



# THE WORKS OF THOMAS BROOKS



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# **The Works of Thomas Brooks**

by Thomas Brooks

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**Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod**

by Thomas Brooks, 1659, London.

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!" Psalm 39:9

## **The Epistle Dedicatory**

To all afflicted and distressed, dissatisfied, disturbed, and agitated Christians throughout the world.

## **Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod**

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!" Psalm 39:9

### **I. What is the Silence Meant, Here in this Verse?**

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# **The Epistle Dedicatory**

(A Christian with an Olive Leaf in his mouth, when he is under the greatest afflictions, the sharpest and sorest trials and troubles, the

saddest and darkest Providences and changes. With answers to diverse questions and objections that are of greatest importance—all tending to win and work souls to be still, quiet, calm and silent under all changes that have, or may pass upon them in this world.)

"The Lord is in his Holy Temple—let all the earth keep silence before him." Hab. 2.20.

**The Epistle Dedicatory**—To all afflicted and distressed, dissatisfied, disturbed, and agitated Christians throughout the world.

Dear hearts—The choicest saints are 'born to troubles as the sparks fly upwards', Job 5:7. '**Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.**' Psalm 34:19. If they were many, and not troubles, then, as it is in the proverb, the more the merrier; or if they were troubles and not many, then the fewer the better. But God, who is infinite in wisdom and matchless in goodness, has ordered troubles, yes, many troubles to come trooping in upon us on every side. As our mercies—so our crosses seldom come single; they usually come treading one upon the heels of another; they are like April showers, no sooner is one over but another comes. And yet, Christians, it is mercy, it is rich mercy, that every affliction is not an execution, that every correction is not a damnation. The higher the waters rise, the nearer Noah's ark was lifted up to heaven; the more your afflictions are increased, the more your heart shall be raised heavenward.

Because I would not hold you too long in the porch, I shall only endeavor two things—first, to give you the reasons of my appearing once more in print; and secondly, a little counsel and direction that the following tract may turn to your soul's advantage, which is the objective that I have in my eye. The true **REASONS** of my sending this piece into the world, such as it is, are these—

First, The afflicting hand of God has been hard upon myself, and upon my dearest relations in this world, and upon many of my precious Christian friends, whom I much love and honor in the Lord, which put me upon studying of the mind of God in that scripture that I have made the subject-matter of this following discourse. Luther could not understand

some Psalms until he was afflicted; the Christ-cross is no letter in the book, and yet, says he, it has taught one more than all the letters in the book. **Afflictions are a golden key by which the Lord opens the rich treasure of his word to his people's souls;** and this in some measure, through grace, my soul has experienced. When Samson had found honey, he gave some to his father and mother to eat, Judges 14:9, 10; some honey I have found in my following text; and therefore I may not, I cannot be such a churl as not to give them some of my honey to taste, who have drunk deep of my gall and wormwood.

Augustine observes on that, Ps. 66:16, 'Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul.' 'He does not call them', says he, 'to acquaint them with speculations, how wide the earth is, how far the heavens are stretched out, what the number of the stars is, or what is the course of the sun; but come and I will tell you the wonders of his grace, the faithfulness of his promises, the riches of his mercy to my soul'. Gracious experiences are to be communicated. 'We learn—that we may teach'—is a proverb among the Rabbis. And I do therefore 'lay in and lay up,' says the heathen, that I may draw forth again and lay out for the good of many. When God has dealt bountifully with us, others should reap some noble good by us. The family, the town, the city, the country, where a man lives, should fare the better for his faring well. Our mercies and experiences should be as a running spring at our doors, which is not only for our own use—but also for our neighbors', yes, and for strangers too.

Secondly, What is written is permanent and spreads itself further by far—for time, place, and people—than the voice can reach. The pen is an artificial tongue; it speaks as well to absent as to present friends; it speaks to those who far off as well as those who are near; it speaks to many thousands at once; it speaks not only to the present age but also to succeeding ages. The pen is a kind of image of eternity; it will make a man live when he is dead, Heb. 11:1. Though 'the prophets do not live for ever', yet their labors may, Zech. 1:6. A man's writings may preach when he **can** not, when he **may** not, and when by reason of bodily distempers, he **dares** not; yes, and that which is more, when he **is** not.

Thirdly, Few men, if any, have iron memories. How soon is a sermon

*preached* forgotten, when a sermon *written* remains! Augustine writing to Volusian, says, 'That which is written is always at hand to be read, when the reader is at leisure.' Men do not easily forget their own names, nor their father's house, nor the wife of their bosom, nor the fruit of their loins, nor to eat their daily bread; and yet, ah! how easily do they forget that word of grace, that should be dearer to them than all! Most men's memories, especially in the great concernments of their souls, are like a sieve, where the good grain and fine flour goes through—but the light chaff and coarse bran remain behind; or like a strainer, where the sweet liquor is strained out—but the dregs left behind; or like a grate that lets the pure water run away—but if there be any straws, sticks, mud, or filth, that it holds, as it were, with iron hands. Most men's memories are very treacherous, especially in good things; few men's memories are a holy ark, a heavenly storehouse for their souls, and therefore they stand in the more need. But,

Fourthly, Its marvelous suitableness and usefulness under these great turns and changes that have passed upon us. As every wise husbandman observes the fittest seasons to sow his seed—some he sows in the autumn and some in the spring of the year, some in a dry season and some in a wet, some in a moist clay and some in a sandy dry ground, Isaiah 28:25; so every spiritual husbandman must observe the fittest times to sow his spiritual seed in. He has heavenly seed by him for all occasions and seasons, for spring and fall; for all grounds, heads, and hearts. Now whether the seed sown in the following treatise be not suitable to the times and seasons wherein we are cast, is left to the judgment of the prudent reader to determine; if the author had thought otherwise, this babe had been stifled in the womb.

Fifthly, The good acceptance that my other weak labors have found. God has blessed them—not only to the conviction, the edification, confirmation, and consolation of many—but also to the conversion of many, Rom. 15:21. God is a free agent to work by what hand he pleases; and sometimes he takes pleasure to do great things by weak means, that 'no flesh may glory in his presence.' God will not 'despise the day of small things;' and who or what are you, that dare despise that day? The Spirit breathes upon whose preaching and writing he pleases, and all prospers

according as that wind blows, John 3:8.

Sixthly, That all afflicted and distressed Christians may have a proper salve for every sore, a proper remedy against every disease, at hand. As every good man, so every good book is not fit to be the afflicted man's companion; but this is. Here he may see his face, his head, his hand, his heart, his ways, his works; here he may see all his diseases discovered, and proper remedies proposed and applied. Here he may find arguments to silence him, and means to quiet him, when it is at worst with him. In every **storm** here he may find a tree to shelter him; and in every **danger**, here he may find a city of refuge to secure him; and in every **difficulty**, here he may have a light to guide him; and in every **peril**, here he may find a shield to defend him; and in every **distress**, here he may find a cordial to strengthen him; and in every **trouble**, here he may find a staff to support him.

Seventhly, To satisfy some bosom friends, some faithful friends. Man is made to be a friend, and apt for friendly offices. He who is not friendly is not worthy to have a friend; and he who has a friend, and does not show himself friendly, is not worthy to be accounted a man. Friendship is a kind of life, without which there is no comfort of a man's life. Christian friendship ties such a knot that great Alexander cannot cut. Summer friends I value not—but winter friends are worth their weight in gold; and who can deny such anything, especially in these days, wherein real, faithful, constant friends are so rare to be found? 1 Sam. 22:1-3.

The friendship of most men in these days is like Jonah's gourd, now very promising and flourishing, and anon fading and withering; it is like some plants in the water, which have broad leaves on the surface of the water—but scarce any root at all; their friendship is like melons, cold within, hot without; their expressions are high—but their affections are low; they speak much—but do little. As drums, and trumpets, and flags in a battle make a great noise and a fine show—but do nothing; so these friends will compliment highly and handsomely, speak plausibly, and promise lustily, and yet have neither a hand nor heart to do anything cordially or faithfully. From such friends it is a mercy to be delivered, and therefore king Antigonus was used to pray to God that he would protect him from his friends; and when one of his council asked him why he prayed so, he

returned this answer, Every man will shun and defend himself against his professed enemies—but from our professed or pretended friends, of whom few are faithful, none can safe-guard himself—but has need of protection from heaven.

But for all this, there are some that are real friends, faithful friends, active friends, winter friends, bosom friends, fast friends; and for their sakes, especially those among them that have been long, very long, under the smarting rod, and in the fiery furnace, and that have been often poured from vessel to vessel—have I once more appeared in print to the world.

Eighthly and lastly, There are not any authors or author come to my hand, who have handled this subject as I have done; and therefore I do not know but it may be the more grateful and acceptable to the world; and if by this essay others that are more able shall be provoked to do more worthily upon this subject, I shall therein rejoice, 1 Thess. 1:7, 8, 1 Cor. 9:1, 2. I shall only add, that though much of the following matter was preached upon the Lord's chastening visitations of my dear yoke-fellow, myself, and some other friends—yet there are many things of special concernment in the following tract, that yet I have not upon any accounts communicated to the world. And thus I have given you a true and faithful account of the reasons that have prevailed with me to publish this treatise to the work, and to dedicate it to yourselves.

II. Secondly, The second thing promised was, the giving of you a little **GOOD COUNSEL**, that you may so read the following discourse, as that it may turn much to your soul's advantage; for, as many fish and catch nothing, Luke 5:5, so many read good books and get nothing, because they read them over cursorily, slightly, superficially; but he who would read to profit, must then,

First, Read and **look up for a blessing**—'Paul may plant, and Apollos may water,' but all will be to no purpose, except 'the Lord gives the increase,' 1 Cor. 3:6, 7. God must do the deed, when all is done, or else all that is done will do you no good. If you would have this work successful and effectual, you must look off from man—and look up to God, who alone can make it a blessing to you. As without a blessing from heaven, your clothes cannot warm you, nor your food nourish you, nor medicine

cure you, nor friends comfort you, Micah 6:14; so without a blessing from heaven, without the precious breathings and influences of the Spirit, what here is written will do you no good, it will not turn to your account in the day of Christ; therefore cast an eye heavenwards, Haggai 1:6.

It is Seneca's observation, that the husbandmen in Egypt never look up to heaven for rain in the time of drought—but look after the overflowing of the banks of Nile, as the only cause of their plenty. Ah, how many are there in these days, who, when they go to read a book, never look up, never look after the rain of God's blessing—but only look to the river Nile; they only look to the wit, the learning, the arts, the parts, the eloquence, etc., of the author, they never look so high as heaven; and hence it comes to pass, that though these read much, yet they profit little.

Secondly, He who would read to profit must read and **meditate**. Meditation is the food of your souls, it is the very stomach and natural heat whereby spiritual truths are digested. A man shall as soon live without his heart, as he shall be able to get good by what he reads, without meditation. Prayer, says Bernard, without meditation, is dry and formal; and reading without meditation is useless and unprofitable. He who would be a wise, a prudent, and an able experienced statesman, must not hastily ramble and run over many cities, countries, customs, laws, and manners of people, without serious musing and pondering upon such things as may make him an expert statesman; so he who would get good by reading, that would complete his knowledge, and perfect his experience in spiritual things, must not slightly and hastily ramble and run over this book or that—but ponder upon what he reads, as Mary pondered the saying of the angel in her heart.

Lord! says Augustine, the more I meditate on you, the sweeter you are to me; so the more you shall meditate on the following matter, the sweeter it will be to you. They usually thrive best who meditate most. Meditation is a soul-fattening duty; it is a grace-strengthening duty, it is a duty-crowning duty. Meditation is the nurse of prayer. Jerome calls it his paradise; Basil calls it the treasury where all the graces are locked up; Theophylact calls it the very gate and portal by which we enter into glory; and Aristotle, though a heathen, places felicity in the contemplation of the mind. You may read much and hear much—yet without meditation

you will never be excellent, you still never be eminent Christians.

Thirdly, Read, and **test** what you read; take nothing upon trust—but all upon trial, as those 'noble Bereans' did, Acts 17:to, 11. You will try and count and weigh gold, though it be handed to you by your fathers; and so should you all those heavenly truths that are handed to you by your spiritual fathers. I hope upon trial you will find nothing—but what will hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary; and though all be not gold that glitters, yet I judge that you will find nothing here to blister, that will not be found upon trial to be true gold.

Fourthly, Read and **do**, read and **practice** what you read, or else all your reading will do you no good. He who has a good book in his hand—but not a lesson of it in his heart or life, is like that donkey that carries burdens, and feeds upon thistles. In divine account, a man knows no more than he does. Profession without practice will but make a man twice told a child of darkness. To *speak* well is to sound like a cymbal—but to *do* well is to act like an angel [Isidore]. He who practices what he reads and understands, God will help him to understand what he understands not. There is no fear of knowing too much, though there is much fear in practicing too little; the most doing man, shall be the most knowing man; the mightiest man in practice, will in the end prove the mightiest man in Scripture, John 7:16, 17, Psalm 119:98-100. Theory is the guide of practice, and practice is the life of theory.

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their lewd lives made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach. 'Where,' said they, 'is that good law which they believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they learn? They read the holy gospel, and yet are unclean; they read the apostles' writings, and yet live in drunkenness; they follow Christ, and yet disobey Christ; they profess a holy law, and yet lead impure lives.' Ah! how may many preachers take up sad complaints against many readers in these days! They read our works, and yet in their lives they deny our works; they praise our works, and yet in their lives they reproach our works; they cry up our labors in their discourses, and yet they cry them down in their practices—yet I hope better things of you into whose hands this treatise shall fall. The Samaritan woman did not fill her pitcher with water, that she might talk of it—but that she might use it,

John 4:7; and Rachel did not desire the mandrakes to hold in her hand—but that she might thereby be the more apt to bring forth, Gen. xxx. 15. The application is easy. But,

Fifthly, Read and **apply**. Reading is but the drawing of the bow, application is the hitting of the bulls-eye. The choicest truths will no further profit you than they are applied by you. It would be as good not to read, as not to apply what you read. No man attains to health by reading books on health—but by the practical application of their remedies. All the reading in the world will never make for the health of your souls—except you apply what you read. The true reason why many read so much and profit so little—is because they do not apply and bring home what they read to their own souls. But,

Sixthly, and lastly, Read and **pray**. He who makes not conscience of praying over what he reads, will find little sweetness or profit in his reading. No man makes such earnings of his reading, as he who prays over what he reads. Luther professes that he profited more in the knowledge of the Scriptures by prayer, in a short space, than by study in a longer. As John by weeping got the sealed book open, so certainly men would gain much more than they do by reading good men's works, if they would but pray more over what they read! Ah, Christians! pray before you read, and pray after you read, that all may be blessed and sanctified to you; when you have done reading, usually close up thus—So let me live, so let me die, that I may live eternally.

And when you are in the mount for yourselves, bear him upon your hearts, who is willing to 'spend and be spend' for your sakes, for your souls, 2 Cor. 12:15. Oh! pray for me, that I may more and more be under the rich influences and glorious pourings out of the Spirit; that I may 'be an able minister of the New Testament—not of the letter—but of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. 3:6; that I may always find an everlasting spring and an overflowing fountain within me, which may always make me faithful, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord; and that I may live daily under those inward teachings of the Spirit, which may enable me to speak from the heart to the heart, from the conscience to the conscience, and from experience to experience; that I may be a 'burning and a shining light,' that everlasting arms may be still under me; that while I live, I may

be serviceable to his glory and his people's good; that no discouragements may discourage one in my work; and that when my work is done, I may give up my account with joy and not with grief. I shall follow these poor labors with my weak prayers, that they may contribute much to your internal and eternal welfare.

Your soul's servant in our dearest Lord,  
Thomas Brooks.

## THE MUTE CHRISTIAN UNDER THE SMARTING ROD

**"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!"** Psalm 39:9

Not to trouble you with a tedious **preface**, wherein usually is a flood of words, and but a drop of matter,

This Psalm consists of two parts. Narration and prayer take up the whole. In the former, you have the prophet's disease discovered; and in the latter, the remedy applied. My text falls in the latter part, where you have the way of David's cure, or the means by which his soul was reduced to a still and quiet temper. I shall give a little light into the words, and then come to the point that I intend to stand upon.

'I was silent.' The Hebrew word signifies to be mute, tongue-tied, or dumb. The Hebrew word signifies also to bind, as well as to be mute and dumb, because those who are dumb are as it were tongue-tied; they have their lips stitched and bound up. Ah! the sight of God's hand in the afflictions which were upon him, makes him lay a law of silence upon his heart and tongue.

'I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!' He looks through all secondary causes to the first cause, and is silent—he sees a hand of God in all, and so sits mute and quiet. The sight of God in

an affliction is of an irresistible efficacy to silence the heart, and to stop the mouth of a godly man. In the words you may observe three things:

1. The person speaking, and that is, David; David a king, David a saint, David 'a man after God's own heart,' David a Christian; and here we are to look upon David—not as a king—but as a Christian, as a man whose heart was right with God.

2. The action and carriage of David under the hand of God, in these words, 'I was silent; I would not open my mouth.'

3. The reason of this humble and sweet carriage of his, in these words, 'for You are the one who has done this!' The proposition is this:

Doctrine: That it is the great duty and concern of gracious souls to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and sharpest trials which they meet with in this world.

For the opening and clearing up of this great and useful truth, I shall inquire,

First, What this silence is that is here pointed at in the proposition.

Secondly, What a gracious, a holy, silence does include.

Thirdly, What this holy silence does not include.

Fourthly, The reasons of the point; and then bring home all by way of application to our own souls.

## **I. What is the silence meant, here in this verse?**

I answer, **There is a sevenfold silence.**

First, There is a **STOICAL** silence. The stoics of old thought it altogether

below a man that has reason or understanding either to rejoice in any good, or to mourn for any evil; but this stoical silence is such a sinful insensibleness as is very provoking to a holy God, Isaiah 26:10,11. God will make the most insensible sinner sensible either of his hand here on earth—or of his wrath in hell. It is a heathenish and a horrid sin to be without natural affections, Rom. 1:31. And of this sin Quintus Maximus seems to be foully guilty who, when he heard that his mother and wife, whom he dearly loved, were slain by the fall of an house, and that his younger son, a brave, hopeful young man, died at the same time in Umbria, he never changed his countenance—but went on with the affairs of the commonwealth as if no such calamity had befallen him. This carriage of his spoke out more stupidity than patience, Job 25:13.

And so Harpalus was not at all appalled when he saw two of his sons laid in a coffin, when Astyages had bid him to supper. This was a sottish insensibleness. Certainly if the loss of a child in the house be no more to you than the loss of a chick in the yard—your heart is base and sordid, and you may well expect some sore awakening judgment. This age is full of such monsters, who think it below the greatness and magnanimity of their spirits to be moved, affected, or afflicted with any afflictions which befall them. I know none so ripe and ready for hell as these.

Aristotle speaks of fish, that though they have spears thrust into their sides, yet they awake not. God thrusts many a sharp spear through many a sinner's heart, and yet he feels nothing, he complains of nothing. These men's souls will bleed to death. Seneca reports of Senecio Cornelius, who minded his body more than his soul, and his money more than heaven; when he had all the day long waited on his dying friend, and his friend was dead, he returns to his house, sups merrily, comforts himself quickly, goes to bed cheerfully. His sorrows were ended, and the time of his mourning expired before his deceased friend was interred. Such stupidity is a curse that many a man lies under. But this stoical silence, which is but a sinful sullenness, is not the silence here meant.

Secondly, There is a **POLITIC** silence. Many are silent out of policy. Should they not be silent, they should lay themselves more open either to the rage and fury of men, or else to the plots and designs of men—to prevent which they are silent, and will lay their hands upon their mouths,

that others might not lay their hands upon their estates, lives, or liberties —'And Saul also went home to Gibeah, and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him, and brought him no presents; but he held his peace,' or was as though he had been deaf, 1 Sam. 10:26, 27. This new king being but newly entered upon his kingly government, and observing his condition to be but base and low, his friends but few, and his enemies many and potent, sons of Belial, that is, men without yoke, as the word signifies, men that were desperately wicked, that were marked out for hell, that were even incarnate devils, who would neither submit to reason nor religion, nor be governed by the laws of nature nor of nations, nor yet by the laws of God—now this young prince, to prevent sedition and rebellion, blood and destruction, prudently and politically chooses rather to lay his hand upon his mouth than to take a wolf by the ear or a lion by the beard—he turns a deaf ear to all they say, his unsettled condition requiring silence.

Saul knew this was a time for silence; he knew his work was rather to be an auditor than an orator. But this is not the silence the proposition speaks of.

Thirdly, There it's a **FOOLISH** silence. Some fools there be that can neither do well nor speak well; and because they cannot word it neither as they would nor as they should, they are so wise as to be mute—Prov. 17:28, 'Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.' As he cannot be wise that speaks much, so he cannot be known for a fool that says nothing. There are many wise fools in the world, who, by holding their tongues, gain the credit and honor of being discreet men. He who does not uncover his lack of wisdom by foolish babbling, is accounted wise, though he may be otherwise. Silence is so rare a virtue, where wisdom does regulate it, that it is accounted a virtue where folly does impose it. Silence was so highly honored among the old Romans, that they erected altars to it. That man shall pass for a man of understanding, who so far understands himself as to hold his tongue. For though it be a great misery to be a fool, yet it is a greater that a man cannot be a fool but he must needs show it. But this foolish silence is not the silence here meant.

Fourthly, There is a **SULLEN** silence. Many, to gratify an humour, a lust, are sullenly silent; these are troubled with a dumb devil, which was the worst devil of all the devils you read of in the Scripture, Mark 9:17-28. Pliny, in his Natural History, makes mention of a certain people in the Indies, upon the river Ganges, called Astomy, that have no mouth—but do only feed upon the smell of herbs and flowers. Certainly there is a generation among us, who, when they are under the afflicting hand of God, have no mouths to plead with God, no lips to praise God, nor no tongues to justify God. These are possessed with a dumb devil; and this dumb devil had possessed Ahab for a time—1 Kings 21:4, 'And Ahab came into his house, heavy and displeased, and laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.' Ahab's ambitious humour, his covetous humour, being crossed, he is resolved to starve himself, and to die of the sullens. A sullen silence is both a sin and a punishment. No devil frets and vexes, wears and wastes the spirits of a man, like this dumb devil—like this sullen silence.

Some write of a certain devil, whom they call Hudgin, who will not, they say, hurt anybody, except he be wronged. I cannot speak so favorably of a sullen silence, for that wrongs many at once, God and Christ, bodies and soul. But this is not the silence here meant.

Fifthly, There is a **FORCED** silence. Many are silent per force. He who is under the power of his enemy, though he suffers many hard things, yet he is silent under his sufferings, because he knows he is liable to worse; he who has taken away his liberty, may take away his life; he who has taken away his money, may take off his head; he who has cut him in the foot, may cut him in the throat if he will not be still and quiet—and this works silence per force. So, when many are under the afflicting hand of God, conscience tells them that now they are under the hand of an enemy, and the power of that God whom they have dishonored, whose Son they have crucified, whose Spirit they have grieved, whose righteous laws they have transgressed, whose ordinances they have despised, and whose people they have abused and opposed; and that he who has taken away one child, may take away every child; and he who has taken away the wife, might have taken away the husband; and he who has taken away some part of the estate, might have taken away all the estate; and that he who

has inflicted some distempers upon the body, might have cast both body and soul into hell-fire forever; and he who has shut him up in his chamber, may shut him out of heaven at pleasure. The thoughts and sense of these things makes many a sinner silent under the hand of God; but this is but a forced silence!

And such was the silence of Philip the Second, king of Spain, who, when his invincible Armada, that had been three years a-fitting, was lost, he gave command that all over Spain they should give thanks to God, that it was no more grievous. As the cudgel forces the dog to be quiet and still, and the rod forces the child to be silent and mute, so the apprehensions of what God has done, and of what God may do, forces many a soul to be silent, Jer. 3:10, 1 Kings 14:5-18. But this is not the silence here meant—a forced silence is no silence in the eye of God.

Sixthly, There is a **DESPAIRING** silence. A despairing soul is a terror to himself; he has a hell in his heart, and horror in his conscience. He looks upwards, and there he beholds God frowning; he looks inwards, and there he finds conscience accusing and condemning of him; he looks on the one side of him, and there he hears all his sins crying out—We are yours, and we will follow you; we will go to the grave with you, we will go to judgment with you, and from judgment we will go to hell with you; he looks on the other side of him, and there he sees infernal fiends in fearful shapes, amazing and terrifying of him, and waiting to receive his despairing soul as soon as she shall take her leave of his wretched body; he looks above him, and there he sees the gates of heaven shut against him; he looks beneath him, and there he sees hell gaping for him; and under these sad sights, he is full of secret conclusions against his own soul. There is mercy for others, says the despairing soul—but none for me; grace and favor for others—but none for me; pardon and peace for others—but none for me; blessedness and happiness for others—but none for me—there is no help, there is no help, none! Jer. 2:25, 18:12.

This seems to be his case who died with this desperate saying in his mouth—farewell, life and hope together. Now, under these dismal apprehensions and sad conclusions about its present and future condition, the despairing soul sits silent, being filled with amazement and astonishment—Psalm 77:1, 'I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' But this

is not the silence here meant. But,

Seventhly and lastly, There is a **PRUDENT** silence, a **HOLY**, a **GRACIOUS** silence; a silence that springs from prudent principles, from holy principles, and from gracious causes and considerations; and this is the silence here meant. And this I shall fully discover in my answers to the second question, which is this:

## **II. What does a prudent, a gracious, a holy silence include?**

Answer. It includes and takes in these eight things:

First, **It includes a sight of God, and an acknowledgment of God as the author of all the afflictions which come upon us.** And this you have plain in the text—'I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!' The psalmist looks through secondary causes to the first cause, and so sits mute before the Lord. There is no sickness so little—but God has a finger in it; though it be but the aching of the little finger. As the scribe is more eyed and properly said to write, than the pen; and he who makes and keeps the clock, is more properly said to make it go and strike, than the wheels and weights that hang upon it; and as every workman is more eyed and properly said to erect his works, rather than the tools which he uses as his instruments. So the Lord, who is the chief agent and mover in all actions, and who has the greatest hand in all our afflictions, is more to be eyed and owned than any inferior or subordinate causes whatever.

So **Job**, he beheld God in all—Job 1:21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.' Had he not seen God in the affliction, he would have cried out—Oh these wretched Chaldeans, they have plundered and spoiled me; these wicked Sabeans, they have robbed and wronged me! Job discerns God's commission in the Chaldeans' and the Sabeans' hands, and then lays his own hand upon his mouth. So **Aaron**, beholding the hand of God in the untimely death of his two sons, holds his peace, Lev. 10:3. The

sight of God in this sad stroke is a bridle both to his mind and mouth, he neither mutters nor murmurs. So **Joseph** saw the hand of God in his brethren's selling of him into Egypt, Gen. 42:8, and that silences him.

Men who don't see God in an affliction, are easily cast into a feverish fit, they will quickly be in a flame, and when their passions are up, and their hearts on fire, they will begin to be saucy, and make no bones of telling God to his teeth, that they do well to be angry, Jonah 4:8, 9. Such as will not acknowledge God to be the author of all their afflictions, will be ready enough to fall in with that mad principle of the Manichees, who maintained the devil to be the author of all calamities; as if there could be any evil of affliction in the city, and the Lord have no hand in it, Amos 3:6. **Such as can see the ordering hand of God in all their afflictions, will, with David, lay their hands upon their mouths, when the rod of God is upon their backs, 2 Sam. 16:11, 12. If God's hand be not seen in the affliction, the heart will do nothing but fret and rage under affliction.**

Secondly, **It includes and takes in some holy, gracious apprehensions of the majesty, sovereignty, authority, and presence of that God under whose acting hand we are—**Hab 2:20, 'But the Lord is in his holy temple—let all the earth be silent', or as the Hebrew reads it, 'Be silent, all the earth, before his face.' When God would have all the people of the earth to be hushed, quiet, and silent before him, he would have them to behold him in his temple, where he sits in state, in majesty, and glory—Zeph. 1, 'Hold your peace at the presence of the Lord God.' Chat not, murmur not, repine not, quarrel not; stand mute, be silent, lay your hand on your mouth, when his hand is upon your back, who is all eye to see, as well as all hand to punish. As the eyes of a well-drawn picture are fastened on you which way soever you turn, so are the eyes of the Lord; and therefore you have cause to stand mute before him.

Thus Aaron had an eye to the sovereignty of God, and that silences him. And Job had an eye upon the majesty of God, and that stills him. And Eli had an eye upon the authority and presence of God, and that quiets him. A man never comes to humble himself, nor to be silent under the hand of God, until he comes to see the hand of God to be a mighty hand—1 Pet.

5:6, 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.' When men look upon the hand of God as a weak hand, a feeble hand, a low hand, a mean hand—their hearts rise against his hand. 'Who is the Lord,' says Pharaoh, 'that I should obey his voice?' Exod. 5:2. And until Pharaoh came to **see** the hand of God, as a mighty hand, and to **feel** it as a mighty hand, he would not let Israel go.

When Tiribazus, a noble Persian, was arrested, at first he drew out his sword and defended himself; but when they charged him in the king's name, and informed him that they came from the king, and were commanded to bring him to the king, he yielded willingly. So when afflictions arrest us, we shall murmur and grumble, and struggle, and strive even to the death, before we shall yield to that God that strikes, until we come to see his majesty and authority, until we come to see him as the king of kings, and Lord of lords, Isaiah 26:11, 12. It is such a sight of God as this, that makes the heart to stoop under his almighty hand, Rev. 1:5. The Thracians being ignorant of the dignity and majesty of God; when it thundered and lightened, used to express their madness and folly in shooting their arrows against heaven! As a sight of his grace cheers the soul, so a sight of his greatness and glory silences the soul. But,

Thirdly, **A gracious, a prudent silence, takes in a holy quietness and calmness of mind and spirit, under the afflicting hand of God.** A gracious silence shuts out all inward heats, murmurings, frettings, quarrelings, wranglings, and boilings of heart—Psalm 62:1, 'Truly my soul keeps silence unto God, or is silent or still;' that is, my soul is quiet and submissive to God; all murmurings and repinings, passions and turbulent affections, being allayed, tamed, and subdued. This also is clear in the text; and in the former instances of Aaron, Eli, and Job. **They saw that it was a Father that put those bitter cups in their hands, and love that laid those heavy crosses upon their shoulders, and grace that put those yokes about their necks; and this caused much quietness and calmness in their spirits.**

Marius bit in his pain when the surgeon cut off his leg. Some men, when God cuts off this mercy and that mercy from them, they bite in their pain—they hide and conceal their grief and trouble; but could you but look into their hearts, you will find all in an uproar, all out of order, all in a

flame; and however they may seem to be cold without, yet they are all in a hot burning fever within. Such a feverish fit David was once in, Psalm 39:3. But certainly a holy silence allays all tumults in the mind, and makes a man 'in patience to possess his own soul,' which, next to his possession of God, is the choicest and sweetest possession in all the world, Luke 21:19.

The law of silence is as well upon that man's heart and mind as it is upon his tongue, who is truly and divinely silent under the rebuking hand of God. As tongue-service abstracted from heart-service, is no service in the account of God; so tongue-silence abstracted from heart-silence, is no silence in the esteem of God. A man is then graciously silent when all is quiet within and without, Isa 29:13, Mat. 15:8, 9.

Terpander, a harpist and a poet, was one that, by the sweetness of his verse and music, could allay the tumultuous motions of men's minds, as David by his harp did Saul's. When God's people are under the rod, he makes by his Spirit and word such sweet music in their souls as allays all tumultuous motions, passions, and perturbations, Psalm 94:17-19, Psalm 119:49, 50, so that they sit, Noah-like, quiet and still; and in peace possess their own souls.

Fourthly, **A prudent, a holy silence, takes in an humble, justifying, clearing and acquitting of God of all blame, rigor and injustice, in all the afflictions he brings upon us;** Psalm 51:4, 'That you may be justified when you speak, and be clear when you judge,' that is, when you correct. God's judging his people is God's correcting or chastening of his people—1 Cor. 11:32, 'When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord.' David's great care, when he was under the afflicting hand of God, was to clear the Lord of injustice. 'Ah! Lord, says he, there is not the least show, spot, stain, blemish, or mixture of injustice, in all the afflictions you have brought upon me; I desire to take shame to myself, and to set to my seal, that the Lord is righteous, and that there is no injustice, no cruelty, nor no extremity in all that the Lord has brought upon me.' And so in that Psalm 119:75, 137, he sweetly and readily subscribes unto the righteousness of God in those sharp and smart afflictions which God exercised him with. 'I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right, and that you in faithfulness have afflicted me.'

Righteous are you, O Lord, and righteous are your judgments.'

God's afflictions are always just; he never afflicts but in faithfulness. His will is the rule of justice; and therefore a gracious soul dares not cavil nor question his proceedings. The afflicted soul knows that a righteous God can do nothing but that which is righteous; it knows that God is uncontrollable, and therefore the afflicted man puts his mouth in the dust, and keeps silence before him. Who dare say, 'Why have You done so?' 2 Sam. 16:10.

The Turks, when they are cruelly lashed, are compelled to return to the judge who commanded it, to kiss his hand, give him thanks, and pay the officer who whipped them—and so clear the judge and officer of injustice. Silently to kiss the rod, and the hand that whips with it—is the noblest way of clearing the Lord of all injustice.

The Babylonish captivity was the sorest, the heaviest affliction that ever God inflicted upon any people under heaven; witness that 1 Sam. 12:and Dan. 9:12, etc. Yet under those great afflictions, wisdom is justified of her children—Neh. 9:33, 'You are just in all that is brought upon us, for you have done right—but we have done wickedly!' Lam. 1:18, 'The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against him.' A holy silence shines in nothing more than in an humble justifying and clearing of God from all that which a corrupt heart is apt enough to charge God with, in the day of affliction. God, in that he is good, can give nothing, nor do nothing—but that which is good. "Others do evil frequently; God can never do evil," says Luther.

Fifthly, **A holy silence takes in gracious, blessed, soul-quieting conclusions about the outcome of those afflictions which are upon us.** "It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust—there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men." Lamentations 3:27-33. In this choice scripture you may observe these **FIVE SOUL-STILLING**

## CONCLUSIONS.

(1.) First, and that more generally, That **afflictions shall work for their good** ver. 27, 'It is **good** for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.' A gracious soul secretly concludes—as stars shine brightest in the night, so God will make my soul shine and glisten like gold, while I am in this furnace, and when I come out of the furnace of affliction—Job 23:10, 'He knows the way that I take; and when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold!' 'It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.' Psalm 119:71.

Surely, as the tasting of honey did open Jonathan's eyes, so this cross, this affliction, shall open my eyes. **By this stroke I shall come to have a clearer sight of my sins and of myself, and a fuller sight of my God,** Job 33:27, 28; 40:4, 5; 13:1-7.

**Surely this affliction shall proceed in the purging away of my dross,** Isaiah 1:25.

Surely as ploughing of the ground kills the weeds, and harrowing breaks hard clods; **so these afflictions shall kill my sins, and soften my heart,** Hosea 5:15, 6:1-3.

Surely as the plaster draws out the infectious core; **so the afflictions which are upon me shall draw out the core of pride, the core of self-love, the core of envy, the core of earthliness, the core of formality, the core of hypocrisy,** Psalm 119:67, 71.

Surely by these afflictions, **the Lord will crucify my heart more and more to the world, and the world to my heart,** Gal. 6:14; Psalm 131:1-3.

Surely by these afflictions, **the Lord will keep pride from my soul,** Job 33:14-21.

Surely these afflictions are but the Lord's pruning-knives, by which he will bleed my sins, and prune my heart, and make it more fertile and fruitful; they are but the Lord's portion, by which he will clear me, and rid

me of those spiritual diseases and maladies, which are most deadly and dangerous to my soul!

Affliction is such a potion, as will carry away all soul-diseases, better than all other remedies, Zech. 13:8, 9.

Surely these shall increase my spiritual experiences, Rom. 5:3, 4.

Surely by these I shall be made more partaker of God's holiness, Heb. 12:10. As black soap makes white clothes, so does sharp afflictions make holy hearts.

Surely by these God will communicate more of himself unto me, Hosea 2:14.

Surely by these afflictions, **the Lord will draw out my heart more and more to seek him**, Isaiah 36:16. Tatianus told the heathen Greeks, that when they were sick, then they would send for their gods to be with them, as Agamemnon did at the siege of Troy, send for his ten counselors. Hosea 5:15, 'In their afflictions they will seek me early,' or as the Hebrew has it, 'they will morning me;' in times of affliction, Christians will industriously, speedily, early seek unto the Lord.

Surely by these trials and troubles, the Lord will fix my soul more than ever upon the great concerns of the eternal world, John 14:1-3; Rom. 8:17, 18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

Surely by **these afflictions the Lord will work in me more tenderness and compassion towards those who are afflicted**, Heb. 10:34, 13:3. The Romans punished one that was seen looking out at his window with a crown of roses on his head, in a time of public calamity.

Surely these **afflictions are but God's love-tokens**. Rev. 3:19, 'As many as I love—I rebuke and chasten.' Seneca persuaded his friend Polybius to bear his affliction quietly, because he was the emperor's favorite, telling him, that it was not lawful for him to complain while Caesar was his friend. So says the holy Christian—'O my soul! be quiet, be

still; all is sent in love, all is a fruit of divine favor. I see honey upon the top of every twig, I see the rod is but a rosemary branch, I have sugar with my gall, and wine with my wormwood; therefore be silent, O my soul! And this general conclusion, that all should be for good, had this blessed eject upon the church—Lam. 3:28, 'He sits alone, and keeps silence, because he has borne it upon him.'

Afflictions abase the carnal attractions of the world, which might entice us. Affliction abates the lustiness of the flesh within, which might else ensnare us! And it abates the spirit in its quarrel against the flesh and the world; by all which it proves a mighty advantage unto us.

(2.) Secondly, **Afflictions shall keep them humble and low**—Lam. 3:29, 'He puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.' Some say, that these words are an allusion to the manner of those that, having been conquered and subdued, lay their necks down at the conqueror's feet to be trampled upon, and so lick up the dust that is under the conqueror's feet. Others looked upon the words as an allusion to poor petitioners, who cast themselves down at princes' feet, that they may draw forth their pity and compassion towards them. As I have read of Aristippus, who fell on the ground before Dionysius, and kissed his feet, when he presented a petition to him; and being asked the reason, answered—he has his ears in his feet. Take it which way you will, it holds forth this to us, That holy hearts will be humble under the afflicting hand of God. When God's rod is upon their backs, their mouths shall be in the dust. A good heart will lie lowest, when the hand of God is lifted highest, Job 13:1-7; Acts 9:1-8.

(3.) Thirdly, The third soul-quieting conclusion you have in Lam. 3:31, 'For the Lord will not cast off forever;' **the rod shall not always lie upon the back of the righteous.** 'In the evening—sudden terror! Before morning—it is gone!' Isaiah 17:13. As Athanasius said to his friends, when they came to bewail his misery and banishment—'it is but a little cloud—and it will quickly be gone.' There are none of God's afflicted ones, that have not their intermissions and respites; yes, so small a while does the hand of the Lord rest upon his people, that Luther cannot get diminutives enough to extenuate it; for he calls it a very little little cross that we bear—Isaiah 26:20, 'Come, my people, enter into your chambers,

and shut your doors behind you—hide yourself as it were for a little moment (or for a little space, a little while), until the indignation is over-pass.' The indignation does not pass—but over-pass. The sharpness, shortness, and suddenness of the saints' afflictions, is set forth by the travail of a woman, John 16:21, which is sharp, short, and sudden.

4.) Fourthly, The fourth soul-silencing conclusion you have in Lamentations 3:32 'But though he causes grief, **yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies.**' 'In wrath God remembers mercy,' Hab. 3:2. 'Weeping may endure for a night—but joy comes in the morning,' Psalm 30:5. Their mourning shall last but until morning. God will turn their winter's night into a summer's day, their sighing into singing, their grief into gladness, their mourning into music, their bitter into sweet, their wilderness into a paradise. The life of a Christian is filled up with interchanges of sickness and health, weakness and strength, want and wealth, disgrace and honor, crosses and comforts, miseries and mercies, joys and sorrows, mirth and mourning. All honey would harm us; all wormwood would undo us—a composition of both is the best way in the world to keep our souls in a healthy constitution. It is best and most for the health of the soul that the warm south wind of mercy, and the cold north wind of adversity—do both blow upon it. And though every wind that blows, shall blow good to the saints, yet certainly their sins die most, and their graces thrive best, when they are under the frigid, drying, nipping north wind of calamity, as well as under the warm, nourishing south wind of mercy and prosperity.

(5) Fifthly, The fifth soul-quieting conclusion you have in Lament. 3:33, 'For He does not afflict willingly (or as the Hebrew has it, 'from his heart'), 'nor grieve the children of men.' Christians conclude that **God's heart was not in their afflictions, though his hand was.** He takes no delight to afflict his children; it goes against his heart. It is a grief to him to be grievous to them, a pain to him to be punishing of them, a sorrow to him to be striking them. He has no will, no desire, no inclination, no disposition, to that work of afflicting of his people; and therefore he calls it 'his strange work,' Isaiah 28:21. Mercy and punishment—they flow from God, as the honey and the sting from the bee. The bee yields honey of her own nature—but she does not sting but

when she is provoked. God takes delight in showing of mercy, Micah 7:18; he takes no pleasure in giving his people up to adversity, Hosea 11:8. Mercy and kindness flows from him freely, naturally; he is never severe, never harsh; he never stings, he never terrifies us—but when he is sadly provoked by us. God's hand sometimes may lie very hard upon his people, when his heart, his affections, at those very times may be yearning towards his people, Jer. 31:18-20.

No man can tell how the heart of God stands—by his hand. God's hand of mercy may be open to those against whom his heart is set—as you see in the rich poor fool, and Dives, in the Gospel. And his hand of severity may lie hard upon those on whom he has set his heart—as you may see in Job and Lazarus. And thus you see those gracious, blessed, soul-quieting conclusions about afflictions, that a holy, a prudent silence does include.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Psalms 37:7

Sixthly, **A holy, a prudent silence includes and takes in a strict charge, a solemn, command, that conscience lays upon the soul to be quiet and still.** Psalm 37:7, 'Rest in the Lord, (or as the Hebrew has it, 'be silent to the Lord'), 'and wait patiently for him.' I charge you, O my soul—not to mutter, nor to murmur; I command you, O my soul, to be dumb and silent under the afflicting hand of God. As Christ laid a charge, a command, upon the boisterous winds and the roaring raging seas—Mat. 8:26, 'Be still; and there was a great calm,'—so conscience lays a charge upon the soul to be quiet and still—Psalm 27:14, 'Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart—wait, I say, on the Lord.' Peace, O my soul! be still, leave your muttering, leave your murmuring, leave your complaining, leave your chafing, and vexing—and lay your hand upon your mouth, and be silent. Conscience allays and stills all the tumults and uproars that are in the soul, by such like reasonings as the clerk of Ephesus stilled that uproar—Acts 19:40, 'For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.' O my soul! be quiet, be silent, else you will one day be called in question for all those inward mutterings, uproars, and passions that are in you, seeing no

sufficient cause can be produced why you should murmur, quarrel, or wrangle—under the righteous hand of God.

Seventhly, **A holy, a prudent silence includes a surrendering, a resigning of ourselves to God, while we are under his afflicting hand.** The silent soul gives himself up to God. The secret language of the soul is this—'Lord, here am I; do with me what you please, write upon me as you please—I give up myself to be at your disposal.'

There was a good woman, who, when she was sick, being asked whether she were willing to live or die, answered, 'Whichever God pleases.' But, said one that stood by, 'If God would refer it to you, which would you choose?' 'Truly,' said she, 'if God would refer it to me, I would even refer it right back to him again.' This was a soul worth gold.

'Well,' says a gracious soul, 'The ambitious man gives himself up to his honors—but I give up myself unto God. The voluptuous man gives himself up to his pleasures—but I give up myself to God. The covetous man gives himself up to his bags of money—but I give up myself to God. The wanton man gives himself up to his lust—but I give up myself to God. The drunkard gives himself up to his cups—but I give up myself to God. The papist gives up himself to his idols—but I give myself to God. The Turk gives up himself to his Mahomet—but I give up myself to God. The heretic gives up himself to his heretical opinions—but I give up myself to God. Lord! lay what burden you will upon me, only let your everlasting arms be under me!

Lord! lay what burden you will upon me, only let your everlasting arms be under me. Strike, Lord, strike, and spare not, for I am lain down in your will, I have learned to say amen to your amen; you have a greater interest in me than I have in myself, and therefore I give up myself unto you, and am willing to be at your disposal, and am ready to receive whatever impression you shall stamp upon me. O blessed Lord! have you not again and again said unto me, as once the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, 'I am yours, and all that I have is yours,' 1 Kings 20:4.

God says, "I am yours, O soul! to save you! My mercy is yours to pardon you! My blood is yours to cleanse you! My merits are yours to justify you!

My righteousness is yours to clothe you! My Spirit is yours to lead you! My grace is yours to enrich you! My glory is yours to reward you!" And therefore, says a gracious soul, "I cannot but make a resignation of myself unto you. Lord! here I am, do with me as seems good in your own eyes. I know the best way to have my own will, is to resign up myself to your will, and to say amen to your amen."

I have read of a gentleman, who, meeting with a shepherd in a misty morning, asked him what weather it would be? 'It will be,' says the shepherd, 'that weather which pleases me.' And being courteously requested to express his meaning, replied, 'Sir, it shall be whatever weather pleases God; and whatever weather pleases God—pleases me.' When a Christian's will is molded into the will of God, he is sure to have his will. But,

Eighthly and lastly, **A holy, a prudent silence, takes in a patient waiting upon the Lord under our afflictions until deliverance comes**—Psalm 11:1-3; Psalm 62:5, 'My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from him;' Lam. 3:26, 'It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly (or as the Hebrew has it, 'silently') wait for the salvation of the Lord.' The farmer patiently waits for the precious fruits of the earth, the mariner patiently waits for wind and tide, the watchman patiently wait for the dawning of the day; and so does the silent soul in the night of adversity, patiently wait for the dawning of the day of mercy, James 5:7, 8. The mercies of God are not styled the **swift**—but the **sure** mercies; and therefore a gracious soul waits patiently for them. And thus you see what a gracious, a prudent silence does include.

## To Discover What is Included in a Holy, a Prudent Silence Under Affliction

**III. The third thing is, to discover what is included in a holy, a prudent silence under affliction.** Now there are eight things that a holy patience includes.

1. First, **A holy, a prudent silence under affliction does not exclude and shut out a sense and feeling of our afflictions,** Psalm 39:9, though he 'was silent, and laid his hand upon his mouth,' yet he was very sensible of his **affliction**—verses 10, 11, 'Remove your scourge from me; I am overcome by the blow of your hand. You rebuke and discipline men for their sin; you consume their wealth like a moth—each man is but a breath.' He is sensible of his **pain** as well as of his **sin**; and having prayed off his sin in the former verses, he labors here to pray off his pain.

Diseases, aches, sicknesses, pains—they are all the daughters of sin, and he who is not sensible of them as the births and products of sin, does but add to his sin and provoke the Lord to add to his sufferings, Isaiah 26:9-11. No man shall ever be charged by God for feeling his burden, if he neither frets nor faints under it. Grace does not destroy nature—but rather perfects it. Grace is of a noble offspring; it neither turns men into stocks nor to stoics. The more grace, the more sensible of the tokens, frowns, blows, and lashes—of a displeased Father. Though Calvin, under his greatest pains, was never heard to mutter nor murmur, yet he was heard often to say 'How long, Lord, how long?' A pious commander being shot in battle, when the wound was searched, and the bullet cut out, some standing by, pitying his pain, he replied, Though I **groan**, yet I bless God I do not **grumble**. God allows his people to groan, though not to grumble. It is a God-provoking sin to lie stupid and senseless under the afflicting hand of God. God will heat that man's furnace of affliction sevenfold hotter, who is in the furnace but feels it not.

"Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers?"

Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law. So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them—but they did not take it to heart." Isaiah 42:24-25. Stupidity lays a man open to the greatest fury and severity.

The physician, when he finds that the potion which he has given his patient will not work, he seconds it with one more violent one; and if that will not work, he gives another yet more violent one. If a gentle plaster will not serve, then the surgeon applies that which is more corroding; and if that will not do, then he makes use of his knife! So when the Lord afflicts, and men feel it not; when he strikes and they grieve not; when he wounds them, and they awake not—then the furnace is made hotter than ever; then his fury burns, then he lays on irons upon irons, bolt upon bolt, and chain upon chain, until he has made their lives a hell. Afflictions are the saints' medicines; and where do you read in all the Scripture that ever any of the saints drunk of these medicines, and were not sensible of it.

2. Secondly, **A holy, a prudent, silence does not shut out prayer for deliverance out of our afflictions.** Though the psalmist lays his hand upon his mouth in the text, yet he prays for deliverance—"Remove your scourge from me; I am overcome by the blow of your hand. Hear my prayer, O Lord, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping. For I dwell with you as an alien, a stranger, as all my fathers were. Look away from me, that I may rejoice again before I depart and am no more." Psalm 39:10-13. 'Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.' James 5:13. 'Call upon me in the day of trouble—I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.' Psalm 50:15

Times of affliction, by God's own injunction, are special times of supplication. David's heart was more often out of tune than his harp; but then he prays and presently cries, 'Return to your rest O my soul.' Jonah prays in the whale's belly, and Daniel prays when among the lions, and Job prays when on the ash-heap, and Jeremiah prays when in the dungeon. Yes, the heathen mariners, as stout as they were, when in a storm, they cry every man to his god, Jonah 1:5, 6. To call upon God, especially in times of distress and trouble, is a lesson that the very light

and law of nature teaches. The Persian messenger, though a heathen, says thus—'When the Grecian forces hotly pursued our army, and we must needs venture over the great water Strymon, frozen then—but beginning to thaw, when a hundred to one we had all died for it, with my eyes I saw many of those gallants whom I had heard before so boldly maintain there was no God, every one upon his knees, and devoutly praying that the ice might hold until they got over.' And shall blind heathen nature do more than grace? If the time of affliction be not a time of supplication, I know not what is.

As there are two kinds of antidotes against poison, that is, hot and cold; so there are two kinds of antidotes against all the troubles and afflictions of this life, that is, prayer and patience—the one hot, the other cold—the one quenching, the other quickening. Chrysostom understood this well enough when he cried out—Oh! says he, it is more bitter than death to be robbed of prayer; and thereupon observes that Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life, than to lose his prayer. Well! This is the second thing. A holy silence does not exclude prayer; but,

**3. Thirdly, A holy, a prudent silence does not exclude men's being kindly affected and afflicted with their sins, as the meritorious cause of all their sorrows and sufferings, Lam. 3:39, 40, 'Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.' Job 40:4, 6, 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer you? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken—but I will not answer; yes, thrice—but I proceed no further.' Micah 7:9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned.' In all our sorrows we should read our sins! When God's hand is upon our backs, our hands should be upon our sins.**

It was a good saying of one, 'I hide not my sins—but I show them. I wipe them not away—but I sprinkle them; I do not excuse them—but accuse them. The beginning of my salvation is the knowledge of my transgression.' When some told Prince Henry, that darling of mankind, that the sins of the people brought that affliction on him, Oh no! said he, I have sins enough of my own to cause that. 'I have sinned,' says David, 'but what have these poor sheep done?' 2 Sam. 24:17. When a Christian is

under the afflicting hand of God, he may well say, 'I may thank this proud heart of mine, this worldly heart, this froward heart, this formal heart, this dull heart, this backsliding heart, this self-seeking heart of mine—for this cup is so bitter, this pain so grievous, this loss so great, this disease so desperate, this wound so incurable! It is my own self, my own sin—which has caused these floods of sorrows to break in upon me! But,

4. Fourthly, **A holy, a prudent silence does not exclude the teaching and instructing of others, when we are afflicted.** The words of the afflicted stick close; they many times work strongly, powerfully, strangely savingly, upon the souls and consciences of others. Many of Paul's epistles were written to the churches when he was in prison, that is, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon; he begot Onesimus in his bonds, Philem. 10. And many of the brethren in the Lord waxed bold and confident by his bonds, and were confirmed, and made partakers of grace by his ministry, when he was in bonds, Philip. 1:7, 13, 14.

As the words of dying people do many times stick and work gloriously, so many times do the words of afflicted people work very nobly and efficaciously. I have read of one Adrianus, who, seeing the martyrs suffer such grievous things for the cause of Christ, he asked what that was which enabled them to suffer such things? and one of them named that 1 Cor. 2:9, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.' This word was like apples of gold in pictures of silver, Prov. 25:11, for it made hint not only a convert—but a martyr too. And this was the means of Justin Martyr's conversion, as himself confesses.

Doubtless, many have been made happy by the words of the afflicted. The tongue of the afflicted has been to many as choice silver. The words of the afflicted many times are both pleasing and profitable; they tickle the ear, and they win upon the heart; they slide insensibly into the hearers' souls, and work efficaciously upon the hearers' hearts—Eccles. 10:12, 'The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious.' Jerome reads it, "the words of the mouth of a wise man are grace." They minister grace to others, and they win grace and favor from others. Gracious lips make gracious hearts; gracious words are a grace, an ornament to the speaker, and they are a

comfort, a delight, and an advantage to the hearer.

Now, the words of a wise man's mouth are never more gracious, than when he is most afflicted and distressed. Now, you shall find most worth and weight in his words; now his lips, like the spouse's, are like a thread of scarlet; they are red with talking much of a crucified Christ; and they are thin like a thread—not swelled with vain and unprofitable discourses. Now his mouth speaks of wisdom, and his tongue talks judgment, for the law of the Lord is in his heart, Psalm 37:30. Now his lips drop as honeycombs, Cant. 4:11; now his tongue is a tree of life, whose leaves are medicinal, Prov. 12:18. As the silver trumpets sounded most joy to the Jews in the day of their gladness, so the mouth of a wise man, like a silver trumpet, sounds most joy and advantage to others in the days of his sadness, Num. 10:10.

The heathen man could say—'when a wise man speaks, he opens the rich treasure and wardrobe of his mind'; so may I say, 'when an afflicted saint speaks, Oh the pearl, the treasures that he scatters!' But,

5. Fifthly, **A holy, a prudent silence does not exclude moderate mourning or weeping under the afflicting hand of God.** Isaiah 38:3, 'And Hezekiah wept sore', or, as the Hebrew has it, 'wept with great weeping.' But was not the Lord displeased with him for his great weeping? No! ver. 5, 'I have heard your prayers, I have seen your tears—behold, I will add unto your days fifteen years.' God had as well a bottle for his tears—as a bag for his sins, Psalm 56:8. There is no water so sweet as the saints' tears, when they do not overflow the banks of moderation. Tears are not mutes; they have a voice, and their oratory is of great prevalence with the almighty God. Therefore the weeping prophet calls out for tears—Lam. 2:18, 'Let your tears flow like a river day and night; give yourself no relief; let not the apple of your eye cease;' or, as the Hebrew has it, 'Let not the daughter of your eye be silent.' That which we call the pupil or apple of the eye, the Hebrews call the daughter of the eye, because it is as dear and tender to a man as an only daughter; and because therein appears the likeness of a little daughter. Upon which words, says Bellarmine—'cry aloud—not with your tongue—but with your eyes; not with your words—but with your tears; for that is the prayer that makes the most forcible entry into the ears of the great God of heaven.'

When God strikes, he looks that we should tremble; when his hand is lifted high, he looks that our hearts should stoop low; when he has the rod in his hand, he looks that we should have tears in our eyes, as you may see by comparing of these Scriptures together, Psalm 55:2, 38:6, Job 30:26-32. Says the Greek poet—'the better any are—they are more inclining to weeping, especially under affliction.' As you may see in David, whose tears, instead of gems, were the common ornaments of his bed; as Jonathan, Job, Ezra, Daniel, etc. How, says one, shall God wipe away my tears in heaven, if I shed none on earth? And how shall I reap in joy, if I sow not in tears? I was born with tears, and I shall die with tears—and why then should I live without them in this valley of tears?

There is as well a time to weep, as there is a time to laugh; and a time to mourn, as well as a time to dance, Eccles. 3:4. The mourning garment among the Jews was the black garment, and the black garment was the mourning garment—Psalm 43:2, 'Why do you go *mourning*?' The Hebrew word signifies 'black'. Why go you in black? Sometimes Christians must put off their gay ornaments, and put on their black—their mourning garments, Exod. 33:3-6. But,

6. Sixthly, **A gracious, a prudent silence does not exclude sighing, groaning, or roaring under afflictions.** A man may sigh, and groan and roar under the hand of God, and yet be silent. It is not sighing—but muttering; it is not groaning—but grumbling; it is not roaring—but murmuring—which is opposite to a holy silence—Exod. 2:23, 'And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage.' Job 3:24, 'For my sighing comes before I eat.' His sighing, like bad weather, came unent for and unsought—so Psalm 38:9, 'Lord, all my desire is before you; and no groaning is not hid from you.' Psalm 102:5, 'By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin.' Job 3:24, 'And my roarings are poured out like the waters.' Psalm 38:8, 'I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disturbance of my heart.' Psalm 22:1, 'My, God! my God! why have you forsaken me? why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my roaring?' Psalm 32:3, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roarings all the day long.' He roars—but does not rage; he roars—but does not repine.

When a man is in extremity, nature prompts him to roar, and the law of grace is not against it. And though sighing, roaring, groaning, cannot deliver a man out of his misery, yet they do give some ease to a man under his misery. When Solon wept for his son's death, one said to him, Weeping will not help. He answered, 'Alas! I weep, because weeping will not help.' So a Christian many times sighs, because sighing will not help; and he groans, because groaning will not help; and he roars, because roaring will not help. Sometimes the sorrows of the saints are so great, that all tears are dried up, and they can get no ease by weeping; and therefore for a little ease they fall a-sighing and a-groaning. And this may be done, and yet the heart may be quiet and silent before the Lord. Peter wept and sobbed, and yet was silent. Sometimes the sighs and groans of a saint do in some manner, tell that which his tongue can in no manner utter. But,

7. Seventhly, **A holy, a prudent silence, does not exclude nor shut out the use of any just or lawful means, whereby people may be delivered out of their afflictions.** God would not have his people so in love with their afflictions, as not to use such righteous means as may deliver them out of their afflictions. Mat. 10:23, 'But when they persecute you in this city, *flee* into another.' Acts 12:5, When Peter was in prison, the saints thronged together to pray, as the original has it, and they were so instant and earnest with God in prayer, they did so beseech and besiege the Lord, they did so beg and bounce at heaven-gate, that God could have no rest, until, by many miracles of power and mercy, he had returned Peter as a bosom-favor to them. "After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him—but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall." Acts 9:23-25

The blood of the saints is precious in God's eye, and it should not be vile in their own eyes. When providence opens a door of escape, there is no reason why the saints should set themselves as marks for their enemies to shoot at. 2 Thess. 3:1, 2, The apostles desired the brethren 'to pray for them, that they may be delivered from absurd and wicked men; for all men have not faith.' It is a mercy worth a seeking, to be delivered out of

the hands of wicked, villainous, and troublesome men.

Afflictions are evil in themselves, and we may desire and endeavor to be delivered from them, James 5:14, 15, Isaiah 38:18-21. Both inward and outward means are to be used for our own preservation. Had not Noah built an ark, he would have been swept away with the flood, though he had been with Nimrod and his gang on the tower of Babel, which was raised to the height of some 2000 feet. Though we may not trust in means; yet we may and ought to use the means. In the use of them, eye that God that can only bless them, and you do your work. As the pilot that guides the ship has his hand upon the rudder, and his eye on the star that directs him at the same time; so when your hand is upon the means, let your eye be upon your God, and deliverance will come. We may neglect God as well by neglecting of means, as by trusting in means. It is best to use them, and in the use of them, to live above them. Augustine tells of a man, that being fallen into a pit, one passing by falls to questioning of him, as to how he got into the pit. Oh! said the poor man, ask me not how I came in—but help me and tell me how I may come out! The application is easy. But,

8. Eighthly, and lastly, **A holy, a prudent silence, does not exclude a just and sober complaining against the authors, contrivers, abettors, or instruments of our afflictions.** 2 Tim. 4:14, 'Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.' This Alexander is conceived by some to be that Alexander that is mentioned, Acts 19:33, who stood so close to Paul at Ephesus, that he ran the hazard of losing his life by appearing on his side. Yet if glorious professors come to be furious persecutors, Christians may complain—2 Cor. 11:24, 'Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes.' They inflict, says Maimonides, no more than forty stripes, though he be as strong as Samson—but if he be weak, they abate of that number. They scourged Paul with the greatest severity, in making him suffer so often the utmost extremity of the Jewish law, when as those who were weak had their punishment mitigated—ver. 25, 'Thrice was I beaten with rods,' that is, by the Romans, whose custom it was to beat the guilty with rods.

If Pharaoh makes Israel groan—Israel may make his complaint against

Pharaoh to the Keeper of Israel, Exod. 2. If the proud and blasphemous king of Assyria shall come with his mighty army to destroy the people of the Lord—Hezekiah may spread his letter of blasphemy before the Lord. Isaiah 37:14-21.

It was the saying of Socrates, that every man in this life had need of a faithful friend and a bitter enemy; the one to advise him, and the other to make him look about him; and this Hezekiah found by experience.

Though Joseph's bow abode in strength, and the arm of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. Yet Joseph may say, that the archers, (or the arrow-masters, as the Hebrew has it,) have severely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him. Gen. 49:23, 24. And so David sadly complained of Doeg. Yes, Christ himself, who was the most perfect pattern for silence under sorest trials, complains against Judas, Pilate, and the rest of his persecutors, Psalm 69:20, 30, etc. Yes, though God will make his people's enemies to be the workmen that shall fit them and square them for his building; to be goldsmiths to add pearls to their crown; to be rods to beat off their dust; to be scullions to scour off their rust; to be fire to purge away their dross; and water to cleanse away their filthiness, fleshliness, and earthliness; yet may they point at them, and pour out their complaints to God against them, Psalm 132:2-18. This truth I might make good by over a hundred texts of Scripture; but it is time to come to the reasons of the point.

## **Why Must Christians be Mute and Silent Under the Greatest Afflictions**

**IV. WHY must Christians be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and sharpest trials which they meet with in this world? I answer,**

**Reason 1. That they may the better hear and understand the**

**voice of the rod.** As the **word** has a voice, the **Spirit** a voice, and **conscience** a voice—so God's **rod** has a voice. Afflictions are the rod of God's anger, the rod of his displeasure, and his rod of revenge. God gives a commission to his rod—to awaken his people—to reform his people—or else to revenge the quarrel of his covenant upon them, if they will not hear the rod, and kiss the rod, and sit mute and silent under the rod—Micah 6:9, 'The voice of the Lord calls out to the city (and it is wise to fear Your name,) "Pay attention to the rod and the One who ordained it." God's rods are not mutes, they are all vocal, they are all speaking as well as smiting. Every twig has a voice. 'Ah! soul,' says one twig, 'you say it smarts. Well! tell me, is it good to provoke a jealous God?' Jer. 4:18. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'you say it is bitter, it reaches to your heart; but have not your own doings procured these things?' Rom. 6:20, 21. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'where is the profit, the pleasure, the sweet that you have found in wandering from God?' Hosea 2:7. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'was it not best with you, when you were high in your communion with God, and when you were humble and close in your walking with God?' Micah 6:8. 'Ah! Christian,' says another twig, 'will you search your heart, and try your ways, and turn to the Lord your God?' Lam. 3:40. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you die to sin more than ever, and to the world more than ever, and to relations more than ever, and to yourself more than ever?' Rom. 14:6-8; Gal. 6:18. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you live more to Christ than ever, and cleave closer to Christ than ever, and prize Christ more than ever, and venture further for Christ than ever?' 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you love Christ with a more inflamed love, and hope in Christ with a more raised hope, and depend upon Christ with a greater confidence, and wait upon Christ with more invincible patience?'

Now, if the soul be not mute and silent under the rod, how is it possible that it should ever hear the voice of the rod, or that it should ever hearken to the voice of every twig of the rod? The rod that is in the hands of earthly fathers has a voice—but children hear it not, they understand it not, until they are hushed and quiet, and brought to kiss it, and sit silently under it; no more shall we hear or understand the voice of the rod that is in our heavenly Father's hand, until we come to kiss it, and sit silently under it. But,

**Reason 2. Gracious souls should be mute and silent under their greatest afflictions and sharpest trials—that they may difference and distinguish themselves from the men of the world, who usually fret and fling, mutter or murmur, curse and swagger, when they are under the afflicting hand of God.**

"They will wander through the land, dejected and hungry. When they are famished, they will become enraged, and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. They will look toward the earth and see only distress, darkness, and the gloom of affliction, and they will be driven into thick darkness." Isaiah 8:21-22. Ah! how fretful and froward, how disturbed and distracted, how mad and forlorn—are these poor wretches under the rebukes of God! They look upward and downward this way and that way, on this side and on that, and finding no help, no support, no support, no deliverance, like Bedlams, yes, like incarnate devils—they fall upon cursing of God!

"We all roar like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice—but find none; for deliverance—but it is far away." Isaiah 59:11. They express their inward vexation and indignation by roaring like bears. When bears are robbed of their whelps, or taken in a pit, oh how dreadfully will they roar, rage, tear, and tumble! So when wicked people are fallen into the pit of affliction, oh how will they roar, rage, tear, and cry out! not of their sins—but of their punishments; as Cain, 'My punishment is greater than I am able to bear!' Gen. 4:13; Isaiah 51:20, 'Your sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net—they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of your God.' When the huntsman has taken the wild bull in his net, and so entangled him, that he is not able to wind himself out, oh, how fierce and furious will he be! how will he spend himself in struggling to get out! Such wild bulls are wicked men—when they are taken in the net of affliction.

It is said of Marcellus the Roman general, that he could not be quiet—neither conquered nor conqueror! It is so with wicked men; they cannot be quiet, neither full nor fasting, neither sick nor well, neither in wealth nor want, neither in bonds nor at liberty, neither in prosperity nor in adversity—"Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives. Her people all roar like

young lions, they growl like lion cubs." Jeremiah 51:37-38. When the lion roars, all the beasts of the field tremble, Amos 3:8. When the lion roars, many creatures that could outrun him are so amazed and astonished at the terror of his roar, that they are not able to stir from the place. Such roaring lions are wicked men, when they are under the smarting rod—"They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues—but they refused to repent and glorify him. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores—but they refused to repent of what they had done." Revelation 16:9-11

And therefore gracious souls have cause to be silent under their sorest trials, that they may difference and distinguish themselves from wicked men, who are 'like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt', Isaiah 57:20. The verb *rasha* signifies to make a stir, to be exceeding busy, unquiet, or troublesome. Ah! what a stir do wicked men make, when they are under the afflicting hand of God! Ah! the sea is restless and unquiet when there is no storm; it cannot stand still—but has its flux and reflex; so it is much more restless, when by tempest upon tempest it is made to roar and rage, to foam and cast up mire and dirt. The raging sea is a fit emblem of a wicked man, who is under God's afflicting hand.

Reason 3. A third reason why gracious souls should be silent and mute under their sharpest trials is, **that they may be conformable to Christ their head, who was dumb and silent under his sorest trials.**

"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth. Isaiah 53:7. Christ was tongue-tied under all his sorrows and sufferings—"He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; when reviled, He did not revile in return; when suffering, He did not threaten—but committed Himself to the One who judges justly." 1 Peter 2:22-23. Christ upon the cross did not read us a lecture of patience and silence—but he has also set us a copy or pattern of both, to be transcribed and imitated by us when we are under the smarting rod. It will be our sin and shame if we do not bear up with patience and silence

under all our sufferings, considering what an admirable copy Christ has set before us.

It is said of Antiochus, that before going to battle, he showed unto his elephants the blood of the grapes and mulberries—to provoke them the better to fight. So the Holy Spirit has set before us the injuries and abuses, the sorrows and sufferings, the pains and torments, the sweat and blood of our dearest Lord, and his invincible patience, and admirable silence under all—to provoke us and encourage us to imitate the Captain of our salvation, in patience and silence under all our sufferings.

Jerome having read the life and death of Hilarion—one that lived graciously and died comfortably—folded up the book, saying—Well! Hilarion shall be the champion that I will follow; his good life shall be my example, and his good death my precedent. Oh! how much more should we all say—We have read how Christ has been afflicted, oppressed, distressed, despised, persecuted, etc.; and we have read how speechless, how tongue-tied, how patient, and how silent he has been under all; oh! he shall be the copy which we shall write after, the pattern which we will walk by, the champion which we will follow! But, alas! alas! how rare is it to find a man that may be applauded with the eulogy of Salvian—an excellent disciple of a singular master. The heathens had this notion among them, as Lactantius reports, that the way to honor their gods was to be like them; and therefore some would be wicked, counting it a dishonor to their gods to be unlike to them. I am sure the way to honor our Christ, is in patience and silence to be like to Christ, especially when a smarting rod is upon our backs, and a bitter cup put into our hands.

Reason 4. The fourth reason why the people of God should be mute and silent under their afflictions, is this, **because it is ten thousand times a greater judgment and affliction, to be given to a fretful spirit, a froward spirit, a muttering spirit under an affliction—than it is to be afflicted.** This is both the devil's sin, and the devil's punishment. God is still afflicting, crossing and vexing him; and he is still a-fretting, repining, vexing, and rising up against God. No sin like the devil's sin, no punishment like the devil's punishment. A man were better to have all the afflictions of all the afflicted throughout the world at once upon him—than to be given up to a froward spirit—to a muttering,

murmuring heart under the least affliction. When you see a soul fretting, vexing, and stamping under the mighty hand of God, you see one of Satan's first-born, one that resembles him to the life. No child can be so much like the father, as this froward soul is like to the father of lies.

Though he has been in chains almost this six thousand years, yet he has never lain still one day, nor one night, no nor one hour in all this time—but is still a-fretting vexing, tossing and tumbling in his chains, like a princely bedlam. He is a lion—not a lamb; a roaring lion—not a sleepy lion; not a lion standing still—but a lion going up and down; he is not satisfied with the prey he has already gotten—but is restless in his designs to fill hell with souls, 1 Pet. 5:8. **He never lacks an apple for an Eve,** nor a grape for a Noah, nor a change of clothing for a Gehazi, nor a wedge of gold for an Achan, nor a crown for an Absalom, nor a bag of silver for a Judas, nor a world for a Demas. If you look into one company, there you shall find Satan a-dishing out his meat to every palate; if you look into another company, there you shall find him fitting a lace to every shoe; if you look into a third company, there you shall find him suiting a garment to every back. He is under wrath, and cannot but be restless. Here, with Jael, he allures poor souls in with milk—and murders them with a nail! There, with Joab, he embraces with one hand—and stabs with another! Here with Judas, he kisses—and betrays! And there, with the whore of Babylon, he presents a golden cup—with poison in it! He cannot be quiet, though his bolts be always on!

And the more unquiet any are under the rebukes of God, the more such resemble Satan—whose whole life is filled up with vexing and fretting against the Lord. Let not any think, says Luther, that the devil is now dead, nor yet asleep, for as he who keeps Israel, so he who hates Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps. But; in the next place,

Reason 5. A fifth reason why gracious souls should be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions and sharpest trials that do befall them is this—**because a holy, a prudent silence under afflictions, under miseries, does best capacitate and fit the afflicted for the receipt of miseries.** When the rolling bottle lies still, you may pour into it your sweetest or your strongest waters; when the rolling, tumbling soul lies still, then God can best pour into it the sweet waters of mercy, and the

strong waters of divine consolation. You read of the 'peaceable fruits of righteousness'—Heb. 12:11. 'Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous—but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby.' James 3:18, 'And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, by those who make peace.'

The still and quiet soul is like a ship that lies still and quiet in the harbor; you may take in what goods, what commodities you please, while the ship lies quiet and still—so when the soul is quiet and still under the hand of God, it is most fitted and advantaged to take in much of God, of Christ, of heaven, of the promises, of ordinances, and of the love of God, the smiles of God, the communications of God, and the counsel of God. But when souls are unquiet, they are like a ship in a storm, they can take in nothing.

Luther, speaking of God, says, God does not dwell in Babylon—but in Salem. Babylon signifies confusion, and Salem signifies peace. Now God dwells not in spirits that are unquiet and in confusion—but he dwells in peaceable and quiet spirits. Unquiet spirits can take in neither counsel nor comfort, grace nor peace, etc.—Psalm 77:2, 'My soul refused to be comforted.' The impatient patient will take down no cordials; he has no eye to see, nor hand to take, nor palate to relish, nor stomach to digest—anything that makes for his health and welfare. When the man is sick and froward, nothing will relieve him; the sweetest music will make no melody in his ears—"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.' Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage." Exodus 6:6-9.

The choicest cordials and comforts that heaven or earth could afford are here held forth to them—but they have no hand to receive them. Here Moses' lips drops honey-combs—but they can taste no sweetness in them.

Here the best of earth and the best of heaven is set before them—but their souls are shut up, and can receive nothing. Here is such ravishing music of paradise as might abundantly delight their hearts and please their ears—but they cannot hear. Here are soul-enlivening, soul-supporting, soul-strengthening, soul-comforting, soul-raising, and soul-refreshing words—but they cannot hearken to them—"Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage." They were under their anguish feverish fits, and so could neither hear nor see, taste nor take in—anything that might be mercy or a comfort to them. They were sick with impatience and discontent—and these humors being grown strong—nothing would work with them, nothing would agree with them. When people are under strong pangs of passion, they have no ears neither for reason nor piety.

Reason 6. A sixth reason why gracious souls should be silent under the smarting rod, is this, namely—**because it is fruitless, it is futile to strive, to contest or contend with God.** No man has ever got anything, by muttering or murmuring under the hand of God, except it has been more frowns, blows, and wounds. Such as will not lie quiet and still, when mercy has tied them with silken cords—justice will put them in iron chains! If *golden fetters* will not hold you, *iron fetters* shall! If Jonah will vex and fret and fling; justice will fling him overboard, to cool him, and quell him, and keep him prisoner in the whale's belly until he is vomited up, and his spirit made quiet before the Lord. What you get by struggling and grumbling—you may put in your eye, and weep it out when you are done—"But am I the one they are provoking? declares the Lord. Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame? Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: My anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground, and it will burn and not be quenched." Jeremiah 7:19-20. 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?' 1 Cor. 10:22. Zanchy observes these two things from these words:

1. That it is foolish to be provoking God to wrath, because he is stronger than we.
2. That though God be stronger than we, yet there are those who do

provoke him to wrath. And certainly there are none that do more provoke him than those who fume and fret when his hand is upon them!

Though the cup be bitter—yet it is put into your hand by your Father! Though the cross be heavy—yet he who has laid it on your shoulders will bear the heaviest end of it himself! Why, then, should you mutter? Shall bears and lions take blows and knocks from their keepers, and will you not take a few blows and knocks from the keeper of Israel? Why should the clay contend with the potter, or the creature with his creator, or the servant with his master, or weakness with strength, or a poor nothing creature with an omnipotent God? Can stubble stand before the fire? Can chaff abide before the whirlwind? Can a worm ward off the blow of the Almighty?

A froward and impatient spirit under the hand of God will but add chain to chain, cross to cross, yoke to yoke, and burden to burden. The more men tumble and toss in their feverish fits, the worse they distemper; and the longer it will be before the cure be effected. The easiest and the surest way of cure is to lie still and quiet until the poison of the distemper be sweat out. Where patience has its perfect work, there the cure will be certain and easy. When a man has his broken leg set, he lies still and quiet, and so his cure is easily and speedily wrought; but when a horse's leg is set, he frets and flings, he flounces and flies out, unjointing it again and again, and so his cure is the more difficult and tedious. Such Christians that under the hand of God are like the horse or mule—fretting and flinging—will but add to their own sorrows and sufferings, and put the day of their deliverance further off.

Reason 7. A seventh reason why Christians should be mute and silent under their afflictions is, **because hereby they shall cross and frustrate Satan's great design and expectation.** In all the afflictions he brought upon Job, Satan's design was not so much to make Job a beggar—as it was to make him a blasphemer; it was not so much to make Job outwardly miserable—as it was to make Job inwardly miserable, by occasioning him to mutter and murmur against the righteous hand of God, that so he might have had some matter of accusation against him to the Lord. Satan is the unwearied accuser of the brethren—Rev. 12:10, 'The accuser of the brethren is cast down, who

accuses them before our God day and night.' Satan is the great tempter and accuser between God and his children. **He has a mint constantly going in hell**, where, as an untiring mint-master, he is still a-coming and hammering out of accusations against the saints. First, he tempts and allures souls to sin—and then accuses them of those very sins he has tempted them to—that so he may disgrace them before God, and bring them, if it were possible, out of favor with God. And though he knows beforehand that God and his people are, by the bond of the covenant, and by the blood of the Redeemer—so closely united that they can never be severed—yet such is his rage and wrath, envy and malice, that he will endeavor that which he knows he shall never effect!

Could he but have made Job froward or fretting under the rod, he would have quickly carried the tidings to heaven, and have been so bold as to have asked God whether this was a posture befitting such a person, of whom God himself had given so glorious a character! Satan knows that there is more evil in the least sin—than there is in all the afflictions which can be inflicted upon a person; and if he could but have made a breach upon Job's patience, ah, how would he have insulted over God himself! Could he but have made Job a mutineer, he would quickly have pleaded for martial law to have been executed upon him; but Job, by remaining mute and silent under all his trials, puts Satan to a blush, and spoils all his projects at once. The best way to outwit the devil, is to be silent under the hand of God; he who mutters is foiled by him—but he who is silent overcomes him; and to conquer a devil is more than to conquer a world!

Reason 8. The eighth and last reason why Christians should be silent and mute under their sorest trials, is this—**that they may be conformable to those noble patterns that are set before them by other saints, who have been patient and silent under the smarting rod.** As Aaron, Lev. 10:3; so Eli, 1 Sam. 3:18; so David, 2 Sam. 16:7-13; so Job, chapter 1:21, 22; so Eliakim, Shebna, and Joab, Isaiah 36:11, 12. So those saints in that Acts 21:12-15; and that cloud of witnesses pointed at in Hebrews 12. Gracious examples are more awakening, more convincing, more quickening, more provoking, and more encouraging—than precepts; because in them we see that the exercise of grace and godliness is possible, though it be difficult.

When we see Christians, who are subject to like infirmities with ourselves, mute and silent under the afflicting hand of God—we see that it is possible that we may attain to the same noble temper of being—tonguetied under God's smarting rod. Certainly it is our greatest honor and glory, in this world, to be eyeing and imitating the highest and worthiest examples. What Plutarch said of Demosthenes, that he was excellent at *praising* the worthy acts of his ancestors—but not so good at *imitating* them—may be said of many in these days. Oh! they are very forward and excellent at praising the patience of Job—but not at imitating it; at praising the silence of Aaron—but not at imitating it; at praising David's silence—but not at imitating it; at praising Eli's muteness—but not at imitating it. It was the height of Caesar's glory to walk in the steps of Alexander; and of Selymus, a Turkish emperor, to walk in Caesar's steps; and of Themistocles to walk in Hiltiades's steps. Oh! how much more should we account it our highest glory to imitate the worthy examples of those worthies, of whom this world is not worthy! It speaks out much of God within, when men are striving to write after the fairest copies. And thus much for the reasons of the point. I come now to the,

## V. APPLICATION

You see, beloved, by what has been said, that it is the greatest duty and concernment of Christians to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and the sharpest trials that they meet with in this world. If this be so, then this truth looks sourly and wistly upon several sorts of people. As,

1. First, **This looks sourly and sadly upon murmurers, upon such as do nothing but mutter and murmur under the afflicting hand of God.** This was Israel's sin of old, and this is England's sin this day. Ah! what murmuring is there against God, what murmuring against instruments, and what murmuring against providences—is to be found among us! Some murmur at what they have lost, others murmur at what they fear they shall lose! Some murmur that they are no higher, others murmur because they are so low! Some murmur because such a party

rules, and others mutter because they themselves are not in the saddle! Some murmur because their mercies are not so great as others' are; some murmur because their mercies are not so many as others' are! Some murmur because they are afflicted, and others murmur because such and such are not afflicted as well as they. Ah, England, England! had you no more sins upon you—your murmuring would be enough to undo you, did not God exercise much pity and compassion towards you! But more of this hereafter, and therefore let this touch for the present suffice.

2. Secondly, **This truth looks sourly upon those who fret, chafe, and vex when they are under the afflicting hand of God.** Many, when they feel the rod to smart—ah, how they do fret and fume! Isaiah 8:21, 'Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God.' Prov. 19:3, 'A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord.' The heart may be fretful and froward when the tongue does not blaspheme. Folly brings man into misery, and misery makes man to fret. Man in misery is more apt to fret and chafe against the Lord, than to fret and chafe against his sin which has brought him into sufferings, 2 Kings 6:33, Psalm 37:1, 7, 8.

A fretful soul dares fly at God himself! When Pharaoh is troubled with the frets, he dares spit in the very face of God himself—'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?' Exod. 5:2. And when Jonah is in a fretting humour, he dares tell God to his face, 'that he does well to he angry,' Jonah 4:8. Jonah had done well if he had been angry with his sin—but he did very ill to be angry with his God! God will vex every vein in that man's heart, before he has done with him, who fumes and frets, because he cannot snap in sunder the cords with which he is bound, Ezek. 16:43. Sometimes good men are *sick of the frets*—but when they are, it costs them dear, as Job and Jonah found by experience. No man has ever got anything by his fretting and flinging, except it has been harder blows or heavier chains; therefore fret not when God strikes!

3. Thirdly, **This truth looks sourly upon those who charge God foolishly in the day of their adversity.** "Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?" Lamentations 3:39. He who has deserved a hanging—has no reason to charge the judge with cruelty if he

escapes with a whipping! And we who have deserved a damning—have no reason to charge God for being too severe, if we escape with a fatherly lashing! Rather than a man will take the blame, and quietly bear the shame of his own folly—he will put it off upon God himself, Gen. 3:12. It is a very evil thing, when we shall go to accuse God, that we may excuse ourselves and unblame ourselves; that we may blame our God, and lay the fault anywhere rather than upon our own hearts and ways.

Job was a man of a more noble spirit—Job 1:22, 'In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.' When God smote some men—then they presently charge God foolishly; they put him to bear the brunt and blame of all; but this will be bitterness in the end. When you are under affliction, you may humbly tell God that you feel his hand heavy; but you must not blame him because his hand is heavy. No man has ever yet been able to make good a charge against God; and will you be able? Surely not! By charging God foolishly in the day of your calamity, you do but provoke the Lord to charge you through and through, more fiercely and furiously, with his most deadly darts of renewed misery! It is your greatest wisdom to blame your sins, and lay your hand upon your mouth; for why should *folly* charge *innocence*? That man is far off from being mute and silent under the hand of God—who dares charge God himself for laying his hand upon him! But,

4. Fourthly, **This truth looks sourly and sadly upon such as will not be silent nor satisfied under the afflicting hand of God, except the Lord will give them the particular reasons why he lays his hand upon them.** Good men sometimes dash their feet against this stumbling stone—Jer. 15:18, 'Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? Will you be to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails?' **Though God has always reason for what he does—yet he is not bound to show us the reasons of his doings.** Jeremiah's passion was up, his blood was hot; and now nothing will silence nor satisfy him but the reasons why his pain was perpetual, and his wound incurable. So Job, chapter 7:20, 'Why have you set me as a mark against you, so that I am a burden to myself?' It is an evil and a dangerous thing to cavil at, or to question God's proceedings, who is the chief Lord of all, and who may do with his own what he pleases, Rom.

9:20, Dan. 4:3, 36. He is unaccountable and uncontrollable; and therefore who shall say—Why are you doing this? As no man may question God's right to afflict him, nor his righteousness in afflicting of him; so no man may question the reasons why he afflicts him. As no man can compel God to give a reason of his doings, so no man may dare to ask him the particular reasons of his doings.

Kings are not bound to give their subjects a reason of their doings; and shall we bind God to give us a reason of his doings, who is the King of kings and Lord of Lords, and whose will is the true and only rule of justice? Eccles. 8:4, Rev. 1:5.

The *general grounds and reasons* which God has laid down in his word why he afflicts his people, as—that is for their profit, Heb. 12:10; for the purging away of their sins, Isaiah 1:25; for the reforming of their lives, Psalm 119:67, 71; and for the saving of their souls, 1 Cor. 11:32—should work them to be silent and satisfied under all their afflictions; though God should never satisfy their curiosity in giving them an account of some more hidden causes which may lie secret in the abysses of his eternal knowledge and infallible will.

**Curiosity** is the spiritual drunkenness of the soul; and as the drunkard will never be satisfied, be the cup ever so deep, unless he see the bottom of it—so some curious Christians, whose souls are overspread with *the leprosy of curiosity*, will never be satisfied until they come to see the bottom and the most secret reasons of all God's dealings towards them. But they are fools in folio, who affect to know more than God would have them. Did not Adam's curiosity render him and his posterity fools in folio? And what pleasure can we take to see ourselves every day fools in print? As a man's eyes, by gazing at the sun, may grow dark and dim, and see less than otherwise he might; so many, by a curious prying into the secret reasons of God's dealings with them, come to grow so dark and dim, that they cannot see those plain reasons that God has laid down in his word why he afflicts and tries his children!

I have read of one Sir William Champney, who was the first man that ever built a turret on the top of his house—that he might the better overlook all his neighbors. But so it happened, that not long after he was struck

blind—so that he who would not be satisfied to see as others saw—but must see more than others—saw nothing at all, through the just judgment of God upon him! And so it is a just and righteous thing with God to strike such with spiritual blindness, who will not be satisfied with seeing the reasons laid down in the word why God afflicts them—but they must be curiously prying and searching into the hidden and more secret reasons of his severity towards them!

Ah, Christian! it is your wisdom and duty to sit silent and mute under the afflicting hand of God upon the account of revealed reasons, without making any curious inquiry into those more secret reasons which are locked up in the golden cabinet of God's own bosom! "The secret things belong to the Lord our God." Deuteronomy 29:29

5. Fifthly, **This truth looks sourly and sadly upon those who, instead of being silent and mute under their afflictions, use all sinful shifts and ways, to shift themselves out of their troubles;** who care not though they break with God, and break with men, and break with their own consciences—so long as they may but break off the chains that are upon them; who care not by what means the prison door is opened, so long as they may but escape; nor by what hands their bolts are knocked off, so long as they may be at liberty. Job 36:21, 'Beware of turning to evil, which you seem to prefer to affliction.' **He makes but an ill choice—who chooses sin rather than suffering!** And yet such an ill choice good men have sometimes made, when troubles have compassed them round about. Though no lion roars like that in a man's own bosom—conscience; yet some, to deliver themselves from troubles without, have set that lion a-roaring within! Some, to deliver themselves from outward tortures, have put themselves under inward torments. He purchases his freedom from affliction at too dear a rate—who buys it with the loss of a good name or a good conscience.

Now, because there is even in good men sometimes too great an aptness and proneness to sin and shift themselves out of afflictions, when they should rather be mute and silent under them, give me leave to lay down these **six considerations to prevent it:**

(1.) First **Consider, that there is infinitely more evil in the least**

**sin—than there is in the greatest miseries and afflictions which can possibly come upon you!** Yes, there is more evil in the least sin than there is in all the troubles that ever come upon the world; yes, than there is in all the miseries and torments of hell. The least sin is an offence to the great God; it is a wrong to the immortal soul; it is a breach of God's righteous law; it cannot be washed away but by the blood of Jesus; it can shut the soul out of heaven, and shut the soul up as a prisoner in hell forever and ever! The least sin is rather to be avoided and prevented—than the greatest sufferings. If this cockatrice be not crushed in the egg—it will soon become a serpent! Sin, if but thought on and pondered—will break out into action—action into custom—custom into habit—and then both body and soul are lost irrecoverably to all eternity! The least sin is very dangerous. Caesar was stabbed to death with a small needle; Herod was eaten up by small worms; Pope Adrian was choked with a gnat; a mouse is but little, yet kills an elephant if he gets up into his trunk; a scorpion is little, yet able to sting a lion to death; though the leopard be great, yet he is poisoned with a head of garlic; the least spark may consume the greatest house; the least leak will sink the greatest ship; a whole arm has been gangrened by a pick of the little finger; a little opened door may betray the greatest city; a pinch of poison diffuses itself into all parts, until it strangles the vital spirits, and turns out the soul from the body. If the serpent can but wriggle in his tail by an evil thought, he will soon make a surprise of the soul—as you see in that sad instance of Adam and Eve.

'The trees of the forest,' says one in a parable, 'held a solemn parliament, wherein they addressed the innumerable wrongs which **the axe** had done them. They therefore made an act, that no tree should hereafter lend the axe-head even a twig. The axe-head traveled up and down the forest, begging wood from the cedar, oak, ash, elm, even of the poplar; but not one would lend him a chip. At last he asked for just a small twig from each the trees—so he could cut down the briars and bushes—alleging, that such shrubs did but suck away the juice of the ground, and hinder the growth, and obscure the glory of the beautiful and goodly trees. Upon these terms, the trees all agreed to give him a twig. The axe-head pretends a thorough reformation—but behold a sad deformation, for when he had got the twigs made into a handle—down went the cedar, oak,

ash, elm, and all that had stood in his way!

Such are the subtle reaches of sin; it will promise to remove the briars of afflictions and troubles, which hinder the soul of that juice, sweetness, comfort, delight, and contentment, which otherwise it might enjoy. Oh! do but now yield a little to sin, and instead of removing your troubles—it will cut down your peace, your hopes, your comforts, yes, it will cut down your precious soul! What is the scratch on the hand—to a stab at the heart? No more are the greatest afflictions to the least sins! And therefore, Christians, never use sinful shifts to shift yourselves out of troubles—but rather be mute and silent under them, until the Lord shall work out your deliverance from them. But,

(2.) Secondly, **Consider it is an impossible thing for any to sin themselves out of their troubles.** Abraham, Job, and Jonah attempted it—but could not effect it. The devils have experienced this for nearly this six thousand years. They had not been now in chains—if they could have sinned themselves out of their chains. Could the damned in hell, sin themselves out of everlasting burning, there would have been none now a-roaring in that devouring unquenchable fire! Isaiah 33:14. Hell would have no inhabitants, could they but sin themselves out of it! Ah! Christians, devils and damned spirits shall as soon sin themselves out of hell—as you shall be able to sin yourselves out of your afflictions. Christians! you shall as soon stop the sun from running her course; fit the sea in a nut-shell; compass the earth with one step; and raise the dead at your pleasure—as ever you shall be able to sin yourselves out of your sufferings! And therefore it is better to be silent and quiet under them—than to attempt that which is impossible to accomplish. This second consideration will receive further confirmation by the next particular—

(3.) Thirdly, **As it is an IMPOSSIBLE thing, so it is a very DAMAGING, a very DANGEROUS thing—to attempt to sin yourselves out of your troubles;** for by attempting to sin yourselves out of your trouble—you will sin yourselves into many troubles, as Jonah and Jacob did; and by laboring to sin yourselves out of less troubles—you will sin yourselves into greater troubles, as Saul did; and by endeavoring to sin yourselves from under outward troubles—you will sin yourselves under inward troubles and distresses, which are the sorest and saddest of

all troubles. Some there have been, who, by laboring to sin themselves out of their present sufferings, have sinned themselves under such horrors and terrors of conscience, so that they could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep—but have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves.

Cyprian speaks of those who, forsaking the faith to avoid sufferings, were given over to be possessed by evil spirits, and died fearfully. O man! you do not know what deadly sin, what deadly temptation, what deadly judgment, what deadly stroke—you may fall under—if you attempt to sin yourself out of troubles. What is it to take Venice—and then to be hanged at the gates thereof? It is better to be silent and mute under your afflictions, than by using sinful shifts to sin yourself under greater afflictions.

(4.) Fourthly, **Consider it is a very ignoble and unworthy thing to go to—to sin yourselves out of your troubles and straits.** It argues a poor, a low, a weak, a dastardly, and an effeminate spirit, to use base shifts to shuffle yourselves out of your troubles. Men of noble, courageous, and magnanimous spirits will disdain and scorn it. As you may see in the three Hebrew children, David, and those worthies, in that 11th of the Hebrews, of whom 'this world was not worthy.' Jerome writes of a brave woman, who, being upon the rack, bade her persecutors do their worst, for she was resolved to die rather than lie. And the prince of Conde, being taken prisoner by Charles the Ninth, king of France, and put to his choice whether he would go to a Catholic mass—or be put to death—or suffer perpetual imprisonment; his noble answer was, that by God's help he would never choose the first; and for either of the latter, he left to the king's pleasure and God's providence.

A soul truly noble will sooner part with all, than the peace of a good conscience. Thus blessed Hooper desired rather to be discharged of his church office, than yield to certain unbiblical ceremonies.

I have read of Marcus Arethusus, all eminent servant of the Lord in gospel-work, who, in the time of Constantine, had been the cause of overthrowing an idol temple; but Julian, coming to be emperor, commanded the people of that place to build it up again. All were ready

so to do, only he refused it. Whereupon his own people, to whom he had preached, fell upon him, stripped off all his clothes, then abused his naked body, and gave it up to children and school-boys to be lanced with their penknives. And when all this would not change his mind, they tied him up, having his naked body poured all over with honey, that so he might be bitten and stung to death by flies and wasps, while baking under the sun! All this cruelty they exercised upon him, because he would not give anything towards the rebuilding of that idol temple! No, they went so far, that if he would but give one halfpenny towards the temple, they would release him. But he refused it with a noble Christian disdain, though the advancing of an halfpenny might have saved his life. And in so doing, he did but live up to that noble principle that most commend—but few practice, that is—that Christians must choose rather to suffer the worst of torments, than commit the least of sins, whereby God should be dishonored, his name blasphemed, true religion reproached, profession scorned, weak saints discouraged, men's consciences wounded, and their souls endangered.

Now tell me, Christians, is it not better to be silent and mute under your sorest trials and troubles, than to sin, and shift yourselves out of them—and so proclaim to all the world, that you are people of very low, poor, and ignoble spirits? But

(5) Fifthly, **Consider—sinful shifts and means, God has always cursed and blasted.** Achan's golden wedge was but a wedge to cleave him—and his garments a shroud to shroud him. Ahab purchases a vineyard with the blood of the owner—but presently it was watered with his own blood, according to the word of the Lord. Gehazi must needs have the silver and two changes of clothing—obtained with a lie, I say with a lie. Well! he has them, and he has with them a leprosy which cleaved to him and his children forever, 2 Kings 5:22-27. With those very hands that Judas took money to betray his master—with those very hands he fitted a noose to hang himself. The rich and wretched glutton fared sumptuously, and lived opulently every day—but the next news you hear of him, is of his being in hell, crying out for a single drop of water, who, when he was on earth, would not give a crumb.

The coal that the eagle carried from the altar to her nest, set all on fire.

Crassus did not long enjoy the fruit of his covetousness, for the Parthians capturing him—poured melted gold down his throat. Ah! Christians, Christians, is it not far better to sit quiet and silent under your afflictions, than to use such sinful shifts and means which God will certainly blast and curse? But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, Consider this, that **your very attempting to sin and shift yourselves out of troubles and afflictions, will cost you dearly.** It will cost you many prayers and tears, many sighs, many groans, many gripes, many terrors, and many horrors. Peter, by attempting to sin himself out of trouble, sins himself into a sea of sorrows —Mat. 26:75, 'He went forth and wept bitterly.'

Clement observes, that every time he heard a cock crow, he would fall upon his knees and weep bitterly. Others say, that his face was furrowed with continual tears. Were Abraham, David, Jacob, and Jonah now alive, they would tell you, that they have found this to be a truth in their own experience. Ah! Christians, it is far better to be quiet and silent under your sufferings, than to pay so dear for attempting to sin and shift yourselves out of your sufferings. A man will not buy gold too dear, and why then should he buy himself out of troubles at too dear a rate?

## Exhortation

But now I shall come to that use that I intend to stand most upon, and that is, a use of **EXHORTATION**. Seeing it is the great duty and concernment of Christians to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providence, and sharpest trials which they meet with in this world—oh that I could prevail with you, Christians, to mind this great duty, and to live up and live out this necessary truth. I now propound **twelve considerations, to engage your souls to be mute and silent under your greatest troubles and your saddest trials.**

1. **Consider first, the greatness, sovereignty, majesty, and dignity of God—and let that move you to silence, Jer. 10:7; 5:22.** "Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Psalm 46:8-10. Who can cast his eye upon the greatness of God, the majesty of God, and not sit still before him? Zeph. 1:7, 'Hold your peace at the presence of the Lord God.' Oh, chatter not, murmur not, fret not—but stand mute before him! Shall the child be hushed before his father, the servant before the master, the subject before his prince, and the guilty person before the judge, when he majestically rises off his judgment seat, and composes his countenance into an aspect of terror and severity, that his sentence may fall upon the offender with the greater dread? Shall the sheep be hushed before the wolf, birds before the hawk, and all the beasts of the field before the lion? And shall not we be hushed and quiet before him, who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Rev. 5:5. God is mighty in power, and mighty in counsel, and mighty in working, and mighty in punishing; therefore be silent before him.

It appears that God is a mighty God, by the epithet that is added unto *El*, which is *Gibbon*—importing that he is a God of prevailing might. In Daniel he is called El Elim—the mighty of mighties. Moses magnifying of his might, says, 'Who is like unto you among the gods?' Now certainly this

epithet should be a mighty motive to work souls to that which Habakkuk persuaded to—Hab. 2:20, 'The Lord is in his holy temple—let all the earth keep silence before him.' Upon this very consideration Moses commands Israel to hold their peace, Exod. 14:13, 14.

It is reported of Augustus the emperor, and likewise of Tamerlane that warlike Scythian, that in their eyes sat such a rare majesty, that many in talking with them, and often beholding of them, have become speechless. O my brethren, shall not the brightness and splendor of the majesty of the great God, whose sparkling glory and majesty dazzles the eyes of angels, and makes those princes of glory stand mute before him—move you much more to silence, to hold your peace, and lay your hands upon your mouths. Surely yes! But,

2. Secondly, **Consider, That all your afflictions, troubles, and trials shall work for your good**—Rom. 8:28, 'And we know that all things shall work together for good to those who love God.' Why then should you fret, fling, fume—seeing God designs you good in all? The bee sucks sweet honey out of the bitterest herbs; so God will by afflictions teach his children to suck sweet knowledge, sweet obedience, and sweet experiences, sweet humility—out of all the bitter afflictions and trials he exercises them with. That **scouring** and **rubbing**, which frets others, shall make them shine the brighter; and that **weight** which keeps others crushed, shall but make them, like the palm tree, grow better and higher; and that **hammer** which knocks others all in pieces, shall but knock them the nearer to Christ, the corner stone.

Stars shine brightest in the darkest night; torches give the best light when beaten; grapes yield most wine when most pressed; spices smell sweetest when pounded; vines are the better for bleeding; gold looks the brighter for scouring; juniper smells sweetest in the fire; camomile, the more you tread it the more you spread it; the salamander lives best in the fire; the Jews were best, when most afflicted; the Athenians would never mend, until they were in mourning. Christ's cross, says Luther, is no letter in the book, and yet, says he, it has taught me more than all the letters in the book. Afflictions are the saints' best benefactors to heavenly affections. Where afflictions hang heaviest, corruptions hang loosest. And grace that is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose leaves, is then most fragrant when

the fire of affliction is put under to distill it out. Grace shines the brighter for scouring, and is most glorious when it is most clouded.

Pliny in his Natural History writes of certain trees growing in the Red Sea, which being battered by the roughness of the waves, stand like a rock, immovable. In the sea of afflictions, God will make his people stand like a rock; they shall be immovable and invincible, and the more the waves of afflictions beat upon them, the better they shall be, the more they shall thrive in grace and godliness.

Now how should this engage Christians to be mute and silent under all their troubles and trials in this world, considering that they shall all work for their good! God chastises our carcasses—to heal our consciences; he afflicts our bodies—to save our souls; he gives us gall and wormwood here—that the pleasures which are at his right hand may be more sweet hereafter; here he lays us upon a bed of thorns, that we may look and long more for that easy bed of down—his bosom in heaven.

As there is a curse wrapped up in the best things he gives the wicked—so there is a blessing wrapped up in the worst things he brings upon his own, Psalm 25:10, Deut. 26:16. As there is a curse wrapped up in a wicked man's health—so there is a blessing wrapped up in a godly man's sickness; as there is a curse wrapped up in a wicked man's strength—so there is a blessing wrapped up in a godly man's weakness; as there is a curse wrapped up in a wicked man's wealth—so there is a blessing wrapped up in a godly man's wants; as there is a curse wrapped up in a wicked man's honor—so there is a blessing wrapped up in a godly man's reproach; as there is a curse wrapped up in all a wicked man's mercies—so there is a blessing wrapped up in all a godly man's crosses, losses, and changes! Why then should he not sit mute and silent before the Lord? But,

3. Thirdly, **Consider, That a holy silence in that excellent precious grace—which lends a hand of support to every grace,** Rom. 15:4. Silence is the helper of all other virtues; it lends a hand to faith, a hand to hope, a hand to love, a hand to humility, a hand to self-denial etc. A holy silence has its influences upon all other graces that are in the soul; it causes the rosebuds of grace to blossom and bud forth.

Silence is a grace that keeps a man gracious in all conditions. In every condition silence is a Christian's right hand; in **prosperity**, it bears the soul up under all the envy, hatred, malice, and censures of the world; in **adversity**, it bears the soul up under all the neglect, scorn, and contempt that a Christian meets with in the world. It makes every bitter, sweet; every burden, light; and every yoke, easy. And this the very heathen seemed to intimate in placing the image of Angeronia with the mouth bound, upon the altar of Volupia to show that silence under sufferings was the ready way to attain true comfort, and make every bitter, sweet. No man honors God, nor no man justifies God at so high a rate—as he who lays his hand upon his mouth, when the rod of God is upon his back. But,

4. Fourthly, To move you to silence under your sorest and your sharpest trials, **consider, That you have deserved greater and heavier afflictions than those you are under**, Lam. 3:39; Micah 7:7-9. Has God taken away one mercy? You have deserved to be stripped of all. Has he taken away the delight of your eyes? He might have taken away the delight of your soul. Are you under outward wants? You have deserved to be under outward and inward together. Are you cast upon a sick bed? You have deserved a bed in hell. Are you under that ache and that pain? You have deserved to be under all aches and pains at once. Has God chastised you with whips? You have deserved to be chastised with scorpions, 1 Kings 12:14. Are you fallen from the highest pinnacle of honor to be the scorn and contempt of men? You have deserved to be scorned and condemned by God and angels. Are you under a severe whipping? You have deserved an utter damning. Ah Christian! let but your eyes be fixed upon your demerits, and your hands will be quickly upon your mouths; whatever is less than a final separation from God, whatever is less than hell, is mercy; and therefore you have cause to be silent under the sharpest dealings of God with you. But,

5. Fifthly, **Consider, a quiet silent spirit is of great esteem with God.** God sets the greatest value upon people of a quiet spirit—1 Peter 3:4. 'your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.' A quiet spirit is a spark of the divine nature, it is a ray, a beam of glory; it is a heaven-born spirit. No

man is born with a holy silence in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. This is a flower of paradise; it is a precious gem which God makes very great estimate of. A quiet spirit speaks a man most like to God; it capacitates a man for communion with God; it renders a man most serviceable to God; and it obliges a man to most accurate walking with God. A meek and quiet spirit is an incorruptible ornament, much more valuable than gold.

(1.) First, There is a **mutual** quietness, which proceeds from a good temper and constitution of body.

(2.) Secondly, There is a **moral** quietness, which proceeds from good education and breeding, which flows from good injunctions, instructions, and examples.

(3.) Thirdly, There is an **artificial** quietness; some have an art to imprison their passions, and to lay a *law of restraint* upon their anger and wrath, when they are all in a flame within—as you may see in Cain, Esau, Absalom, and Joab, who for a time cast a thick cloak over their malice, when their hearts were set on fire of hell. So Domitian would seem to love them best, whom he willed least should live.

(4.) Fourthly, There is a **gracious** quietness, which is of the Spirit's infusion, Gal. 5. Now this quietness of spirit, this spiritual frame of heart, is of great price in the sight of God. God values it above the world, and therefore who would not covet it more than the world, yes, more than life itself? Certainly the great God sets a great price upon nothing but that which is of an invaluable price; what stretching, struggling, and striving is there for those things that the great ones of the earth do highly prize! Ah! what stretching of wits, interests, and consciences is there this day, to gain and hold up that which justice will cast down! How much better would it be, if all people would in good earnest struggle and strive, even as for life, after a quiet and silent spirit, which the great and glorious God sets so great a price upon! This is a pearl of greatest price, and happy is he who purchases it, though it were with the loss of all. But,

**6. Sixthly, Consider, That if you do not sit silent and quiet under your greatest troubles and your sorest trials, you will be found**

**fighters against your own prayers.** How often have you prayed that the will of God may be done, yes, that it may be done on the earth, as the angels, those glistening courtiers, those princes of glory, do it now in heaven! Mat. 6:10. When troubles and afflictions come upon you, the will of God is done, his will is accomplished. Why then should you fret, fling, and fume, and not rather quietly lie down in his will—whose will is a perfect will, a just and righteous will, a wise will, an overruling will, an infinite will, a sovereign will, a holy will, an immutable will, an uncontrollable will, an omnipotent will, and an eternal will? Certainly you will but add affliction to affliction, lay fighting against your own prayers—by vexing and fretting yourselves when the will of God is done.

It is sad to see a man to fight against his friends; it is sadder to see him fight against his relations; it is saddest of all to see him fight against his prayers. And yet this every Christian does, who murmurs and mutters when the rod of God is upon him. Some there be that pray against their prayers, as Augustine, who prayed for patience with a proviso—Lord! give me patience—but not yet! And some there are who fight against their prayers, as those who pray that the will of God may be done, and yet when his will is done upon them, they are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest—they are still fretting against the Lord. Ah, Christians! have you not sins to fight against, and temptations to fight against, and a devil to fight against, yes, a whole world to fight against? Why then should you be found fighting against your own prayers? But,

7. Seventhly, **Consider, A holy silence under the heaviest burdens, the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences and changes—will make all tolerable and easy to a Christian.** The silent soul can hear a burden—without a burden. Those burdens and troubles that will break a froward man's back—will not so much as break a silent man's sleep. Those afflictions which lie as heavy weights upon a murmurer—will lie as light as a feather upon a mute Christian, Micah 7:7-10, Psalm 92:1, 6. That bed of sorrow, which is as a bed of thorns to a fretful soul—will be as a bed of down to a silent soul. A holy silence unstings every affliction; it takes off the weight of every burden; it adds sweet to every bitter; it changes dark nights into sunshiny days, and terrible storms into desirable calms. **The smallest sufferings will**

**easily vanquish an unquiet spirit—but a quiet spirit will as easily triumph over the greatest sufferings.** As little mercies are great mercies; so great sufferings are but little sufferings—in the eye of a silent soul. The silent soul never complains that his affliction is too great, his burden too heavy, his cross too weighty, his sufferings too many; silence makes him victorious over all. Therefore, as ever you would have heavy afflictions light, and be able to bear a burden without a burden—labor as for life after this holy silence!

8. Eighthly, **Consider that a holy silence under afflictions will be your best armor against those temptations, which afflictions may expose you to.** Times of afflictions often prove times of great temptations, and therefore afflictions are called temptations—James 1:12, 'Blessed is the man which endures temptations, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life,' etc. The Greek word *peirasmon*, is to be understood of temptations of probation, of afflicting temptations, and not of temptations of suggestion, of seduction; for they are not to be endured—but resisted and abhorred, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:9. Now, affliction is called temptation,

(1.) Because, as temptation tries what metal a Christian is made of, so do afflictions.

(2.) Because, as Satan usually has a great hand in all the temptations that come upon us—so he has a great hand in all the afflictions which befall us; as you see in that great instance of Job.

(3.) Because, as temptations drive men to God, 2 Cor. 12:7, 8, so do afflictions, Isaiah 26:16, Hosea 5:15.

(4.) But mainly because Satan chooses times of afflictions as the fittest seasons for his temptations. When Job was severely afflicted in his estate, children, wife, life—then Satan lets fly, and makes his fiercest assaults upon him. Now, Satan tempts him to entertain hard thoughts of God; to distrust, to impatience, to murmuring and muttering. As when Israel was feeble, faint, and weary—Amalek assaulted them, and smote them Deut. 25:17, 18; so when Christians are most afflicted, then usually they are most tempted.

Luther found this by experience when he said, I am without set upon by all the world, and within by the devil and all his demons. Satan is a cowardly and loves to strike us and trample upon us when afflictions have cast us down. When besieged towns, cities, and castles are in greatest straits and troubles—then the besiegers make their fiercest assaults; so when Christians are under the greatest straits and trials—then Satan assaults them most, like a roaring lion. Now, silence under afflictions is the best antidote and preservative against all those temptations which afflictions lay us open to. Silence in afflictions is a Christian's impregnable armor; it is that shield that no spear or dart of temptation can pierce. While a Christian lies silently under the rod, he is safe. Satan may tempt him—but he will not conquer him; he may assault him—but he cannot vanquish him. Satan may entice him to use sinful shifts to shift himself out of trouble—but he will choose rather to die, yes, die, in trouble, than get out upon Satan's terms. But,

9. Ninthly, **Consider, That holy silence under afflictions and trials will give a man a quiet and peaceable possession of his own soul**—'In patience possess your souls', Luke 21:19. Now, next to the possession of God, the possession of a man's own soul is the greatest mercy in this world. A man may possess honors, and riches, and dear relations and the favor and assistance of friends under his trials—but he will never come to a possession of his own soul under his troubles until he comes to be silent, and to lay his hand upon his mouth. Now what are all earthly possessions to the possession of a man's own soul? He who possesses himself possesses all; he who possesses not himself possesses nothing at all. He possesses not the use, the sweet, the comfort, the good, the blessing of anything he enjoys—who enjoys not himself. That man who is not master of himself—he is a master of nothing. Holy silence gives a man the greatest mastery over his own spirit; and mastery over a man's own spirit is the greatest mastery in the world, Prov. 16:32.

The Egyptian goddess they paint upon a rock standing in the sea, where the waves come roaring and dashing upon her, with this motto—'Storms shall not move me'. A holy silence will give a man such a quiet possession of his own soul, that all the storms of afflictions shall not move him; it will make him stand like a rock in a sea of troubles. Let a man but quietly

possess himself, and troubles will never trouble him. But,

10. Tenthly, **Consider the commands and instructions that God in his word has laid upon you to be silent, to be mute and quiet, under all the troubles, trials, and changes that have or may pass upon you**—"Let all people be silent before the Lord, for He is coming from His holy dwelling." Zechariah 2:13. Isaiah 51:1, 'Keep silence before me, O islands.' Hab. 2:20, 'The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.' Amos 5:13, 'Therefore, the wise person will keep silent at such a time, for the days are evil.' Psalm 44:10, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' Psalm 4:4, 'Commune with your heart, and be still.' Exod. 14:13, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of God.' Job 37:14, 'Hearken unto this, O Job; stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.'

It is a dangerous thing for us to neglect one of his commands, who by another is able to command us into nothing, or into hell at pleasure. To act or run cross to God's express command, though under pretense of revelation from God, is as much as a man's life is worth, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings 13:24, etc. Divine commands must be put in speedy execution, without denying or delaying, without debating or disputing the difficulties that may attend our subjection to them. God's commands are spiritual, holy, just, and good; and therefore to be obeyed without muttering or murmurings. Divine commands are backed with the strongest reason, and attended with the highest encouragements.

Shall the servant readily obey the commands of his master, the subject the commands of his prince, the soldier the commands of his general, the child the commands of his father, the wife the commands of her husband—and shall not a Christian as readily obey the commands of his Christ? No, shall vain men readily and willingly obey the sinful and senseless commands of men, and shall not we be willing to obey the commands of God? "Now Absalom commanded his young men 'Watch Amnon until he is in a good mood from the wine. When I order you to strike Amnon, then kill him. Don't be afraid. Am I not the one who has commanded you? Be strong and courageous!' So Absalom's young men did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded." 2 Samuel 13:28-29 They made no bones of obeying the bloody commands of Absalom, against all law, reason, and

religion.

I have read of one Johannes Abbas who willingly fetched water from two miles away every day for a whole year, to pour upon a dry stick—upon the bare command of his priest.

I have also read of the old kings of Peru, that they were used to use a tassel or fringe made of red wool, which they wore upon their heads, and when they sent any governor to rule as viceroy in any part of their country, they delivered unto him one of the threads of the tassel, and for one of those simple threads he was as much obeyed as if he had been the king himself. Now, shall one single thread be more forcible to draw infidels to obedience, than all those golden commands, last cited, shall be of force to draw you to be quiet and silent under the troubles and changes you meet with in this world? The Lord forbid!

Shall carnal and wicked people be so ready and willing to comply with the bloody, and senseless, and superstitious commands of their superiors? And shall not Christians be more ready and willing to comply with the commands of the great God, whose commands are all just and equal, and whose will is the perfect rule of righteousness. The chief reason of obedience is the authority of the Lord—not the utility of the servant. Ah, Christians! when your hearts begin to fret and fume under the smarting rod, charge one of those commands last cited upon your hearts; and if they mutter, charge another of those commands upon your hearts; and if after this, they vex and murmur, charge another of those commands upon your hearts; and never leave charging and rubbing those commands one after another upon your hearts, until you are brought to lay your hands upon your mouths, and to sit silent before the Lord under your greatest straits and your sorest trials.

11. Eleventhly, **Consider, That mercy is nearest, deliverance and salvation is at hand—when a Christian stands still, when he sits quiet and silent under his greatest troubles and his sorest trials.** In Exodus 14, they were in very great straits. Pharaoh with a mighty army was behind them, the Red Sea before them, mountains on each side of them and no visible means to deliver them. But now they stand still to see the salvation of the Lord, ver. 13, and within a few hours

their enemies are destroyed, and they are gloriously delivered, ver. 24, et seq.

Psalm 39:9, David is dumb, he sits mute under his sharp afflictions; but if you look to the second and third verses of the fortieth Psalm, you shall find mercy draw near to him and work salvation for him. 'I waited patiently for the Lord, and He turned to me and heard my cry for help. He brought me up from a desolate pit, out of the muddy clay, and set my feet on a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.' Psalm 40:1-3.

And so when Absalom has made a great conspiracy against him, and his subjects fell off from him and he was forced to flee for his life, David's spirit was quiet and calm. "Then the king instructed Zadok, 'Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the Lord's eyes, He will bring me back and allow me to see both it and its dwelling place. However, if He should say, 'I do not delight in you,' then here I am—He can do with me whatever pleases Him.'" 2 Samuel 15:25-26.

And the same calmness and quietness of spirit was upon him when Shimei bitterly cursed him, and railed upon him, 2 Samuel 16:5-14; and within a few days, as you may see in the two following chapters, the conspirators are destroyed, and David's throne more firmly established. Mercy is always nearest when a man can in quietness possess his own soul. Salvation is at hand when a Christian comes to lay his hand upon his mouth. Mercy will be upon the wing, loving-kindness will ride quickly to put a period to that man's troubles, who sits silent in the day of his sorrows and sufferings. Ah, Christians! as you would have mercy near, as you would see to the end of your afflictions, as you would have deliverance come flying upon the wings of the wind—sit mute and silent under all your troubles. As wine was then nearest when the water-pots were filled with water; even to the brim; so when the heart is fullest of quietness and calmness, then is the wine of mercy, the wine of deliverance, nearest.

12. The twelfth and last motive to work you to silence under your greatest trials is this, **seriously consider the heinous and dangerous nature of murmuring.** Now that you may, let me propose these

following particulars to your most sober consideration.

(1.) First, **Consider that murmuring speaks out many a root of bitterness to be strong in your soul**, Heb. 3:12. Murmuring speaks out sin in its power, and corruption upon its throne, Heb. 12:1. As holy silence argues true grace, much grace, yes, grace in its strength and in its lively vigor; so murmuring, muttering under the hand of God, argues much sin, yes, a heart full of sin; it speaks out a heart full of self-love, Exod. 15:24; 16:7, 8; and full of slavish fears, Numb. 13:32, 33; 14:1-3; and full of ignorance, John 6:41, 42; and full of pride and unbelief, Psalm 106—'yes, they despised the pleasant land,'—there is their pride. 'They believed not in his word'—there is their unbelief. What follows? They murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of God. They were sick of the sullens, and preferred Egypt before Canaan, a wilderness before a paradise. As in the first chaos there were the seeds of all creatures, so in the murmurer's heart there is not only the seeds of all sin—but a lively operation of all sin. Sin is become mighty in the hearts of murmurers, and none but an almighty God can root it out. Those roots of bitterness have so spread and strengthened themselves in the hearts of murmurers, that everlasting strength must put in, or they will be undone forever, Isaiah 26:4. But,

(2.) Secondly, **consider, That the Holy Spirit has set a brand of infamy upon murmurers.** He has stigmatized them as ungodly people—Jude 16, 16, 'To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' But who are these ungodly sinners? 'They are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts,' etc.' ver. 16. When Christ comes to execute judgment upon ungodly ones, murmurers shall be set in the front, they shall experience the fierceness of his wrath and the greatness of his wrath. The front, you know, is first assaulted, and most strongly assaulted. Christ will bend all his power and strength against murmurers; his little finger shall be heavier upon them, than his loins shall be upon others, 1 Kings 12:11, 14. Other sinners shall be chastised with whips—but ungodly murmurers shall be chastised with scorpions. If you can rejoice in that black character of ungodly sinners, be

murmurers still; if not, cease from murmurings.

Where murmuring is in its reign, in its dominion—there you may speak and write that person as ungodly. Let murmurers make what profession they will of godliness, yet if murmuring keeps the throne in their hearts—Christ will deal with them at last as ungodly sinners. A man may be denominated ungodly, as well from his murmuring, if he lives under the dominion of it, as from his drunkenness, swearing, whoring, lying, stealing, etc. A murmurer is an ungodly man, he is an ungodlike man; no man on earth more unlike to God than the murmurer; and therefore no wonder if when Christ comes to execute judgment, he deals so severely and terribly with him.

In the wars of Tamberlain, one having found a great pot of gold, that was hid in the earth, he brought it to Tamberlain, who asked whether it had his father's stamp upon it? But when he saw that it had not his father's stamp—but the Roman stamp upon it, he would not receive it—but cast it away. The Lord Jesus, when he shall come with all his saints to execute judgment, Oh! he will not receive murmurers; no, he will cast them away forever, because they have not his Father's stamp upon them. Ah, souls! souls! as you would not go up and down this world with a badge of ungodliness upon you—take heed of murmuring.

(3). Thirdly, **Consider that murmuring is the mother-sin**; it is the mother of harlots, the mother of all abominations; a sin that breeds many other sins, that is, disobedience, contempt, ingratitude, impatience, distrust, rebellion, cursing, carnality. Yes, it charges God with folly, yes, with blasphemy, Num. 16:41, 17:10, Judges 17:2. The language of a murmuring, a muttering soul is this—Surely God might have done this sooner, and that wiser, and the other thing better, etc. As the river Nilus brings forth many crocodiles; and the scorpion brings forth many serpents at one birth, so murmuring is a sin that breeds and brings forth many sins at once. Murmuring is like the monster hydra; cut off one head, and many will rise up in its place. Oh! therefore, bend all your strength against this mother-sin.

As the king of Syria said to his captains, 'Fight neither with small nor great—but only with the king of Israel', 1 Kings 22:31, so say I, Fight not

so much against this sin or that—but fight against your murmuring, which is a mother-sin. Make use of all your Christian armor, make use of all the ammunition of heaven, to destroy the mother, and in destroying of her, you will destroy the daughters! Eph. 6:10, 11. When Goliath was slain, the Philistines fled. When a general in an army is cut off, the common soldiers are easily and quickly routed and destroyed. So, destroy but murmuring, and you will quickly destroy disobedience, ingratitude, impatience, distrust, etc. Oh, kill this mother-sin—that it may never kill your soul.

I have read of Sennacherib, that after his army was destroyed by an angel, Isaiah 37, and he returned home to his own country, he inquired of one—what he thought the reason might be why God so favored the Jews? He answered that there was one Abraham, their father, that was willing to sacrifice his son to death at the command of God, and that ever since that time God favored that people. Well, said Sennacherib, if that be so, I have two sons, and I will sacrifice them both to death, if that will procure their God to favor me; which, when his two sons heard, they, as the story goes, slew their father, Isaiah 37:38, choosing rather to kill than to be killed. So do you choose rather to kill this mother-sin than to be killed by it, or by any of those vipers that are brought forth by it, Psalm 137:8, 9.

(4.) Fourthly, **Consider that murmuring is a God-provoking sin**; it is a sin which provokes God not only to afflict—but also to destroy a people—Num. 14:27-29, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmurs against me? I have heard the murmuring of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, says the Lord, as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you. In this desert your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me.' 1 Cor. 10:10, 'Neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer.' All our murmurings do but provoke the Lord to strike us and destroy us.

I have read of Caesar, that, having prepared a great feast for his nobles and friends, it so fell out that the day appointed was extreme bad weather, that nothing could be done to the honor of their meeting; whereupon he was so displeased and enraged, that he commanded all

those who had bows to shoot up their arrows at Jupiter, their chief god, as in defiance of him for that rainy weather; which, when they did, their arrows fell short of heaven, and fell upon their own heads, so that many of them were very severely wounded. So all our mutterings and murmurings, which are as so many arrows shot at God himself, they will return upon our heads and hearts; they reach not him—but they will hit us; they hurt not him—but they will wound us—therefore it is better to be mute than to murmur; it is dangerous to provoke a consuming fire! Heb. 12:29.

(5.) Fifthly, **Consider, That murmuring is the devil's image, sin and punishment.** Satan is still a-murmuring; he murmurs at every mercy that God bestows, at every drop of grace he gives, Job 1:8, 9; he murmurs at every sin he pardons, and at every soul he saves. A soul cannot have a good look from heaven, nor hear a good word from heaven, nor receive a love-letter from heaven—but Satan murmurs at it! He murmurs and mutters at every act of pitying grace, and at every act of preventing grace, and at every act of supporting grace, and at every act of strengthening grace, and at every act of comforting grace—which God exercises towards poor souls. He murmurs at every sip, at every drop, at every crumb of mercy that God bestows.

Cyprian, Aquinas, and others conceive that the cause of Satan's banishment from heaven was his grieving and murmuring at the dignity of man, whom he beheld made after God's own image, insomuch that he would relinquish his own glory, to divest so noble a creature of perfection, and rather lie in hell himself, than see Adam placed in paradise. But certainly, after his fall, murmuring and envy at man's innocence and felicity put him upon attempting to plunge man into the bottomless gulf of sin and misery. Satan, knowing himself to be damned, and lost forever, would needs try all ways how to make happy man eternally unhappy.

Mr. Howell tells it as a strange thing, that a serpent was found in the heart of an Englishman when he was dead; but, alas! this old serpent was by sad experience found to have too much power in the heart of Adam while alive, and while in the height of all his glory and excellency. Murmuring is the first-born of the devil; and nothing renders a man more

like the devil, than murmuring. Constantine's sons did not more resemble their father, nor Aristotle's scholars their master, nor Alexander's soldiers their general—than murmurers resemble Satan.

And as murmuring is Satan's sin, so it is his punishment. God has given him up to a murmuring spirit; nothing pleases him; all things go against him; he is perpetually a-muttering and murmuring at people or things. Now, oh what a dreadful thing is it to bear Satan's image upon us, and to be given up to be the devil's punishment! It were better not to be, than thus to be given up! Therefore cease from murmuring, and sit mute under your sorest trials! But,

(6.) Sixthly, **Consider, That murmuring is a mercy-embittering sin, an mercy-souring sin;** as put the sweetest things into a sour vessel, it sours them; or put them into a bitter vessel, and it embitters them. Murmuring puts gall and wormwood into every cup of mercy that God gives into our hands. As holy silence gives a sweet taste, a delightful relish, to all a man's mercies—so murmuring embitters all. The murmurer can taste no sweetness in his sweetest morsels; every mercy, every morsel, tastes like the white of an egg to him, Job 6:6. This mercy, says the murmurer, is not very tasty; that mercy is not wholesome; here is a mercy lacks salt; and there is a mercy needs sauce. A murmurer can taste no sweet, can feel no comfort; he can take no delight in any mercy he enjoys. The murmurer writes *marah*, that is, *bitterness*, upon all his mercies; and he reads and tastes bitterness in all his mercies. All the murmurer's grapes are grapes of gall, and all their clusters are bitter, Deut. 32:23. As to 'the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet', Prov. 27:7, so to the murmuring soul every sweet thing is bitter. The mute Christian can suck sweetness from every breast of mercy—but the murmurer cries out, 'Oh it is bitter! Oh these breasts of mercy are dry!'

(7.) Seventhly, **Consider, That murmuring is a mercy-destroying sin, a mercy-murdering sin.** Murmuring cuts the throat of mercy; it stabs all our mercies at the heart; it sets all a man's mercies a-bleeding about him at once—Num. 14:30, 'Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb and Joshua.' God promises them that they would possess the holy land upon the condition of their obedience. This condition they broke; and therefore

God was faithful, though he cut them off in the wilderness, and kept them out of Canaan, Deut. 31:16, 17. But what is the sin that provokes the Lord to bar them out of the land of promise—and to cut them off from all those mercies which they enjoyed which entered into the holy land? Why, it was their murmuring! as you may see in Numbers 14:1-3, 26-29. As you love your mercies, as you would have the sweet of your mercies, and as you would enjoy the life of your mercies—take heed of murmuring!

Murmuring will bring a consumption upon your mercies; it is a worm that will make all your mercies to wither. There are some who murmur their mercies into the grave. As you would have your mercies always fresh and green, smiling and thriving, as you would have your mercies to bed and board with you, to rise up and lie down with you, and in all conditions to attend you—murmur not, murmur not! The mute Christian's mercies are most sweet and most long-lived; the murmurer's mercies, like Jonah's gourd, will quickly wither. Murmuring has cut the throat of national mercies, of domestic mercies, and of personal mercies; and therefore, oh how should men fly from it as from a serpent! as from the avenger of blood, yes, as from hell itself!

(8.) Eighthly, **Consider, That murmuring unfits the soul for duty**, Exod. 6:7-10. A murmurer can neither hear to profit, nor pray to profit, nor read to profit, nor meditate to profit. The murmurer is neither fit to do good, nor receive good. Murmuring unfits the soul for doings of duties; it unfits the soul for delighting in duties; it unfits the soul for communion with God in duties. Murmuring fills the soul with cares, fears, distractions, vexations—all which unfits a man for duty 1 Cor. 7:33-35. As a holy quietness and calmness of spirit prompts a man to duty, as it makes every duty easy and pleasant to the soul Prov. 3:17; so it is murmuring which unhinges the soul, and indisposes the soul—so that it takes off the chariot wheels of the soul, that the soul cannot look up to God, nor do for God, nor receive from God, nor wait on God, nor walk with God, nor act faith upon God, etc.' Psalm 90:12. Oh! therefore, as ever you would be in a blessed preparedness, and a blessed fittedness for duty—take heed of murmuring, and sit mute and silent under the afflicting hand of God, Isaiah 26:9-11.

(9.) Ninthly, **Consider, That murmuring unmans a man**; it strips

him of his reason and understanding; it makes him call evil good, and good evil; it puts light for darkness and darkness for light, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; it calls saviors destroyers, and deliverers murderers Isaiah 5:18-20, as you see in the murmuring Israelites, Murmuring uncrowns a man. The murmurer may say, 'My crown is fallen from my head', Lam. 5:16. Murmuring strips a man of all his glory; it spoils all his excellency; it destroys the nobility of man; it speaks him out to be a base ignoble creature. Murmuring clouds a man's understanding; it perverts the judgment, it puts out the eye of reason, stupefies his conscience; it sours the heart, disorders the will, and distempers the affections; it be-beasts a man, yes, it sets him below the beasts; for he were better be a beast, than be like a beast.

The murmurer is the hieroglyphic of folly; he is a comprehensive vanity; he is a man and no man; he is sottish and senseless—he neither understands God nor himself nor anything as he should; he is the man that must be sent to school, to learn from the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the earth—how to cease from murmuring, and how to be mute, Isaiah 3:8, Jer. 7:6. Ah! sirs, as you would have the name, the honor, the reputation of being men, I say men—Take heed of murmuring, and sit silent before the Lord!

(10.) Tenthly, **Murmuring is a time-destroying sin.** Ah! the precious time that is buried in the grave of murmuring? When the murmurer should be a-praying, he is a-murmuring against the Lord; when he should be a-hearing, he is a-murmuring against the divine providences; when he should be a-reading, he is a-murmuring against instruments. The murmurer spends much precious time in musing; in musing how to get out of such a trouble, how to get off such a yoke, how to be rid of such a burden, how to revenge himself for such a wrong, how to supplant such a person, how to reproach those that are above him, and how to affront those that are below him; and a thousand other ways murmurers have to expend that precious time that some would redeem with a world; as Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed cried out, 'Time, time, a world of wealth for an inch of time!'

The murmurer lavishly and profusely trifles away that precious time, which is his greatest interest in this world to redeem, Eph. 5:16. Every

day, every hour in the day, is a talent of time, and God expects the improvement of it, and will charge the non-improvement of it upon you at last, Rev. 2:21, 25; 1 Peter 4:2. Caesar observing some ladies in Rome to spend much of their time in making much of little dogs and monkeys, asked them, Whether the women in that country had no children to make much of? Ah! murmurers, murmurers, you who by your murmuring, trifle away so many godly hours and seasons of mercy—have you no God to honor? have you no Christ to believe in? have you no hearts to change, no sins to be pardoned, no souls to save, no hell to escape, no heaven to seek after? Oh! If you have, why do you spend so much of your precious time in murmuring against God, against men, against this or that thing? **Eternity rides upon the back of time.** This is the moment—if it be well improved, you are made forever; if not, you are undone forever.

I have read of Archias a Lacedaemonian, that while he was rioting and quaffing in the midst of his cups, one delivers him a letter, purposely to signify that there were some that lay in wait to take away his life, and withal desires him to read it immediately, because it was a serious business and matter of high concern to him. Oh, said he—I will think of serious things tomorrow; but that night he was slain! Ah! murmurer, cease from murmuring today, or else you may be forever undone by murmuring tomorrow. The old saying, 'now or never'—so say I, 'Now or never, now or never give over murmuring, and let it swallow up no more of your precious time!' What would not many a murmurer give for one of those days, yes, for one of those hours which he has trifled away in murmuring—when it is a day too late!

The Rabbis glory in this conceit, that a man has so many bones as there are letters in the Decalogue, and just so many joints as there are days in the year; to show that all our strength and time should be expended in God's service. Ah, murmurers, you will gain more by one day's faithful serving of God, than ever you have gained by murmuring against God. But,

(11.) Eleventhly, **Consider this, Christians, that of all men in the world, you have least cause, yes, no cause, to be murmuring and muttering under any dispensation that you meet with in this world.** Is not God your portion? Chrysostom propounds this

question, Was Job miserable when he had lost all that God had given him? and gives this answer, No, he had still the God who gave him all. Is not Christ your treasure? Is not heaven your inheritance? and will you murmur? Have you not much in hand, and more in hope? Have you not much in possession—but much more reserved in heaven—and will you murmur? Has not God given you a changed heart, a renewed nature, and a sanctified soul—and will you murmur? Has he not given you himself to satisfy you, his Son to save you, his Spirit to lead you, his grace to adorn you, his covenant to assure you, his mercy to pardon you, his righteousness to clothe you—and will you murmur? Has he not made you a friend, a son, a brother, a bride, an heir—and will you murmur? Has not God often turned your water into wine, your brass into silver, and your silver into gold—and will you murmur? When you were dead, did not he quicken you; and when you were lost, did not he seek you; and when you were wounded, did not he heal you; and when you were falling, did not he support you; and when you were down, did not he raise you; and when you were staggering, did not he establish you; and when you were erring, did not he correct you; and when you were tempted, did not he support you; and when you went in dangers, did not he deliver you?—and will you murmur? What! you who are so highly advanced and exalted above many thousands in the world? Murmuring is a black garment, and it befits none so ill as saints.

(12.) Twelfthly, and lastly, **Consider that murmuring makes the life of man invisible miserable.** Every murmurer is his own executioner. Murmuring vexes the heart; it wears and tears the heart, it enrages and inflames the heart, it wounds and stabs the heart. Every murmurer is his own martyr, every murmurer is a murderer; he kills many at once, that is—his joy, his comfort, his peace, his rest, his soul. No man so inwardly miserable as the murmurer; no man has such inward gripes and griefs as he, such inward bitterness and heaviness as he, such inward contentions and combustions as he. Every murmurer is his own tormentor. Murmuring is a fire within that will burn up all, it is an earthquake within that will overturn all, it is a disease within that will infect all, it is a poison within that will prey upon all.

And thus I have done with those motives that may persuade us not to

murmur nor mutter—but to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences and sharpest trials that we meet with in this world.

## Objections

**I shall now address myself to answer those OBJECTIONS, and to remove those impediments which hinder poor souls from being silent and mute under the afflicting hand of God.**

Objection 1. Sir! **did I but know that I were afflicted in love, I would hold my peace under my affliction,** I would sit mute before the Lord; but oh! how shall I come to understand that these strokes are the strokes of love, that these wounds are the wounds of a friend? I answer:

1. First, **If your heart be drawn more out to the Lord by your afflictions, then the afflictions are in love.** If they are so sanctified as that they draw out your soul to love the Lord more, and to fear the Lord more, and to please the Lord more, and to cleave to the Lord more, and to wait on the Lord more, and to walk with the Lord more—then they are in love. Oh, then they are the wounds of a friend indeed! It is reported of the lioness, that she leaves her young whelps until they have almost killed themselves with roaring and yelling, and then at the last gasp, when they have almost spent themselves, she relieves them, and by this means they become more courageous; and so if the afflictions which are upon us do increase our courage, strengthen our patience, raise our faith, inflame our love, and enliven our hopes, certainly they are in love, and all our wounds are the wounds of a friend. But

2. Secondly, **If you are more careful and studious how to glorify God in the affliction, and how to be kept from sinning under the affliction, than how to yet out of the affliction, then certainly your affliction is in love,** Dan. 3. and 5:16,17, Heb. 11. Where God smites in love, there the soul makes it his study how to glorify

God, and how to lift up God, and how to be a light and an honor to God. The daily language of such a soul under the rod is this—Lord! stand by me that I sin not, uphold me that I sin not, strengthen me that I sin not, John 7:7-10. He who will not sin to repair and make up his losses, though he knew assuredly that the committing of such a sin would make up all again, he may conclude that his affliction is in love.

I have read of a nobleman whose son and heir was supposed to be bewitched, and being advised to go to some wizard, as they are called, to have some help for his son, that he might be unwitched again, he answered, Oh, by no means, I had rather the witch should have my son than the devil. His son should suffer rather than he would sin him out of his sufferings. He who will not break the hedge of a fair command to avoid the foul way of some heavy affliction, may well conclude that his affliction is in love. Christians! what do you say, when you are in the mount; do you thus bespeak the Lord?—'Lord! take care of your glory, and let me rather sink in my affliction than sin under my affliction.' If this be the bent and frame of your heart, it is certain the affliction that is upon you is in love. The primitive times afforded many such brave spirits, though this age affords but few.

3. Thirdly, **If you enjoy the special presence of God with your spirits in your affliction, then your affliction is in love**, Psalm 23:4-6. Isaiah 43:2, 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you—when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon you.' Have you a special presence of God with your spirit, strengthening of that, quieting of that, stilling of that, satisfying of that, cheering and comforting of that? Psalm 94:19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts,'—that is, of my troubled, intricate, ensnared, intertwined and perplexed thoughts—'your comforts delight my soul.' Here is a presence of God with his soul, here are comforts and delights that reach the soul, here is a cordial to strengthen the spirit.

When all things went cross with Andronicus, the old emperor of Constantinople, he took a Psalter into his hand, and opening the same, he lighted upon Psalm 68:14, 'When the Almighty scattered kings, they shall be white as snow in Salmon;' which scripture was a mighty comfort and

refreshment to his spirit. Now you are to remember that Salmon signifies shady and dark; so was this mount, by the reason of many lofty fair-spread trees that were near it—but made lightsome by snow that covered it. So that to be white as snow in Salmon, is to have joy in affliction, light in darkness, mercy in misery, etc. And thus God was to the psalmist in the midst of his greatest afflictions—as snow in Salmon. When Paul would wish his dear son Timothy the best mercy in all the world, the greatest mercy in all the world, the most comprehensive mercy in all the world, a mercy that carries the virtue, value, and sweetness of all mercies in it, he wishes the presence of God with his spirit—2 Tim. 4:22, 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit', in point of honor, in point of profit and pleasure, in point of safety and security, and in point of comfort and joy. It is the greatest blessing and happiness in this world to have the presence of God with our spirits, especially in times of trials—2 Cor. 4:16, 'For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' By the 'outward man,' you are to understand not merely our bodies—but our persons, estates, and outward conditions in this world; and by the 'inward man,' you are to understand our souls, our spiritual estate. Now, when the inward man gains new strength by every new trouble, when as troubles, pressures, afflictions, and tribulations are increased—a Christian's inward strength is increased also, when his afflictions are in love. When the presence of God is with our inward man, cheering, comforting, encouraging, strengthening, and renewing of that, we may safely conclude that all these trials, though they are ever so sharp and acute, yet they are in love.

I have read of a company of poor Christians that were banished into some remote parts, and one standing by, seeing them pass along, said that it was a very sad condition those poor people were in, to be thus exiled from the society of men, and to be made companions with the beasts of the field. True, said another, it were a sad condition indeed if they were carried to a place where they should not find their God; but let them be of good cheer, God goes along with them, and will exhibit the comforts of his presence wherever they go. **The presence of God with the spirits of his people—is a breast of comfort that can never be drawn dry;** it is an everlasting spring that will never fail, Heb. 13:5, 6. Well! Christian, you are under many great troubles, many sore trials—but tell

me, does God give unto your soul such cordials, such supports, such comforts, and such refreshments, that the world knows not of? Oh! then, certainly your affliction is in love.

4. Fourthly, **If by your affliction you are made more conformable to Christ in his virtues, there certainly your afflictions are in love.** Many are conformable to Christ in their sufferings, who are not made conformable to Christ in his virtues by their sufferings; many are in poverty, neglect, shame, contempt, reproach, etc., like Christ was—who yet by these are not made more like Christ in his meekness, humbleness, heavenliness, holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, fruitfulness, goodness, contentedness, patience, submission, subjection. Oh! but if in these things you are made more like Christ, without question, your afflictions are in love. If by afflictions the soul be led to show forth the virtues of Christ, then certainly those afflictions are in love; for they never have such an operation but where they are set on by a hand of love.

When God strikes as an enemy, then all those strokes do but make a man more an enemy to God, as you see in Pharaoh and others; but when the strokes of God are the strokes of love, oh! then they do but bring the soul nearer Christ, and transform the soul more and more into the likeness of Christ, Isaiah 26:8-10. Jer. 6:3, Amos 6:1. If by your afflictions you are made more holy, humble, heavenly, etc., they are in love. Every afflicted Christian should strive to be honored with that eulogy of Salvian—an excellent disciple of a singular master. But,

5. Fifthly, **If by outward afflictions your soul is brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless your afflictions are love,** Job 34:31, 32. Psalm 94:12, 'Blessed is the man whom you chasten O Lord, and teach out of your law.' All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man who finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning—is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon you, shall teach you how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more—your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to your relations more, and how to die to your self-interest more—your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to live to Christ more,

how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more—your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of your death—your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to mind heaven more, how to live in heaven more, and how to fit for heaven more—your afflictions are in love. If God by afflictions shall teach your proud heart how to lie more low, and your hard heart how to grow more tender, and your censorious heart how to grow more charitable, and your carnal heart how to grow more spiritual, and your froward heart how to grow more quiet—your afflictions are in love. When God teaches your thoughts as well as your brains, your heart as well as your head, these lessons, or any of these lessons—your afflictions are in love.

Pambo, an illiterate dunce, as the historian terms him, was a-learning that one lesson, 'I said I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue,' nineteen years, and yet had not learned it. Ah! it is to be feared that there are many who have been in the school of affliction above this nineteen years, and yet have not learned any beneficial lesson all this while. Surely their afflictions are not in love—but in wrath. Where God loves, he afflicts in love, and wherever God afflicts in love, there he will, sooner or later, teach such souls such lessons as shall do them good to all eternity. But,

(6.) **Sixthly, If God suits your burdens to your backs, your trials to your strength, according to that golden promise, 1 Cor. 10:13, your afflictions are in love.** 'There has no temptation taken you—but such as is common to man—but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' When God's strokes and a Christian's strength are suited one to another—all is in love, Isaiah 27:8, Jer. 30:11, 46:28. Let the load be ever so heavy that God lays on, if he puts under his everlasting arms—all is in love, Gen. 49:23, 24. As Egypt had many venomous creatures, so it had many antidotes against them. When God shall lay antidotes into the soul against all the afflictions which befall a Christian—then they are all in love. It is no matter how heavy the burden is, if God gives a shoulder to

bear it—all is in love; it is no matter how bitter the cup is, if God gives courage to drink it off; it is no matter how hot the furnace is, if God gives power to walk in the midst of it—all is in love.

(7.) Seventhly, **If you are willing to lie in the furnace until your dross be consumed**; if you are willing that the plaster should lie on, though it smart, until the cure be wrought; if you are willing that the medicine should work, though it makes you sick, until the humors be expelled; all is in love, Job 23:10, Micah 7:9. Cain, and Saul, and Pharaoh, were all for the removing away of the stroke, the affliction; they cry not out, 'Our sins are greater than we are able to bear'—but they cry out, 'Our punishment is greater than we are able to bear;' they do not cry out, 'Lord, take away our sins,' but 'Lord, remove the stroke of your hand.' Oh! But when an affliction comes in love upon a soul, the language of that soul is this—Lord, remove the cause rather than the effect, the sin rather than the punishment, my corruption rather than my affliction! Lord! what will it avail me to have the sore skinned over, if the corrupt matter still remains inside? there is no evil, Lord, to the evil of sin; and therefore deliver me rather from the evil of sin than the evil of suffering. I know, Lord, that affliction cannot be so displeasing to me as sin is dishonorable and displeasing to you; and therefore, Lord, let me see an end of my sin, though in this world I should never see an end of my sorrows; oh, let me see an end of my corruptions, though I should never see an end of my corrections; Lord, I had rather have a cure for my heart than a cure for my head; I had rather be made whole and sound within than without; I had rather have a healthy soul than a healthy body; a pure inside than a beautiful outside. If this be the settled frame and temper of your spirit, certainly your afflictions are in love.

There was one who, being under extremely great pains and torments in his body, occasioned by many sore diseases which were upon him, cried out, Had I all the world I would give it for ease, and yet for all the world I would not have ease until the cure be wrought. Sure his afflictions were in love. The first request, the great request, and the last request of a soul afflicted in love, is, "A cure, Lord! a cure, Lord! a cure, Lord! of this wretched heart, and this sinful life, and all will be well, all will be well."

(8.) Eighthly and lastly, **If you live a life of faith, while in your**

**afflictions—then your afflictions are in love.** Now, what is it to live by faith in affliction—but to live in the exercising of faith upon those precious promises that are made over to an afflicted condition? God has promised to be with his people in their afflictions, Isaiah 43:2, 3; he has promised to support them under their affliction, Isaiah 41:10; he has promised to deliver his people out of their afflictions, Psalm 50:15; he has promised to purge away his people's sins by affliction, Isaiah 1:25; he has promised to make his people more partakers of his holiness by affliction, Heb. 12:10; he has promised to make affliction an inlet to a more full and sweet enjoyment of himself, Hos. 2:14; he has promised that he will never leave nor forsake his people in their afflictions, Heb. 13:5, 6; he has promised that all their afflictions shall work for their good, Zech. 13:9; Rom. 8:28. Now if your faith is drawn forth to feed upon these promises, if these be heavenly manna to your faith, and your soul lives upon them, and sucks strength and sweetness from them, under all the trials and troubles that are upon you—then your afflictions are in love.

A bee can suck honey out of a flower, which a fly cannot. If your faith can extract comfort and sweetness in your distresses, out of the breasts of precious promises, and gather one contrary out of another, honey out of the rock, Deut. 32:13, your afflictions are in love. The promises are full breasts, and God delights that faith should draw them; they are the food of faith, and the very soul of faith; they are an everlasting spring that can never be drawn dry; they are an inexhaustible treasure that can never be exhausted; they are the garden of paradise, and full of such choice flowers that will never fade—but be always fresh, sweet, green and flourishing. And if, in the day of affliction, they prove thus to your soul—your afflictions are in love.

Sertorius paid what he promised, with mere words—but God does not so. Men many times eat their words—but God will never eat his; all his promises in Christ are yes and in him amen, 1 Cor. 1:20. Has he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? If in all your troubles your heart is drawn forth to act faith upon the promises—your troubles are from love. And thus much by way of answer to the first objection.

Objection 2. Oh—but, sir! **the Lord has smitten me in my nearest and dearest comforts and contentments—so how then can I**

**hold my peace?** God has taken away a husband, a wife, a child, an only child, a bosom-friend, and how then can I be silent? To this I answer,

(1.) First, **If God did not strike you in that comfort which was near and dear unto you—it would not amount to an affliction.** That is not worthy the name of an affliction that does not strike at some bosom mercy; that trouble is no trouble that does not touch some choice contentment; that storm is no storm that only blows on the leaves—but never hurts the fruit; that thrust is no thrust that only touches the clothes—but never reaches the skin; that cut is no cut that only cuts the hat—but never touches the head; neither is that affliction any affliction that only reaches some remote enjoyment—but never reaches a Joseph, a Benjamin, etc.

(2.) Secondly, **The best mercy is not too good for the best God.** The best of the best is not good enough for him who is goodness itself; the best child, the best friend, the best jewel in all your crown must be readily resigned to your best God. There is no mercy, no enjoyment, no contentment worthy of God—but the best. The *milk* of mercy is for others—the *cream* of mercy is due to God. The choicest, the fairest, and the sweetest flowers are fittest for the bosom of God; if he will take the best flower in all the garden, and plant it in a better soil—have you any cause to murmur? Will you not remain silent before the Lord? Mal. 1:13, 14.

(3.) Thirdly, **Your near and dear mercies were first the Lord's before they were yours—and always the Lord's more than they were yours.** When God gives a mercy, he does not relinquish his own right in that mercy— 1 Chron. 29:14, 'Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your own hand.' The sweet of mercy is yours—but the sovereign right to dispose of your mercies is the Lord's. Whatever you are, you owe to him who made you; and whatever you have, you owe to him who redeemed you. You say it is but just and reasonable that men should do with their own as they please; and is it not just and reasonable that God, who is Lord paramount, should do with his own as he pleases? Do you believe that the great God may do in heaven what he pleases? and on the seas what he pleases? and in the nations and kingdoms of the world what he pleases? and in your heart what he pleases? And do you not believe that God may do in your house what he

pleases, and do with your mercies what he pleases?

Job 9:12, 'Behold, he takes away', or he snatches away, it may be a husband, a wife, a child, an estate, 'who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, what are you doing?' Who dares cavil against God? Who dares question that God who is unquestionable, that sovereign Lord who is uncontrollable, and who may do with his own whatever he pleases? Dan. 4:35, 'All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: What have you done?' Where is the prince, the peasant, the master, the servant, the husband, the wife, the father, the child, that dares say to God, 'What have you done?' Isaiah 14:9.

In matters of arithmetical accounts, set one against ten, ten against a hundred, a hundred against a thousand, a thousand against ten thousand, although there be great odds, yet there is some comparison; but if a man could set down an infinite number, then there could be no comparison at all, because the one is infinite, the other finite. So set all the princes and powers of the earth in opposition to God, they shall never be able to withstand him. It was once the saying of Pompey, that with one stamp of his foot he could raise all Italy in arms; but let the great God but stamp with his foot, and he can raise all the world in arms, to own him, to contend for him, or to revenge any affronts that are put upon him by any; and therefore who shall say unto him, 'What have you done?'

Water is stronger than earth, fire stronger than water, angels stronger than men, and God stronger than them all; and therefore who shall say unto God, 'What have you done?' when he takes their nearest and their dearest mercies from them? But,

(4.) Fourthly, **It may be, that you have not made any IMPROVEMENT on your near and dear mercies, while you had them.** You have been taken up with your mercies—but your heart has not been taken up in the improvement of them. There are many who are very much taken up with their mercies, who make no conscience of improving their mercies. Have your near and dear mercies been a star to lead you to Christ? Have they been a cloud by day, and a pillar of light by night, to

lead you towards the heavenly Canaan? Have they been a Jacob's ladder to your soul? Have you by them been provoked to give up yourself to God as a living sacrifice? Rom. 12:1. Have you improved your dear mercies to the inflaming of your love to God, to the strengthening of your confidence in God, to the raising of your communion with God, and to the engaging of your heart to a more close and circumspect walking before God? etc. If you have not thus improved them—you have more cause to be mute than to murmur; to be silent than to be impatient; to be upset with yourself than to be upset with your God.

Children and fools use many things—but improve nothing. Such children and fools are most men; they are much taken up with their mercies—but they make no improvement of their mercies; and therefore no wonder if God strips them of their mercies. The *candle of mercy* is set up not to play by—but to work by.

Pliny speaks of one Cressinus, who improved a little piece of ground to a far greater advantage than his neighbors could a greater quantity of land. Thereupon he was accused of witchcraft; but he, to defend himself, brought into the court his working tools, and said, 'these are my witchcrafts, O you Romans! These working tools are all the witchcraft that I know of!' When the people heard this plea, with one consent they acquitted him, and declared him not guilty; and so his little piece of ground was secured to him.

There is no way to secure your mercies but by improving of them; there is nothing that provokes God to strip you of your mercies like the non-improvement of them—Mat. 25:28-31, 'Take therefore the one talent from him, and give it unto him who has ten talents.' By some stroke or other, God will take away the mercy that is not improved. If your slothfulness has put God upon passing a sentence of death upon the dearest mercy—thank **yourself**—and remain silent before the Lord!

(5.) Fifthly, **God has given you many examples of dear mercies being removed from those who are eminently pious.** How much more, then, should you be mute, where God has made many others examples to you! Did not God smite Aaron in his dear and near enjoyments, Lev. 10:1, 2 and does he not remain silent? Did not God

smite David in his Absalom, and Abraham in his Sarah, and Job in his sons, daughters, estate, and body, and Jonah in his gourd? Are you more beloved than these godly ones? No! Have you more grace than these? No! Have you done more for divine glory than these? No! Are you richer in spiritual experiences than these? No! Have you attained to higher enjoyments than these? No! Have you been more serviceable in your generation than these? No! Have you been more exemplary in your life and conversation than these? etc. No! Then **why should you murmur and fret at that which has been the common lot of the dearest saints?**

Though God has smitten you in this or that near and dear enjoyment, it is your wisdom to remain silent before the Lord, for that God that has taken away **one**—might have taken away **all**. Justice writes a sentence of death upon all Job's mercies at once, and yet he holds his peace; and will not you hold yours, though God has cropped the fairest flower in all your garden?

So when our hearts begin to storm and complain when God smites us in this near mercy and in that dear enjoyment, oh let us lay the law of silence upon our hearts! let us charge our souls to be quiet! for that God that has taken away one child, might have taken away every child; and he who has taken away one friend, might have taken away every friend; and he who has taken away a part of your estate, might have taken away your whole estate—therefore remain silent before the Lord; let who will murmur—yet you be mute.

(6.) Sixthly, **It may be your sins have been much about your near and dear enjoyments.** It may be you have over-loved them, and over-prized them, and over-much delighted yourself in them. It may be they have often had your heart, when they should have had but your hand. It may be that care, that concern, that confidence, that joy which should have been expended upon more noble objects, has been expended upon them. Your heart, O Christian! is Christ's bed of spices, and it may be you have bedded your mercies with you, when Christ has been made to lie outside! Luke 2:7. You have had room for them—when you have had none for him! They have had the best—when the worst have been counted good enough for Christ!

It is said of Reuben, that he went up to his father's bed, Gen. 49:4. Ah! how often has one creature comfort and sometimes another, been put in between Christ and your souls! how often have your dear enjoyments gone up to Christ's bed!

It is said of the Babylonians, that they came in to Aholah and Aholibah's bed of love, Ezek. 23:17; may it not be said of your near and dear mercies, that they have come into Christ's bed of love, your hearts; they being that bed wherein Christ delights to rest and repose himself? Cant. 3:7. Now, if you take a husband, a child, a friend—into **that room in your soul** which only belongs to God—he will either embitter it, remove it, or be the death of it. If once the love of a wife runs out more to a servant than to her husband, the husband will remove that servant; though otherwise he was a servant worth gold.

The sweetest comforts of this life, they are but like treasures of snow; now do but take a handful of snow, and crush it in your hands, and it will melt away presently; but if you let it lie upon the ground, it will continue for some time. And so it is with the contentments of this world; if you grasp them in your hands and lay them too near your hearts, they will quickly melt and vanish away; but if you will not hold them too fast in your hands, nor lay them too close to your hearts, they will abide the longer with you.

There are those who love their mercies into their graves—who hug their mercies to death—who kiss them until they kill them! Many a man has slain his mercies, by setting too great a value upon them! Many a man has sunk his *ship of mercy*, by overloading it. Over-loved mercies are seldom long lived— Ezek. 24:21, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword.' The way to lose your mercies is to indulge them; the way to destroy them is to fix your minds and hearts upon them. You may write bitterness and death upon that mercy first—which has first taken away your heart from God. Now, if God has stripped you of that very mercy with which you have often committed spiritual adultery and idolatry—have you any cause to murmur? Have you

not rather cause to remain silent before the Lord, and to be mute before the Lord? **Christians! Your hearts are Christ's royal throne, and in this throne Christ will be chief,** as Pharaoh said to Joseph, Gen. 12:40; he will endure no competitor. If you attempt to **enthroned the creature,** be it ever so near and dear unto you—Christ will dethrone it! He will destroy it! He will quickly lay them in a bed of dust—who shall aspire to his royal throne! But,

(7.) Seventhly, **You have no cause to murmur because of the loss of such near and dear enjoyments, considering those more noble and spiritual mercies and favors that you still enjoy.** Grant that Joseph is not, and Benjamin is not, Gen. 42:36. Yet Jesus is! He is yesterday, and today, and the same forever, Heb. 13:8; your union and communion with Christ remains still; the immortal seed abides in you still, 1 John 3:9; the Sun of righteousness shines upon you still; you are in favor with God still, and you are under the anointings of the Spirit still, and under the influences of heaven still, etc. So why then should you mutter—and not rather remain silent before the Lord?

I have read of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, once asked him, whether he was not sorely troubled and afflicted for lack of his sight? Oh yes! said Didymus, it is a great affliction and grief unto me! Then Alexander chid him, saying, Has God given you an excellency above an angel—and are you troubled for that which rats and mice and brute beasts have? Ah, Christians! has God blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places? Eph. 1:3, 4. Has the Lord given you himself for a portion? Has he given you his Son for your redemption, and his Spirit for your instruction—and will you murmur? Has he given his grace to adorn you, his promises to comfort you, his ordinances to better you, and the hopes of heaven to encourage you; and will you mutter?

Paulinus Nolanus, when his city was taken from him, prayed thus—'Lord! said he, let me not be troubled at the loss of my gold, silver, honor, etc., for you are all, and much more than all these unto me!' **In the absence of all your sweetest enjoyments, Christ will be all in all unto you,** Col. 3:11. My jewels are my husband, said Phocion's wife. My ornaments are my two sons, said the mother of the Gracchi. My treasures

are my friends, said Constantius. And so may a Christian under his greatest losses say—Christ is my richest jewels, my chief treasures, my best ornaments, my sweetest delights. What all these things are to a carnal heart, a worldly heart—that and more—is Christ to me!

(8.) Eighthly, **If God, by smiting you in your nearest and dearest enjoyments, shall put you upon a more thorough smiting and mortifying of your dearest sins—you have no cause to murmur.** God cures David of adultery by killing his endeared child. There is some Delilah, some darling, some beloved sin or other—that a Christian's calling, condition, constitution, or temptations—leads him to play with, and to hug in his own bosom, Psalm 18:23, Heb. 12:1. As in a plot of ground that lies untilled, among the great variety of weeds there is usually some master-weed, which is more plenteous and more repulsive than all the rest. And as it is in the body of man, that although in some degree or other, more or less, there is a mixture of all the four elements, not any of them wholly lacking, yet there is some one of them predominant that gives the denomination, in which regard some are said to be of a sanguine, some of a phlegmatic, some of a choleric, and some of a melancholic constitution.

So it is also in the souls of men—though there be a general mixture and medley of all evil and corrupt qualities, yet there is some one sin which is usually paramount, which, like the prince of devils, is most powerful and prevalent, which sways and manifests itself more eminently and evidently than any other of them do. And as in every man's body there is a seed and principle of death, yet in some there is a proneness to one kind of disease more than another that may hasten death. So, though the root of sin and bitterness has spread itself over all, yet every man has his inclination to one kind of sin rather than another, and this may be called a man's besetting sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin. Now, it is one of the hardest works in this world to subdue and bring under control, this bosom sin! Oh! the prayers, the tears, the sighs, the sobs, the groans, the gripes that it will cost a Christian before he subdues this darling sin!

Look upon a rabbit's skin, how well it comes off until it comes to the head—but then what hauling and pulling is there before you can remove it! So it is in the mortifying, in the crucifying of sin; a man may easily subdue

and mortify such and such sins—but when it comes to the head-sin, to the master-sin, to the bosom-sin, oh! what tugging and pulling is there! what striving and struggling is there to get off that sin, to get down that sin! Now, if the Lord, by smiting you in some near and dear enjoyment, shall draw out your heart to fall upon smiting of your master-sin, and shall so sanctify the affliction, as to make it issue in the mortification of your bosom corruption, what eminent cause will you have rather to bless him, than to sit down and murmur against him! And doubtless if you are dear to God, God will, by striking your dearest mercy, put you upon striking at your darling sin; and therefore do not murmur, even when God touches the apple of your eye!

(9.) Ninthly, consider **That the Lord has many ways to make up the loss of a near and dear mercy to you. He can make up your loss in something else that may be better for you, and he will certainly make up your loss, either in kind or in worth,** Matt. 19:27-30. He took from **David** an Absalom, and he gave him a Solomon; he took from him a Michal, and gave him a wise Abigail. He took from **Job** seven sons and three daughters, and afterwards he gives him seven more sons and three more daughters. He took from Job a fair estate, and at last doubled it to him. He removed the *bodily* presence of Christ from his **disciples**—but gave them more abundantly of his *spiritual* presence, which was far the greater and the sweeter mercy. If **Moses** is taken away—a Joshua shall be raised in his place. If **David** is gathered to his fathers—a Solomon shall succeed him in his throne. If John the Baptist is cast into prison, rather than the pulpit shall stand empty, a greater than John, even Christ himself will begin to preach!

He who lives upon God in the loss of creature comforts, shall find all made up in the *God of comforts*; he shall be able to say, Though my child is not, my friend is not, my spouse is not—yet my God lives, and 'blessed be my rock,' Psalm 89:26. Though this mercy is not, and that mercy is not, yet covenant-mercies, yet 'the sure mercies of David' continue, 2 Sam. 23:5; these bed and board with me, these will go to the grave and to glory with me.

I have read of a godly man, who, living near a philosopher, did often persuade him to become a Christian. Oh! but, said the philosopher, I

must, or may lose all for Christ. To which the godly man replied, if you lose anything for Christ, he will be sure to repay it a hundred-fold. Yes—but, said the philosopher, will you be bound for Christ, that if he does not pay me, you will? Yes, that I will, said the godly man. So the philosopher became a Christian, and the godly man entered into a written bond for performance of covenants. Some time after it happened that the philosopher fell sick on his deathbed, and, holding the bond in his hand, sent for the party engaged, to whom he gave up the bond, and said, Christ has paid all, there is nothing for you to pay, take your bond, and cancel it.

Christ will allow none of his children to suffer a loss; he has all, and he will make up all to them. In the close, Christ will pay the reckoning. No man shall ever have cause to say that he has been a loser by Christ. And, therefore, you have much cause to be mute, you have no cause to murmur, though God has snatched the fairest and the sweetest flower out of your bosom.

(10.) Tenthly, **How can you tell but that which you call a near and dear mercy, if it had been continued longer to you, might have proved the greatest cross, the greatest calamity and misery, which you ever had?** Our mercies, like choice wines, many times turn into vinegar. Our fairest hopes are often blasted. That very mercy which we once have said should be a staff to support us—has proved a sword to pierce us. How often have our most flourishing mercies withered in our hands, and our bosom contentments been turned into gall and wormwood! If God had continued the life of David's child to him, it would have been but a living monument of his sin and shame; and all that knew the child would have pointed at him, 'Yonder goes David's bastard child!'—and so would have kept David's wound still a-bleeding, 2 Sam. 12:16.

Many parents have sought the lives of their children with tears—who have lived afterwards to see them take such wicked courses and come to such dismal ends—as have brought their grey head with sorrow to their graves! It had been ten thousand times a greater mercy to many parents to have buried their children as soon as they were born, than to see them come to such unhappy ends as they often do.

Well! Christian, it may be the Lord has taken from you such a hopeful son, or such a dear daughter, and you say—How can I hold my peace? But hark, Christian, hark! Would not every sin which they had committed against your gracious God caused a new throe in your soul? Would not every temptation which they had fallen before been as a dagger at your heart? Would not every affliction that should have befallen them been as a knife at your throat? What are those pains, and pangs, and throes of child-birth, compared to those after pains, pangs, and throes that might have been brought upon you by the sins and sufferings of your children? Well! Christians, remain silent before the Lord, for you do not know what thorns in your eyes, what goads in your sides, nor what spears in your hearts—such near and dear mercies might have proved had they been longer continued.

(11.) Eleventhly, **You can not tell how bad your heart might have proved under the enjoyment of those near and dear mercies, which now you have lost.** Israel was very bad while they were in the wilderness—but they were much worse when they came to possess Canaan, that *land of desires*. Man's sin is apt to rise with outward prosperity. In the winter, men gird their clothes close about them—but in the summer they let them hang loose. In the *winter of adversity*, many a Christian girds his heart close to God, to Christ, to gospel, to godliness, to ordinances, to duties, etc., who in the *summer of mercy* hangs loose from all.

I have read of a pine tree, that, if the bark be pulled off, it will last a long time; but if the bark remains long on the tree—it rots the tree. Ah! how bad, how rotten, how base, would many have proved, had God not pulled off their bark of health, wealth, friendship! etc. Near and dear relations, they stick as close to us as the bark of a tree sticks to the tree, and if God should not pull off this bark, how apt should we be to rot and corrupt ourselves; therefore God is glad to bark us, and peel us, and strip us naked and bare of our dearest enjoyments and sweetest contentments, that so our souls, like the pine tree, may prosper and thrive the better.

Who can seriously consider of this, and not be silent, even then when God takes a jewel out of his bosom? Heap all the sweetest contentments and most desirable enjoyments of this world upon a man, they will not make

him a Christian; heap them upon a Christian, they will not make him a better Christian. Many a Christian has been made worse by the good things of this world; but where is the Christian that has been bettered by them? Therefore be quiet when God strips you of them!

(12.) Twelfthly, and lastly, **Get your heart more affected with spiritual losses—and then your soul will be less afflicted with those temporal losses that you mourn under.** Have you lost nothing of that presence of God—that once you had in your heart? Have you lost none of those warnings, meltings, quickenings, and cheerings—which once you had? Have you lost nothing of your communion with God, nor of the joys of the Spirit, nor of that peace of conscience—which once you enjoyed? Have you lost none of that ground which once you had gained upon sin, Satan, and the world? Have you lost nothing of that holy vigor and heavenly heat—which once you had in your heart? If you have not, which would be a miracle, a wonder; why do you complain of this or that temporal loss? For what is this, but to complain of the loss of your purse, when your God is safe? If you are a loser in spirituals, why do you not rather complain that you have lost your God—than that you have lost your gold; and that you have lost your Christ—than that you have lost your husband; and that you have lost your child, and that you are damnified in spirituals—than that you are damnified in temporals? Do you mourn over the body, which the soul has left? mourn rather over the soul that God has forsaken, as Samuel did for Saul, says one. 1 Sam. 15:14, seq.

I have read of Honorius, a Roman emperor, who was simple and childish enough; when one told him *Rome* was lost, he was exceedingly grieved, and cried out, 'Alas! alas!' for he supposed that it was his *hen* which he had nicknamed *Rome*—which hen he exceedingly loved. But when it was told him, that it was his imperial city of Rome, which was besieged, and taken, and all the citizens plundered, and made a prey to the crude enraged soldiers—then his spirits were revived that his loss was not so great as he imagined.

Now, what is the loss of a husband, a wife, a child, a friend—to the loss of God, Christ, the Spirit—or the least measure of grace or communion with God? etc. I say, What are all such losses—but the loss of a hen—compared

to the loss of Rome? And yet so simple and childish are many Christians, that they are more affected and afflicted with the loss of this and that poor temporal enjoyment—than they are with the loss of their most spiritual attainments! Ah, Christians! be but more affected with spiritual losses, and you will be more quiet and silent under temporal losses! Let the loss of Rome trouble you more—and then the loss of your hen will not trouble you at all. Let these things suffice for an answer to the second objection!

Objection 3. **Oh—but my afflictions, my troubles have been LONG upon me! and how then can I hold my peace?** Were they but of yesterday, I would be quiet; but they are of a long continuance; and therefore how can I be silent? To this I answer,

(1.) First, You cannot date your afflictions from the first day of your pollution. You have been polluted from the womb—but you have not been afflicted from the womb, Psalm 51:5. Many have been the days, the years, since you was born in sin—but few have been the days, the years, that you have experienced sorrow. You cannot easily number the days of your sinning—but you can easily number the days of your sufferings. You cannot number your days of mercy—but you can easily number your days of calamity. You cannot number your days of health—but you can easily count your days of sickness.

(2.) Secondly, **Your afflictions are not so long as the afflictions of other saints.** COMPARE your *winter nights* and other saints' winter nights together; your *storms* and troubles and other saints' storms and troubles together; your *losses* and other saints' losses together; your *miseries* and other saints' miseries together. Your afflictions are but as a moment—they are but as yesterday compared with the afflictions of other saints, whose whole lives have been made up of sorrows and sufferings—as the life of Christ was. Many a man's life has been nothing but a lingering death—Job 21:25, 'And another dies in the bitterness of his soul, and never eats with pleasure.' There are those that have never a good day all their days—who have not a day of rest among all their days of trouble; nor a day of health among all their days of sickness; nor a day of gladness among all their days of sadness; nor a day of strength among all their days of weakness; nor a day of honor among all their days of reproach;

whose whole life is one continued winter's night, who every day drink gall and wormwood, who lie down sighing, who rise groaning, and who spend their days in complaining, 'No sorrow like our sorrow, no sufferings like our sufferings!' Some there be who have always tears in their eyes, sorrows in their hearts, rods on their backs, and crosses in their hands—but it is not so with you! Therefore be silent.

(3.) Thirdly, **The longer your affliction has been, the sweeter will heaven be to you at last.** The longer the Israelites had been in the wilderness, the sweeter was Canaan to them at last; the longer the storm, the sweeter the calm; the longer the winter nights, the sweeter the summer days. Long afflictions will much set off the glory of heaven. The harbor is most sweet and desirable to those who have been long tossed upon the seas; so will heaven be to those who have been long in a sea of trouble. The new wine of Christ's kingdom is most sweet to those that have been long a-drinking of gall and vinegar, Luke 22:18. The crown of glory will be most delightful to those who have been long in combating with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The longer our journey is—the sweeter will be our end; and the longer our passage is—the sweeter will our haven be. The higher the mountain—the gladder we shall be when we are got to the top of it. The longer the heir is kept from his inheritance—the more delight he will have when he comes to possess it.

(4.) Fourthly, **They are not long—but short—if compared to that eternity of glory that is reserved for the saints,** 2 Cor. 4:16-18. If you turn to the words, you shall find for affliction, glory; for light afflictions, a weight of glory; and for short momentary afflictions, eternal glory. There will quickly be an end of your sadness—but there will never be an end of your happiness. There will soon be an end of your calamity and misery—but there will never be an end of your felicity and glory. The kingdoms of this world are not lasting, much less are they everlasting; they have all their final years—but the kingdom of heaven is an everlasting kingdom; of that there is no end. There are seven sorts of crowns that were in use among the Roman victors—but they were all fading and perishing; but the crown of glory that at last God will set upon the heads of his saints, shall continue as long as God himself continues. Who can look upon those eternal mansions that are above, and those

everlasting pleasures that be at God's right hand, and say that his affliction is long? **Well, Christian, let your affliction be ever so long, yet one hour's being in the bosom of Christ will make you forget both the length and strength of all your afflictions!**

(5.) Fifthly, **The longer you have been afflicted—the more in spiritual experiences you have been enriched.** 2 Cor. 1:5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us—so our consolation also abounds by Christ.' The lower the ebb—the higher the tide; the more pain—the more gain; the more afflicted—the more comforted; the lower we are cast down—the higher we shall be raised. Of all Christians, none so rich in spiritual experiences—as those that have been long in the school of affliction. Oh! the blessed stories that such call tell of the power of God supporting them, of the wisdom of God directing them, of the favor of God comforting them, of the presence of God assisting them. Oh! the love-tokens, the love-letters, the bracelets, the jewels which they are able to produce, since they have been in the furnace of affliction.

Oh! the **sin** that long afflictions have discovered and mortified. Oh! the **temptations** that long afflictions have prevented and vanquished. You shall as soon number the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea, as you shall number up the heavenly experiences of such Christians that have been long under afflictions. The afflicted Christian's heart is fullest of spiritual treasure. Though he may be poor in the world, yet he is rich in faith and holy experiences, James 2:5; and what are all the riches of this world to spiritual experiences? One spiritual experience is more worth than a world, and upon a dying bed and before a judgment-seat, every man will be of this opinion.

The men of this world will with much quietness and calmness of spirit bear much, and suffer much, and suffer long, when they find their sufferings to add to their revenues; and shall nature do more than grace? It is the common voice of nature, 'Who will show us any good' Psalm 4:6; how shall we come to be great, and high, and rich in the world? We care not what we suffer, nor how long we suffer—so we may but add house to house, heap to heap, bag to bag, and land to land, Isa 5:8. Oh how much more then should Christians be quiet and calm under all their afflictions, though they are never so long, considering that they do but add jewels to

a Christian's crown; they do but add to his spiritual experiences. The long afflicted Christian has the fullest and the greatest trade; and in the day of account, will be found the richest man.

(6.) Sixthly, **Long afflictions sometimes are but preparations to long-lived mercies.** Joseph's thirteen years' imprisonment was but a preparative to eighty years, reigning like a king; David's seven years' banishment was but a preparative to forty years' reigning in much honor and glory; Job's long afflictions were but preparatives to more long-lived mercies, as you may see in that last of Job; and those sad and sore trials that the Jews have been under, for above these sixteen hundred years, are to prepare them for those matchless mercies, and those endless glories, in some sense, that God in the latter days will crown them with "O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace. In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you. Isaiah 54:11-14.

Though they have been long afflicted and tossed, yet they shall at last upon glorious foundations be established; God will not only raise them out of their distressed estate wherein now they are—but he will advance them to a most eminent and glorious condition in this world; they shall be very glorious, and outshine all the world in spiritual excellencies and outward dignities—Isaiah 60:14, 16, 'The sons also of those who afflicted you shall come bending unto you, and all those who despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet—and they shall call you, the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.'

Ah, Christians! do not mutter nor murmur under your long afflictions, for you do not know but that by these long afflictions God may prepare and fit you for such favors and blessings that may never have end. By long afflictions God many times prepares his people for temporal, spiritual, and eternal mercies. If God by long afflictions makes more room in your

soul for himself, his Son, his Spirit, his word; if by long afflictions he shall crucify your heart more to the world and to your relations, and frame and fashion your soul more for celestial enjoyments; have you any cause to murmur? Surely not! But,

(7) Seventhly, **The longer a saint is afflicted on earth—the more glorious he shall shine in heaven.** The more affliction here—the more glory hereafter. This truth may be thus made out:

[1.] First, **The more gracious souls are afflicted, the more their graces are exercised and increased,** Heb. 12:10, Rom. 5:3-5. Now, the more grace here, the more glory hereafter; the higher in grace, the higher in glory. Grace differs nothing from glory but in name—grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace at the full. Glory is nothing but the perfection of grace. Heavenly happiness is nothing but the perfection of holiness. Grace is glory in the seed—and glory is grace in the flower. Grace is glory militant—and glory is grace triumphant. Grace and glory differ in degree—not kind. Now, it is most certain that the more gracious souls are afflicted—the more their graces are exercised; and the more grace is exercised—the more it is increased, as I have sufficiently demonstrated in this treatise already. But,

[2.] Secondly, **The longer a gracious soul is afflicted, the more his pious duties will be multiplied.** Psalm 109:4, 'In return for my friendship they accuse me; but I give myself unto prayer;' or as the Hebrew reads it, 'But I am prayer,' or 'a man of prayer.' In times of afflictions a Christian is all prayer; he is never so much a man of prayer, a man given up to prayer—as in times of affliction. A Christian is never so frequent, so fervent, so abundant in the work of the Lord, as when he is afflicted. 'Lord! in trouble have they visited you, they poured out prayer when your chastening was upon them.' Now, they do not only pray—but they pour out prayer; they were freely, largely, and abundantly in prayer when the rod was upon them. Look! as men plentifully pour out water for the quenching of a fire, so did they plentifully pour out their prayers before the Lord. And as affliction puts a man upon being much in prayer, so it puts him upon other duties of religion answerably. Now, this is most certain, that **though God will reward no man for his works, yet he will reward every man according to his works**—1 Cor. 15:58,

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord!' 2 Cor. 9:6, 'But this I say, he who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully;' or he who sows in benedictions or blessings shall reap in benedictions, as it runs in the original.

It is an excellent observation of Calvin upon God's rewarding the Rechabites' obedience, Jer. 35:19; God, says he, often recompenses the shadows and seeming-appearance of virtue, to show what delight he takes in the ample rewards he has reserved for true and sincere piety. Now, if the longer a Christian is afflicted, the more his pious services will be multiplied, and the more they are multiplied, the more his glory at last will be increased—then the longer a saint is afflicted on earth, the more glory he shall have when he comes to heaven. But,

[3.] Thirdly, **The longer any saint is afflicted, the more into the image and likeness of Christ he will be transformed.** It is one of God's great designs and ends in afflicting of his people, to make them more conformable to his Son; and God will not lose his end. Men often lose theirs—but God never has nor will lose his; and experience tells us that God does every day, by afflictions, accomplish his end upon his people. The longer they are afflicted, the more they are made conformable to Christ in meekness, lowliness, spiritualness, heavenliness, in faith, love, self-denial, pity, compassion, etc. Now certainly, the more like to Christ, the more beloved of Christ. The more a Christian is like to Christ, the more he is the delight of Christ; and the more like to Christ on earth, the nearer the soul shall sit to Christ in heaven. Nothing makes a man more conformable to Christ than afflictions.

Many would wear the crown with Christ, that do not care for bearing the cross with Christ. But,

(8.) Eighthly, **Impatience will but lengthen out the day of the sorrows.** Every impatient act adds one link more to the chain; every act of frowardness adds one lash more to those that have already been laid out; every act of muttering will but add stroke to stroke, and sting to sting; every act of murmuring will but add burden to burden, and storm

to storm. The most compendious way to lengthen out your long afflictions is to fret, and vex, and murmur under them. As you would see a speedy end of your long afflictions, sit mute and silent under them.

(9.) Ninthly, **God's time is the best time; mercy is never nearer.** Salvation is at hand, deliverance is at the door, when a man's heart is brought into such a frame as to be freely willing that God should time his mercy and time his deliverance for him, Acts 27:13-44. The physician's time is the best time for the patient to have ease. The impatient patient cries out to his physician, Oh! sir, a little ease, a little refreshment! Oh the pains, the tortures, that I am under! Oh, sir, I think every hour two, and every two ten, until comfort comes, until refreshment comes! But the prudent physician has turned the hour-glass, and is resolved that this medicine shall work so long, though his patient frets, flings, roars, tears. So, when we are under afflictions, we are apt to cry out, How long, Lord, shall it be before ease comes, before deliverance comes? Oh the tortures, oh the torments, that we are under! Lord, a little refreshment! Oh how long are these nights! oh how tedious are these days! But God has turned our glass, and he will not hearken to our cry until our glass be out. After all our fretting and flinging, we must wait his time, who knows best when to deliver us, and how to deliver us, out of all our troubles, and who will not stay a moment when the glass is out that he has turned. But,

(10.) Tenthly, and lastly, **They shall last no longer than there is need, and then they shall work for your good.** It is with souls as it is with bodies; some bodies are more easily and more suddenly cured than others are, and so are some souls. God will not allow the plaster to lie one day, no—not one hour, no—not a moment, longer than there is need. Some flesh heals quickly; proud flesh is long a-healing. By affliction God quickly heals some—but others are long a-healing—1 Pet. 1:6, 'If need be, you are in heaviness, through manifold trials,' or through various afflictions. The burden shall lie no longer upon you than needs must; your pain shall endure no longer than needs must; your illness shall make you no longer sick than needs must, etc. Your heavenly Father is a physician, as wise as he is loving. When your heart begins to grow high—he sees there is need of some heavy affliction to bring it low; when your heart grows cold—he sees there is need of some fiery affliction to heat it

and warm it; when your heart grows dull and dead—he sees there is need of some sharp affliction to enliven and quicken it. And as your afflictions shall continue no longer than there is need, so they shall last no longer than they shall work for your good. If all along they shall work for your good, you have no cause to complain that your afflictions are long. That they shall thus work, I have fully proved in the former part of this book. And thus much for answer to the third objection.

Objection 4. **I would be mute and silent under my afflictions—but my afflictions daily MULTIPLY and increase upon me;** like the waves of the sea, they come rolling over the neck of one another, etc.; and how then can I hold my peace? How can I lay my hand upon my mouth, when the sorrows of my heart are daily increased? To this I answer thus:

(1.) First, **Your afflictions are not so many as your sins**, Psalm 51:12. Your sins are as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea, that cannot be numbered. There are three things that no Christian can number—

1. his sins;
2. divine favors;
3. the joys and pleasures which are at Christ's right hand.

But there is no Christian so poor an accountant—but that he may quickly sum up the number of his troubles and afflictions in this world. Your sins, O Christian, are like the Syrians that filled the country—but your afflictions are like the two little flocks of goats which grazed before them, 1 Kings 20:27; therefore remain silent before the Lord.

(2) Secondly, **If such should not be mute and silent under their afflictions, whose afflictions are increased and multiplied upon them, there are none in the world who will be found mute and silent under their afflictions**—for certainly there are none who do not find the waters of affliction to grow daily upon them. If this be not so, what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? 1 Sam. 15:14. What means the daily sighs, groans, and complaints of Christians,

if their troubles, like the waters in Ezekiel's sanctuary, be not still increasing upon them? Ezek. 47:1, 20. Every day brings us tidings of new straits, new troubles, new crosses, new losses, new trials, etc.

(3.) Thirdly, **Your afflictions are not so many as God MIGHT have exercised you with.** God could as easily exercise you with ten as with two, and with a hundred as with ten, and with a thousand as with a hundred. Let your afflictions be ever so many—yet they are not so many as they might have been, had God either consulted with your sins, with your deserts, or with his own justice. There is no comparison between those afflictions which God has inflicted upon you, and those that he might have inflicted. You have not one burden of a thousand that God could have laid on—but he would not; therefore remain silent before the Lord.

(4.) Fourthly, **Your afflictions are not so many as your mercies,** no, they are not to be named in the day wherein your mercies are spoken of. What are your crosses to your comforts, your miseries to your mercies, your days of sickness to your days of health, your days of weakness to the days of strength, your days of scarcity to your days of plenty? And this is that the wise man would have us seriously to consider—Eccles. 7:14, 'In the day of adversity consider,'—but what must we consider? —'that God has set the one over against the other.' As God has set winter and summer, night and day, fair weather and foul, one over against another; so let us set our present mercies over against our present troubles, and we shall presently find that our mercies exceed our troubles, that they mightily over-balance our present afflictions; therefore let us be silent, let us lay our hands upon our mouths.

(5.) Fifthly, **If you cast up a just and righteous account, you will find that they are not so many as the afflictions which have befallen other saints.** Have you reckoned up the afflictions which befell Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Asaph, Haman, the prophets and apostles? If you have, you will say that your afflictions are no afflictions, compared to those which have befallen them. Their lives were filled up with sorrows and sufferings—but so are not yours; therefore kiss the rod and be silent. It may be, If you look upon your relations, your friends, your neighbors, you may find many whose afflictions for number and

weight do much outweigh yours; therefore be silent, murmur not, hold your peace.

(6.) Sixthly, **You have not so many afflictions as attended our Lord Jesus; whose whole life, from the cradle to the cross, was nothing but a life of sufferings.** Osorius, writing of the sufferings of Christ, says, That the crown of thorns bored his head with seventy-two wounds. Many seventy-two afflictions did Christ meet with while he was in this world. None can be ignorant of this who have but read the New Testament. He is called 'a man of sorrows;' his whole life was filled up with sorrows. When he was but a little past thirty years of age, sorrows, pains, troubles, oppositions, persecutions, had so worn him, that the Jews judged him to be towards fifty years old, John 8:57. A man were as good compare the number of his bosom friends with the stars of heaven, as compare his afflictions and the afflictions of Christ together.

(7.) Seventhly, **Muttering and murmuring will but add to the number.** When the child is under the rod, his crying and fretting does but add lash to lash, blow to blow; but of this, enough before.

(8.) Eighthly, and lastly, **Though afflictions are many, yet they are not so many as the joys, the pleasures, the delights that are at Christ's right hand.** As the pleasures of heaven are matchless and endless, so they are numberless. Augustine, speaking concerning what we can say of heaven, says that it is but a little drop of the sea, and a little spark of the great furnace. Those good things of eternal life are so many, that they exceed number; so great, that they exceed measure; so precious, that they are above all estimation. Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolised. For every affliction, many thousand joys and delights will attend the saints in a glorified estate. What will that life be, or rather what will not that life be, says one, speaking of heaven, since all good is in such a life; voices and music which time cannot ravish away; fragrances which are never dissipated; a feast which is never consumed; a blessing which eternity bestows—but eternity shall never see at an end. And let this suffice for answer to this fourth objection.

Objection 5. **My afflictions are very GREAT, how then can I hold my peace?** Though they were many, yet if they were not great, I would be mute—but alas! they are very great. Oh! how can I be silent under them? How can I now lay my hand upon my mouth?

Answer (1.) To this I answer, **Though your afflictions are great, yet they are not so great as your sins**, yourself being judge; therefore remain silent before the Lord—Ezra 9:13, 'And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses, seeing that you our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve.' Those who were under the sense and guilt of great sins—have cause to be silent under their greatest sufferings. Nearer complain that your afflictions are great—until you can say that your sins are not great. It is but justice that great afflictions should attend great sins; therefore be quiet. Your sins are like great rocks and mighty mountains—but your afflictions are not so great; therefore lay your hand upon your mouth. The remembrance of great sins should cool and calm a man's spirit under his greatest troubles; and if the sense of your great sins will not stop your mouth and silence your heart, I know not what will.

(2.) Secondly, **It may be your afflictions are not great, if you look upon them with Scripture spectacles**, 1 Peter 5:10. Carnal reason many times looks upon molehills as mountains, and scratches upon the hand as stabs at the heart; we make elephants of flies, and of little pigmies we frame giants. Carnal reason often looks upon troubles through *false glasses*. As there are some glasses that will make great things seem little, so there are others that will make little things seem great, and it may be that you look upon your afflictions through one of them, Isa 54:7, 8. Look upon your afflictions in the glass of the word; look upon them in a Scripture dress, and then they will be found to be but little. He who shall look into a gospel glass, shall be able to say, "Heavy afflictions are light, long afflictions are short, bitter afflictions are sweet, and great afflictions are little." It is good to make a judgment of your afflictions by a gospel light and by a gospel rule. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our **light** and **momentary** troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our

eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is **temporary**, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Artemon, an engineer, was afraid of his own shadow. Men that look not upon their afflictions in a Scripture dress, will be afraid even of the shadow of trouble, they will cry out, 'No affliction to our affliction, no burden to our burden, no cross to our cross, no loss to our loss!' But one look into a gospel glass would make them change their tune. The lion is not always so great nor so terrible as he is painted; neither are our troubles always so great as we imagine them to be. When Hagar's bottle of water was spent, she sat down and fell a-weeping, as if she had been utterly undone, Gen. 21:17-19; her provision and her patience, her bottle and her hope were both out together. But her affliction was not so great as she imagined, for there was a well of water near, though for a time she saw it not. So many Christians, they eye the empty bottle, the affliction, the burden that is at present upon them, and then they fall a-weeping, a-whining, a-complaining, a-repining, a-murmuring, as if they were utterly undone! And yet a well of water, a well of comfort, a well of refreshment, a well of deliverance is near—and their case is no way so sad, nor so bad as they imagine it to be.

(3.) Thirdly, **The greater your afflictions are, the nearer is deliverance to you.** When these waters rise high then salvation comes upon the wings; when your troubles are very great, then mercy will ride post to deliver you. Deut. 32:36, 'For the Lord will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone.' Israel of old, and England of late years, has often experienced this truth. Wine was nearest, when the water-pots were filled with water up to the brim, John 2:1-11; so oftentimes mercy is nearest, deliverance is nearest, when our afflictions are at the highest. When a Christian is brim-full of troubles, then the wine of consolation is at hand; therefore hold your peace, murmur not—but sit silent before the Lord.

(4.) Fourthly, **Your afflictions are not great, if compared to the glory that shall be revealed,** 2 Cor. 4:16-18—Rom. 8:18, 'For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us—or upon us.' The apostle, upon casting up of his accounts, concludes that all the pains, chains, troubles,

trials, and torments which they meet with in this world, was not to be put in the balance with the glory of heaven. As the globe of the earth, which the mathematicians account is many thousands of miles in compass, yet being compared unto the greatness of the starry sky's circumference, is but a small point; so **the troubles, afflictions, and sorrows of this life, in comparison with eternal happiness and blessedness, are to be reputed as nothing; they are but as the point of a pin—compared to the starry heavens.**

Those who have heard most of the glory of heaven, have not heard one quarter of that which the saints shall find there; that glory is **inconceivable** and **inexpressible!** Augustine relates, that the very same day wherein Jerome died, he was in his study, and had got pen, ink, and paper, to write something, of the glory of heaven to Jerome; and suddenly he saw a light breaking into his study, and a sweet smell that came unto him, and this voice he thought he heard—O Augustine! what are you doing? Do you think to put the sea into a little vessel? When the heavens shall cease from their continual motion, then shall you be able to understand what the glory of heaven is—and not before!

Nicephorus speaks of one Agbarus, a great man, that hearing so much of Christ's fame, by reason of the miracles he wrought, sent a painter to take his picture, and that the painter when he came was not able to do it, because of that radiance and divine splendor which sat on Christ's face. Such is the splendor, the brightness, the glory, the happiness, and blessedness—which is reserved for the saints in heaven—that had I all the tongues of men on earth, and all the excellencies of the angels in heaven—yet I would not be able to conceive, nor to express that vision of glory to you! It is best to be hastening there, that we may feel and enjoy that which we shall never be able to declare!

(5.) Fifthly, **Your afflictions are not great, if compared with the afflictions and torments of many of the damned, who when they were in this world, never sinned at so high a rate as you have done!** Doubtless there are many now in hell, who never sinned against such clear light as you have done, nor against such special love as you have done, nor against such choice means as you have done, nor against such precious mercies as you have done, nor against such singular

remedies as you have done. Certainly there are many now a-roaring in everlasting burnings, who never sinned against such deep convictions of conscience as you have done, nor against such close and strong reasonings of the Spirit as you have done, nor against such free offers of mercy and rich tenders of grace as you have done, nor against such sweet wooings and multiplied entreaties of a bleeding dying Savior as you have done; therefore remain silent before the Lord. What are your afflictions, your torments—to the torments of the damned, whose torments are numberless, bottomless, remediless, and endless! Whose pains are without intermission of mitigation; who have **weeping** served for the first course, and **gnashing of teeth** for the second course, and the **gnawing worm** for the third course, and **intolerable pain** for the fourth course! Yet the pain of the body is but the body of pain; **the very soul of sorrow and pain** is the soul's sorrow and pain. The everlasting alienation and separation from God is served for the fifth course!

Ah, Christian! how can you seriously think on these things and not lay your hand upon your mouth—even when you are under the greatest sufferings? Your sins have been far greater than many of those who are now in hell, and **your 'great' afflictions are but a flea-bite compared to theirs!** Therefore hush your murmuring, and be silent before the Lord!

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, **If your afflictions are so great; then what madness and folly will it be for you to make them greater by murmuring!** Every act of murmuring will but add load unto load, and burden to burden. The Israelites under great afflictions fell a-murmuring, and their murmuring proved their utter ruin, as you may see in that Num. 14. Murmuring will but put God upon heating the furnace seven times hotter; therefore remain silent before the Lord! 1 Cor. 10:11. But of this I have spoken sufficiently already.

Object. 6. **Oh! but MY afflictions are greater than other men's afflictions are;** and how then can I be silent? Oh! there is no affliction like **my** affliction! How can I not murmur? I answer,

(1.) First, **It may be your sins are greater than other men's sins**, Jer. 3:6-12. If you have sinned against more light, more love, more mercies, more experiences, more promises, than others—no wonder if your afflictions are greater than others! If this be your case, you have more cause to be mute than to murmur; and certainly, if you do but seriously look into *the black book of your conscience*, you will find greater sins there than any you can charge upon any person or people on earth! If you should not, I think you would justly incur the censure which that sour philosopher passed upon grammarians, that is—that they were better acquainted with the evils of Ulysses than with their own. Never complain that your afflictions are greater than others', except you can evidence that your sins are lesser than others.

(2.) Secondly, **It may be you are under some present mental distemper, which disenables you to make a right judgment of the different dealings of God with yourself and others**. When the mind is distempered, and the brain troubled, many things seem to be that are not; and then little things seem very great. Oh! the strange passions, the strange imaginations, the strange conclusions, that attend a distempered judgment! I have read of a foolish emperor, who, to show the greatness of his city, made show of many spiders.

When the mind is disturbed, men many times **say** they know not that, and **do** they know not what. It may be, when these clouds are blown over, and your mind cleared, and your judgment settled, you will be of another opinion. The supplicant woman appealed from *drunken* king Philip—to *sober* king Philip. It is good to appeal from a distempered mind to a clear composed mind, for that is the way to make a righteous judgement of all the righteous dispensations of God, both towards ourselves and towards others.

(3.) Thirdly, **It may be that the Lord sees that it is very needful that your afflictions should be greater than others**. It may be your heart is **harder** than other men's hearts, and **prouder** and stouter than other men's hearts, it may be your heart is more **impure** than others, and more **carnal** than others, or else more **selfish** and more **worldly** than others, or else more deceitful and more **hypocritical** than others, or else more **cold** and careless than others, or more formal and

**lukewarm** than others. Now, if this is your case, certainly God sees it very necessary, for the breaking of your hard heart, and the humbling of your proud heart, and the cleansing of your foul heart, and the spiritualizing of your carnal heart, etc., that your afflictions should be greater than others; and therefore do not murmur.

Where the disease is strong, the remedy must be strong—else the cure will never be wrought. God is a wise physician, and he would never give strong medicine if a weaker one could effect the cure, Jer. 30:11, and 46:28; Isaiah 27:8. The more rusty the nail is, the oftener we put it into the fire to purify it; and the more crooked it is, the more blows and the harder blows we give to straighten it. You have been long a-gathering rust; and therefore, if God deal thus with you, you have no cause to complain.

(4.) Fourthly, **Though your afflictions are greater than this and that particular man's afflictions, yet doubtless there are many thousands in the world whose afflictions are greater than yours.** Can you seriously consider the sore calamities and miseries that the **devouring sword** has brought upon many thousand Christians in foreign parts—and say that your afflictions are greater than theirs? Surely not! Pliny, in his Natural History, writes that the nature of the basilisk is to kill all trees and shrubs it breathes upon, and to scorch and burn all herbs and grass it passes over. Such are the dismal effects of war. The sword knows no difference between the godly and the ungodly, between the innocent and the guilty, between young and old, between bond and free, between male and female, between the precious and the vile, between the prince and the subject, between the nobleman and the beggar. The sword eats the flesh and drinks the blood of all sorts of people, without putting any difference between one or the other. The poor Christians in Poland, Denmark, Germany, and several other parts, have found it so; many of their wounds are not healed to this day. Who can retain in his fresh and bleeding memory the dreadful work that the sword of war has made in this nation, and not say, Surely many thousands have been greater sufferers than myself; they have resisted unto blood—but so have not I, Heb. 12:4. But,

(5.) Fifthly, **As your afflictions are greater than other men's—so**

**it may be your MERCIES are greater than other men's mercies;** and if so, you have no cause to complain—but to remain silent before the Lord. As Job's afflictions were greater than other men's, so his mercies were greater than other men's; and Job wisely sets one against another, and then lays his hand upon his mouth, Job 1:21, 22. It may be you have had more **health** than others, and more **strength** than others, and more **prosperity** than others, and more **smiling providences** than others, and more **good days** than others, and more sweet and comfortable **relations** than others; and if this be your case, you have much cause to be mute, you have no cause to murmur. If now your *winter nights* are longer than others, remember your *summer days* have formerly been longer than others; and therefore remain silent before the Lord. But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, **By great afflictions the Lord may greaten your graces**, and greaten your name and fame in the world, James 5:10, 11. By **Job's** great afflictions, God did greaten his faith, and greaten his patience, and greaten his integrity, and greaten his wisdom and knowledge, and greaten his experience, and greaten his name and fame in the world—as you all know who have but read his book. Bonds and afflictions waited on **Paul** in every city, Acts 20:23, 2 Cor. 11; his afflictions and sufferings were very great—but by them the Lord greatened his spirit, his zeal, his courage, his confidence, his resolution, and his name and fame, both among sinners and saints. Certainly, if you are dear to Christ, he will greaten you in spirituals—by all the great afflictions which are upon you; he will raise your faith, and inflame your love, and quicken your hope, and brighten your zeal, and perfect your patience, and perfume your name, and make it like a precious ointment, 'like a precious ointment poured forth', Prov. 22:1, Eccles. 7:1; so that good men shall say, and bad men shall say, 'Lo, here is a Christian indeed! Here is a man more worth than the gold of Ophir!' Therefore, remain silent before the Lord, though your afflictions are greater than others.

Object. 7. **I would be silent—but my outward affliction is attended with sore TEMPTATIONS;** God has not only outwardly afflicted me—but Satan is let loose to buffet me; and therefore how can I

be silent? how can I hold my peace, now I am fallen under manifold temptations? To this I answer:

(1.) First, **No man is the less loved by God, because he is tempted.** No! Those whom God loves best—are usually tempted most, Eph. 6:12. Witness David, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, yes, Christ himself—who, as he was beloved above all others, so he was tempted above all others! He was tempted to question his Sonship; he was tempted to the worst idolatry, even to worship the devil himself; to the greatest infidelity, to distrust his Father's providence, and to use unlawful means for necessary supplies; and to self-murder, 'Cast yourself down,' etc.

Those who were once glorious on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven—have been severely tempted and assaulted by Satan. It is as natural and common for the choicest saints to be tempted—as it is for the sun to shine, the bird to fly, the fire to burn. The eagle complains not of her wings, nor the peacock of her train of feathers, nor the nightingale of her voice—because these are natural to them. No more should saints of their temptations, because they are natural to them. Our whole life, says Augustine, is nothing but a temptation; **the best men have been the worst tempted;** therefore, remain silent before the Lord.

(2.) Secondly, **Temptations which are resisted and bewailed—will never hurt you, nor harm you.** Distasteful temptations seldom or never prevail. So long as the soul distastes them and the will remains firmly averse against them—they can do no hurt. So long as the language of the soul is, 'Get behind me, Satan!' Mat. 16:23, the soul is safe. It is not Satan tempting—but my assenting; it is not his enticing—but my yielding; which undoes me. Temptations may be troubles to my mind—but they are not sins upon my soul—while I am in arms against them. If your heart trembles and your flesh quakes when Satan tempts—your condition is safe enough. If Satan's temptations are your greatest afflictions—his temptations shall never conquer you nor harm you. Therefore, if this be your case, remain silent before the Lord.

(3.) Thirdly, **Temptations are rather hopeful evidences that your estate is good, that you are dear to God, and that it shall go well with you forever, than otherwise. God had but one Son without**

**corruption—but he had none without temptation**, Heb. 2:17, 18. Pirates make the fiercest assaults upon those vessels which are most richly laden; so does Satan upon those souls that are most richly laden with the treasures of grace, with the riches of glory. Pirates let empty vessels pass and repass, without assaulting them; so does Satan let souls that are empty of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of grace, pass and repass without tempting or assaulting of them. When nothing will satisfy the soul—but a full departure out of Egypt, from the bondage and slavery of sin, and that the soul is firmly resolved upon a march for Canaan; then Satan, Pharaoh-like, will furiously pursue after the soul with horses and chariots, that is—with a whole army of temptations Exod. 14:9.

Well! a tempted soul when it is worst with him, may safely argue thus—"If God were not my friend, Satan would not be so much my enemy; if there were not something of God within me, Satan would never make such attempts to storm me; if the love of God were not set upon me, Satan would never shoot so many fiery darts to wound me; if the heart of God were not towards me, the hand of Satan would not be so strong against me." When Beza was tempted, he made this answer, "Whatever I was, Satan, I am now 'in Christ a new creature', and that is it which troubles you; now I see that you envy me the grace of my Savior."

Satan's malice to tempt, is no sufficient ground for a Christian to dispute God's love and acceptance upon. If it were, there is no saint on earth that would quietly possess divine favor a week, a day, an hour. The jailer is quiet, when his prisoner is in bolts—but if he has escaped, then he pursues him with haste and flurry. You knew how to apply it. Men do not hate the picture of a toad; the wolf does not pounce upon a painted sheep; no more does Satan much disturb those he has in chains! Therefore remain silent before the Lord, though you are inwardly tempted, as well as outwardly afflicted.

(4.) Fourthly, **While Satan is tempting of you, Christ in the court of glory is interceding for you**—Luke 22:31, 32, 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he no sift you as wheat—but *I have prayed for you*, that your faith fail not!' Satan would gladly have been shaking of him up and down, as wheat is shaken in a sieve; but Christ's intercession frustrates Satan's designed

temptations. **Whenever Satan stands at our elbow to tempt us—Christ stands at his Father's to intercede for us!** "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them!" Hebrews 7:25.

Some think that Christ intercedes only by virtue of his merits; others think that it is done only with his mouth; probably it may be done both ways. Is it likely, that that mouth which pled for us on earth, (John 17) should be altogether silent for us in heaven? Christ is a person of highest honor; he is the greatest favorite in the court of heaven; he always stands between us and danger. If there be any evil plotted or designed against us by Satan, the great accuser of the brethren—Christ foresees it, and by his intercession prevents it. When Satan puts in his pleas and commences suit upon suit against us, Christ still undertakes our cause; he answers all his pleas, and non-suits Satan at every turn; and in despite of hell he preserves us in divine favor.

When Satan pleads, 'Lord! here are such and such sins that your children have committed! and here are such and such duties which they have omitted! and here are such and such mercies which they have not improved! and here are such and such ordinances which they have slighted! and here are such and such motions of the Spirit which they have quenched!' Divine justice answers, 'All this is true—but Christ has appeared on their behalf; he has pleaded their cause; he has fully and fairly answered whatever has been objected and given complete satisfaction to the utmost farthing! So there is no accusation nor condemnation which can stand in force against them!' "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us!" Romans 8:33-34

Christ's intercession should be the soul's anchor-hold in time of temptation. In the day of your temptation you need not be overly troubled or disturbed—but in peace and patience possess your own soul; considering what a friend you have in the court of glory, and how he is most active for you—when Satan is most busy in tempting of you.

(5.) Fifthly and lastly, **All temptations that the saints meet with, shall work much for their good; they shall be much for their gain.** The profit and advantage that will redound to tempted souls by all their temptations is very great, Rom. viii 28, Lam. 1:12. Now this will appear to be a most certain truth, by an induction of particulars thus:

[1.] First, **By temptations God multiples and increases his children's spiritual experiences, the increase of which is better than the increase of gold.** In the *school of temptation*, God gives his children the greatest experience of his **power** supporting them, of his **word** comforting of them, of his **mercy** warming of them, of his **wisdom** counseling of them, of his **faithfulness** joying of them, and of his **grace** strengthening of them—2 Cor. 12:9, 'My grace shall be sufficient for you.' Paul never experienced so deeply what almighty power was, what the everlasting arms of mercy were, and what infinite grace and goodness was—as when he was under the buffetings of Satan.

[2.] Secondly, **All their temptations shall be medicinal; their temptations shall be happy preventions of great abominations**—2 Cor. 12:7, 'Lest I should be exalted, lest I should be exalted.' It is twice in that one verse; he begins with it, and he ends with it. If he had not been buffeted, he might have been more proud in his own conceit than he was before in his ecstasy. Ah, tempted souls! you say you are nothing, very nothing—but had it not been for the *school of temptation*, you might have been stark nothing before this time! You say you are sick, you are even sick to death. Why, your sickness had before this time killed you, had not temptations been medicinals to you. You are bad under temptations; but doubtless you would have been much worse had not God made temptation medicinal to you.

[3.] Thirdly, **Temptation shall much promote the exercise of grace.** As the spring in the watch sets all the wheels a-going, and as Solomon's virtuous woman set all her maidens to work—so temptation sets faith to work, and love on work, and repentance to work, and hope to work, and holy fear to work, and godly sorrow to work! As the wind sets the mill to work—so the *wind of temptations* sets the graces of the saints a-going. Now **faith** runs to Christ, now it hugs a promise, now it pleads the blood of Christ, now it looks to the recompense of reward, now it

takes the sword of the Spirit! Now **love** cleaves to Christ, now love hangs upon Christ, now love will fight it out to the death for Christ! Now **hope** flies to the horns of the sanctuary, now hope puts on her helmet, now hope casts her anchor upon that which is within the veil! Grace is never more active, than when a Christian is most tempted.

Satan made a bow of Job's wife; and shot a temptation by her at **Job**, thinking to have shot him to the heart—'Curse God, and die!' But the activity of Job's graces was a breastplate which made him temptation-proof. The devil, tempting Bonaventure, told him he was a reprobate, and therefore persuaded him to drink in the present pleasures of this life; for, said he, you are excluded from the future joys with God in heaven. Bonaventure's graces being active, he answered, No! Not so, Satan—if I must not enjoy God after this life, let me enjoy him as much as I can in this life.

[4.] Fourthly, **By temptations the Lord will make you the more serviceable and useful to others.** None so fit and able to **relieve** tempted souls, to **sympathize** with tempted souls, to **support** tempted souls, to **counsel** tempted souls, to **pity** tempted souls, to **nourish** tempted souls, to **bear with** tempted souls, and to **comfort** tempted souls—as those who have been in *the school of temptations!* "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

By temptations God trains up his servants, and fits and capacitates them to support and shelter their fellow-brethren. One tempted Christian, says Luther, is more profitable and useful to other Christians than a hundred—I may add, than a thousand—who have not known the depths of Satan—who have not been in the school of temptation. He who is *a master of arts in the school of temptation* has learned an art to comfort, to support, and gently to handle tempted and distressed souls, infinitely beyond what all human arts can reach unto. No doctor to him that has been a doctor in the school of temptation; all other doctors are but illiterate dunces compared to him.

[5.] Fifthly, **It is an honor to the saints to be tempted, and in the outcome to have an honorable conquest over over the tempter.**

It was a great honor to David that he should be put to fight hand to hand with Goliath, and in the outcome to overcome him, 1 Sam. 17; but it was far greater honor to Job and Paul, that they should be put to combat in the open field with Satan himself, and in the end to gain a famous conquest over him, as they did, Job 1; 2 Cor. 12:7-10. It was a very great honor to David's three mighty men, that in jeopardy of their lives they broke through the army of the Philistines, to bring water to David out of the well of Bethlehem, and did effect it in spite of all the strength and power of their enemies, though it were to the extremest hazard of their blood and lives, 2 Sam. 23:13-18; but it is a far greater honor to the saints to be furnished with a spirit of strength, courage, and valor, to break through an army of temptations, and in the end to triumph over them! Rom. 8:13-18. And yet this honor have all the saints—1 Cor. 10:13, 'But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' Rom. 16:20, 'And the God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet shortly.' 1 John 2:14, 'I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.' 1 John 5:18, 'We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin'—nor does he sin as other men do—delightfully, greedily, customarily, resolvedly, impenitently, etc. 'But he who is begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one cannot harm him.'

The glorious victory that the people of God had over Pharaoh and his great army, Exod. 14, was a figure of the glorious victory that the saints shall obtain over Satan and his instruments, which is clear from Rev. 15:3, where we have the song of Moses and of the Lamb. But why the song of Moses and of the Lamb—but to hint this to us, that the overthrow of Pharaoh was a figure of the overthrow of Satan? And the triumphal song of Moses was a figure of that song which the saints shall sing for their overthrow of Satan. As certainly as Israel overcame Pharaoh, so certainly shall every true Israelite overcome Satan. The Romans were beaten in many minor skirmishes, but never were overcome in a set war; in the long run they overcame all their enemies. Though a Christian may lie

beaten by Satan in some particular skirmishes, yet at the long run he is sure of an honorable conquest. God puts a great deal of honor upon a poor soul when he brings him into the open field to fight it out with Satan. By fighting, he overcomes, he gains the victory, he triumphs over Satan, and leads captivity captive. Augustine gives this reason why God permitted Adam at first to be tempted, that is—that he might have had the more glory in resisting and withstanding Satan's temptation. It is the glory of a Christian to be made strong to resist, and to have his resistance crowned with a happy conquest.

[6.] Sixthly, **By temptations the Lord will make his people more frequent and more abundant in the work of prayer.** Every temptation proves a strong alarm to prayer. When Paul was in the school of temptation, he prayed thrice, that is, often, 1 Cor. 12:8, 9. Days of temptation—are days of great supplication. Christians usually pray most—when they are tempted most. They are most busy with God—when Satan is most busy with them. A Christian is most upon his knees—when Satan stands most at his elbow.

Augustine was a man much tempted—and a man much in prayer. Holy prayer, says he, is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to the devil.

Luther was a man under manifold temptations, and a man much in prayer. He is said to have spent three hours every day in prayer. He used to say that **prayer was the best book in his study.**

Chrysostom was much in the school of temptation, and delighted much in prayer. Oh! says he, it is more bitter than death to be spoiled of prayer, and hereupon, as he observes, Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life than to lose his prayer. But,

[7.] Seventhly, **By temptations the Lord will make his people more and more conformable to the image of his Son.** Christ was much tempted, he was often in the school of temptation; and the more a Christian is tempted, the more into the likeness of Christ he will be transformed. Of all men in the world, tempted souls do most resemble Christ to the life, in meekness, lowliness, holiness, heavenliness, etc. The

image of Christ is most fairly stamped upon tempted souls. **Tempted souls are much in looking up to Jesus—and every gracious look upon Christ changes the soul more and more into the image of Christ.** Tempted souls experience much of the succouring of Christ, and the more they experience the sweet of the succourings of Christ—the more they grow up into the likeness of Christ. **Temptations are the tools by which the Father does more and more carve, form, and fashion his precious saints into the similitude and likeness of his dearest Son.**

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, take many things in one; **by temptations, God makes sin more hateful, and the world less delightful, and relations less hurtful.** By temptations, God discovers to us our own weakness and the creature's insufficiency in the hour of temptation to help us or support us. By temptations, God will brighten our Christian armor, and make us stand more upon our Christian watch, and keep us closer to a succouring Christ. By temptations, the Lord will make his ordinances to be more highly prized, and heaven to be more earnestly desired. Now seeing that temptations shall work so eminently for the saints' good, why should not Christians be mute and silent? why should they not hold their peace, and lay their hands upon their mouths, though their afflictions are attended with great temptations?

**Objection 8. Oh! But God has deserted me! He has forsaken me!** He who should comfort my soul—stands afar off! How can I be silent? The Lord has hid his face away from me; clouds are gathered around me; God has turned his back upon me! How can I be silent?

Supposing that the desertion is real, and not in appearance only, as sometimes it falls out—I answer,

(1.) First, **It has been the common lot, portion, and condition of the choicest saints in this world, to be deserted and forsaken by God,** Psalm 30:6, 7; Psalm 77:6, and 88:6; Job 23:8, 9; Cant. 3:1-4, 5:6, 7; Isaiah 8:17; Micah 7:7-9. If God deals no worse with you than he has dealt with his most bosom friends, with his choicest jewels—you have no

reason to complain. But,

(2.) Secondly, **God's forsaking of you is only partial, it is not total**, Psalm. 9:4; Gen. 49:23, 24. God may forsake his people in part—but he never wholly forsakes them; he may forsake them in respect of his quickening presence, and in respect of his comforting presence—but he never forsakes them in respect to his supporting presence; 2 Cor. 12:9, 'My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;' Psalm 37:23, 24, 'The steps of a godly man are ordered by the Lord; and he delights in his way. Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down—for the Lord upholds him with his hand.' God's supporting hand of grace is still under his people—Psalm 63:8, ' My soul follows hard after you—your right hand upholds me.' Christ has always one hand to uphold his people, and another hand to embrace them, Cant. 2:16. The everlasting arms of God are always underneath his people, Deut. 33:27. And this the saints have always found; witness David, Heman, Asaph, Job, etc.

Geographers write that the city of Syracuse, in Sicily, is so curiously situated that the sun is never out of sight. Though the children of God sometimes are under some clouds of afflictions, yet the Sun of mercy, the Sun of righteousness, is never quite out of sight. But,

(3.) Thirdly, **Though God has forsaken you—his love abides and continues constant to you.** He loves you with an everlasting love—Jer. 31:8, 'Where he loves, he loves to the end.' John 13:1. "But Zion said —'The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me!' Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands!" Isaiah 49:14-16. Look, as people engrave the mark, name, or picture of those whom they dearly love and entirely affect, upon some stone which they wear at their bosoms, or upon some ring which they wear on their finger, so has God engraved Zion upon the palms of his hands; she was still in his eye, and always dear to his heart, though she did not think so.

As Joseph's heart was full of love to his brethren, even then when he spoke roughly to them, and withdrew himself from them—for he must go

aside and ease his heart by weeping; so the heart of God is full of love to his people, even then when he seems to be most displeased with them, and to turn his back upon them. Though God's dispensations may be changeable towards his people, yet his gracious disposition is unchangeable towards them, Mal. 3:6. When God puts the blackest veil of all upon his face, yet then his heart is full of love to his people—then his affections are yearning towards them—Jer. 31:18-20, 'Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my heart yearns for him—I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.' The mother's affections cannot more yearn after the tender babe than God does after his distressed ones.

As Moses' mother, when she had put him into the ark of bulrushes, Exod. 2, wept to see the babe weep, and when she was turned from him, she could not but cast a weeping eye of love towards him; so when God turns aside from his people, yet he cannot but cast an eye of love towards them—Hos. 11:1, 'How shall I give you up, O Ephraim!' etc. Here are four different 'hows' in the text—the like not to be found in the whole book of God. I am even at a stand, justice calls for vengeance—but mercy interposes; my affections yearn, my heart melts—oh, how shall I give you up? Oh, I cannot give you up! I will not give you up! God's love is always like himself, unchangeable; his love is everlasting; it is a love which never decays nor waxes cold; it is like the stone albestos, of which Solinus writes that being once made hot—it can never be cooled again.

(4.) Fourthly, **Though your Lord has hid his face from you—yet certainly you have his secret presence with you.** God is present when he is seemingly absent—'The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not,' says Jacob, Gen. 28:16. The sun many times shines when we do not see it, and the husband is many times in the house when the wife does not know it. God is in your house, he is in your heart; though you see him not, you feel him not, though you hear him not—Heb. 13:5, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you;' or, as it may be rendered according to the Greek, 'I will never leave you, neither will I ever forsake you.'

Are you not now drawn out to prize God and Christ, and his love above all the world? Yes! Are you not now drawn out to give the Lord many a secret

visit, in a corner, behind the door, Cant. 2:14, in some dark hole where none can see you nor hear you, but the Lord? Psalm 13:1-3, 63:1-3. Yes! Are there not strong breathings, partings, and longings after a clearer vision of God, and after a fuller fruition of God? Yes! Are you not more affected and afflicted with the withdrawings of Christ than you are with the greatest afflictions which ever befell you? Cant. 5:6. Yes!

Augustine, upon that answer of God to Moses, 'You cannot see my face and live,' Exod. 33:20, makes this quick and sweet reply, 'Then, Lord! let me die, that I may see your face.' Do you not often tell God that there is no punishment to the punishment of loss of God's presence, and no hell to that of being forsaken of God? Psalm 30:6, 7. Yes! Do you not find a secret power in your soul, drawing you forth to struggle with God, to lay hold on God, and patiently to wait on God, until he shall return unto you, and lift up the light of his countenance upon you? Yes! Well, then, you may be confident that you have a *secret* and *blessed* presence of God with you; though God, in regard of his *comfortable* presence, may be departed from you.

Nothing below a secret presence of God with a man's spirit will keep him waiting and working until the Sun of righteousness shines upon him, Mal. 4:2. If any vain people should put that deriding question to you, Where is your God? you may safely and boldly answer them, 'My God is here; he is near me, he is round about me, yes, he is in the midst of me—Zeph. 3:17, 'The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.' The bush, which was a type of the church, consumed not, all the while it burned with fire, because God was in the midst of it. **It is no argument that Christ is not in the ship, because tempests and storms arise!**

(5.) Fifthly, **Though God is gone—yet he will return again.** Though your sun be now set in a cloud—yet it will rise again. Though sorrow may abide for a night—yet joy comes in the morning. A Christian's mourning shall last but until morning—Micah 7:19, 'He will turn again—he will have compassion upon us!' Cant. 3:4, 'It was but a little that I passed from them—but I found him whom my soul loves; I held him, and I would not let him go,' etc.; Psalm 94:19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me

—your comforts delight my soul.' Isaiah 54:7; 8, 10, "For a brief moment I abandoned you—but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment—but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer. "So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you."

God will not allow his whole displeasure to rise upon his people; nor will he forsake them totally or finally. The saints shall taste but some *sips* of the cup of God's wrath, sinners shall drink the *dregs*. Their storm shall end in a calm, and their winter night shall be turned into a summer day.

There was a woman who was thirteen years under desertion by God, which was so vehement, that for the most part of her time she was gladly to keep to her bed through weakness. A godly minister, who was affected with her condition, went to comfort her, and to pray with her; but when he came and offered to do it, she shrieked out, utterly refusing and forbidding him to pray with her, for, said she, I have too many abused mercies to answer for already. Yet he would not be put off—but prayed by her, and so prevailed with God on her behalf, that the next morning she was delivered from all her fears, and had such exceeding joy, that the like has rarely been heard of. The Lord, who had been long withdrawn from her, returned at length in a way of singular mercy to her.

There was another precious woman who was several years deserted by God, and hearing a precious godly minister preach, she suddenly fell down, overwhelmed with joy, crying out, Oh! he is come whom my soul loves! and for several days after, she was filled with such exceeding joys, and had such gracious and singular ravishing expressions so fluently coming from her, that many came to hear the rare manifestations of God's grace in her. The lowest of her pious expressions did exceed the highest that ever the minister had read in the book of martyrs. But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, **God's deserting, God's forsaking of his people, shall many ways work for their good.** As,

[1.] First, **God by withdrawing from his people, will prepare and fit them for greater refreshings, manifestations, and consolations.** Psalm 71:11, 20, 21, 'God has forsaken him—persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.' But shall this forlorn condition work for his good? Yes, 'You who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.' When Joseph's brethren were in their greatest distress—then Joseph makes known himself most fully to them, Gen. 14:2-4; so does Christ, our spiritual Joseph, to his people. Hudson the martyr, deserted at the stake, went from under his chain, and having prayed earnestly, was comforted immediately, and suffered valiantly.

[2.] **By God's withdrawing from his people—he prevents his people's withdrawing from him; and so by an affliction he prevents sin.** For God to withdraw from me is but my affliction—but for me to withdraw from God, that is my sin, Heb. 10:38, 39. Therefore it were better for me that God should withdraw a thousand times from me—than that I should once withdraw from God. God therefore forsakes us—that we may not forsake our God. God sometimes hides himself that we may cleave the closer to him, and hang the faster upon him; as the mother hides herself from the child for a time, that the child may cleave the closer and hang the nearer upon her all the day long. God sometimes hid himself from David—Psalm 30:7, 'You hid your face, and I was troubled', I was all dejected. Well! and is that all? No! ver. 8, 'I cried to you, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made my supplication.' Now he cries louder, and cleaves closer to God than ever. So in that Psalm 43:1, 2, 'O God, you are my God! early will I seek you—my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water; to see your power and your glory, so as I have seen you in your sanctuary.' Well! And how do those withdrawals of God work? Why! this you may see in ver. 8, 'My soul follows hard after you', or as the Hebrew reads it, 'My soul cleaves after you.' Look! as the husband cleaves to his wife, so does my soul cleave to the Lord. The psalmist now follows God even hard at heels, as we say. But

[3.] Thirdly, **The Lord, by withdrawing from his people, will**

**enhance and raise the price, and commend the worth, excellency, sweetness, and usefulness of several precious promises, which otherwise would be but as dry breasts, and us useless weapons to the soul,** 2 Peter 1:4. As in Micah 7, 'He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us.' Isaiah 54:7, 8; Heb. 13:5, 6; Heb. 2:3; Psalm 5:12, 'For you, Lord will bless the righteous; with favor you will compass him,' or crown him, 'as with a shield.' The Lord will compass the righteous about with his favor, as the crown compasses the head, as the Hebrew imports. Psalm 112:4, 'Unto the upright there arises light in darkness—he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.' Jer. 31:37, 'This is what the Lord says: Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out, will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done' As surely as heaven cannot be measured, nor the foundations of the earth searched by the skill or power of any mortal man—so sure and certain it is, that God will not utterly cast off his people, no—not for all the evil which they have done!

Now at what a rate does a deserted soul value these precious promises? Well! says he, these promises are sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb; they are more precious than gold, than fine gold, than much gold, than all the gold in the world! I prefer them before my food, before my delightful food, yes, before my necessary food, before my appointed portion!

As Alexander laid up Homer's Iliad in a cabinet embroidered with gold and pearls; so deserted souls will lay up these precious promises in the cabinet of their hearts, as the choicest treasure the world affords. Dolphins, they say, love music, so do deserted souls the music of the promises. That promise, 1 Tim. 1:15, was music to Bilney the martyr; and that promise, John 10:29, was music to Ursinus; and that promise, Isaiah 57:15, was music to another; and that promise, Isaiah 26:3, was music to another; and that to another Mat. 11:28, etc. Promises that are suited to a deserted man's condition make the sweetest music in his ear, and are the most sovereign cordials to bear up the spirits—which God can give—or heaven afford—or the soul desire! Deut. 32:13, 'He made him to ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the fruits of the field; and

he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.' Ah! the honey, the oil—which deserted souls suck of such promises which speak home and close to their conditions!

[4.] Fourthly, **By God's hiding his face and withdrawing himself from you, you will be enabled, more feelingly, and more experimentally to sympathize with others,** and to have compassion on others who are or may be in the dark, and forsaken of God, as you are, Heb. 5:2. Heb. 13:2, 'Remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them; and those who suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.' It is observed of the bees, that when one is sick—they all mourn; and of the sheep, that if one of them is faint—the rest of the flock will stand between it and the sun until it is revived. In the natural body, if one member grieves and is in pain—all suffer with it. When a thorn has stuck into the foot—how does the back bow, and the eyes cry, and the hands go to pluck the thorn out! None so compassionate towards deserted souls as those who have been deserted and forsaken of God themselves. Oh! they know what an evil and a bitter thing it is to be left and forsaken of God, and therefore their affections, their compassions run out much to such, yes, most to such. They know that there is no affliction, no misery, no hell—to that of being forsaken of God.

Anaxagoras, seeing himself old and forsaken by the world, laid himself down, and covered his head, determining to starve himself to death with hunger. But, alas! what is it to be forsaken of the world—to a man's being forsaken of God? Were there as many worlds as there are men in the world, a man were better be forsaken by them all—than to be forsaken by God. There is a great truth in that saying of Chrysostom, that is, That the torments of a thousand hells, if there were so many, come far short of this one, to wit, to be turned out of God's presence with an, 'I know you not!' Mat. 7:23. What a grief was it to Absalom to see the king's face clouded; and how sadly were Eli and his daughter affected with the loss of the ark, which was but a *testimony* of God's presence! But oh! how much more is a Christian afflicted with the loss of the face and favor of God, the remembrance of which makes his heart to melt?

[5.] Fifthly, **Hereby the Lord will teach his people to set a higher price upon his face and favor, when they come to enjoy it again.**

Cant. 3:4, 'I found him whom my soul loves; I held him, and I would not let him go!' etc. No man sets so high a price upon Christ, as he who has lost him and found him again. Jesus in the Chinese language, signifies the rising sun, and so he is, Mal. 4:2, especially to souls that have been long clouded. The poor northern nations of Strabo, who lack the light of the sun for some months together, when the term of his return approaches, they climb up into the highest mountains to spy it, and he who spies it first was accounted the best and most beloved of God, and usually they did choose him king; at such a rate did they prize the return of the sun.

Ah! so it is with a poor soul, that for some months, years, has been deserted; oh, how highly does he prize and value the Sun of righteousness—his returning to him, and shining upon him! Psalm 113:3, 'Your loving-kindness is better than life,' or, 'better than lives,' as the Hebrew has it. Divine favor is better than life; it is better that life with all its revenues, with all its comforts, honors, riches, pleasures, applause, etc., yes, it is better than many lives put together! Now you know at what a high rate men value their lives; they will bleed, sweat, cry, part with an estate, yes, with a limb; yes part with their limbs to preserve their lives! As he cried out, Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery—just so you spare my life. Now, though life be so dear and precious to a man, yet a deserted soul prizes the returnings of divine favor upon him above life—yes, above many lives. Many men have been weary of their lives, as is evident in Scripture and history; but no man was ever yet found that was weary of the love and favor of God. No man sets so high a price upon the sun as he who has laid in a dark dungeon, etc. But,

[6.] Sixthly, **Hereby the Lord will train up his servants in that precious life of faith, which is the most honorable and the most happy life in all the world.** 2 Cor. 5:7, 'For we walk by faith, and not by sight.' The life of sense, the life of reason, is a low life, a base life. The life of faith is a noble life, a blessed life. When Elisha demanded of the Shunamite what he should do for her, whether he should speak for her to the king or the captain of the army, she answered, 'I dwell among my people,' 2 Kings 4:13; that is, I dwell nobly and happily among my people; I have no need to make any suit to king or captain; and this she accounts her great happiness, and indeed it is; the greatest happiness in this world

to live much in the exercise of faith. **No man lives so free a life, so holy a life, so heavenly a life, so happy a life—as he who lives a life of faith.** By divine drawings the soul is put upon hanging upon a naked God, a naked Christ, a naked promise, Isaiah 1. 10; lxiii. 15, 16. Now the soul is put upon the highest and the purest acts of faith, that is, to cleave to God, to hang upon God, and to carry it sweetly and obediently towards God, though he frowns, though he chides, though he strikes, yes, though he kills, Job 13:15. Those are the most excellent and heroic acts of faith that are most abstracted from sense and reason; he who allows his reason to usurp upon his faith, will never be an excellent Christian. He who goes to school to his own carnal reason, has a fool to his schoolmaster; and he who allows his faith to be overruled by his reason, shall never lack woe. Where reason is strongest, faith usually is weakest. But now the Lord, by forsaking of his people for a time, he makes them skillful in the life of faith, which is the choicest and the sweetest life in this world. But,

[7.] Seventhly, **By divine withdrawals, you are made more conformable to Christ your head and husband, who was under spiritual desertion as well as you.** Mat. 27:46, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Psalm 22:1, 2. There is an hidden emphasis in the Hebrew word—El signifies a strong God; Eli, Eli—My strong God, my strong God. The unity of Christ's person was never dissolved, nor his graces were never diminished. In the midst of this terrible storm his faith fortifies and strengthens itself upon the strength of God, My God, any God; yet in respect of divine protection and divine solace, he was for some time forsaken of his Father. And if this be your case, you are herein but made conformable to your Lord and master; no, you do but sip of that bitter cup of which Christ drank deep; your cloud is no cloud to that which Christ was under. But,

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, **By these transient and partial forsakings, the Lord will exceedingly sweeten the clear, full, constant, and uninterrupted enjoyments of himself in heaven to all his people,** Psalm 71:10, 21. Ah! how sweet and precious was the face and favor of the king to Absalom, after he had for a time been banished, and at length restored to his royal favor again! Onesimus departed from

Philemon for a season, that he might receive him forever. So the Lord departs from his people for a time, that they may receive him forever; he hides himself for a season, that his constant presence among his children in glory may be the more sweet and delightful to them, etc.

Objection 9. **Oh! but I am falsely accused and sadly reproached,** and my good name, which should be as dear or dearer to me than my life, is defamed and fly-blown, and things are laid to my charge that I never did, that I never knew, etc.; and how then can I be silent? how can I hold my peace? I cannot forget the proverb—a man's eye and his good name can bear no jests; and how then can I be mute to see men make jests upon my good name? and every day to see men lade it with all the scorn and contempt imaginable, that they may utterly blast it? etc. To this I say,

(1.) First, That **it must be granted that a good name is one of the choicest jewels in a Christian's crown.** Though a great name many times is little worth, yet a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. It is better to love a good name abroad, than silver or gold laid up in a chest at home. 'A good name is better than precious ointment,' Eccles. 7:1. Precious ointments were greatly in use and highly esteemed of among the Israelites in those eastern parts, they were laid up among the most precious things even in the king's treasury, Isaiah 39:2. Sweet ointments can but affect the smell, and comfort the brain, and delight the outward man; they reach not the best part, the noble part, that is, the soul, the conscience of a Christian; but a good name does both. What is the perfume of the nostrils, compared to the perfume of the heart?

I have read that in some countries they have a certain art of drawing of pigeons to their dove-houses in those countries, by anointing the wings of one of them with sweet ointment, and that pigeon being sent abroad, does, by the fragrance of that ointment, decoy, invite, and allure others to that house, where itself is a domestic. Such is the fragrance of a good name, that it draws other men after the savor thereof. Among all sorts and ranks of men in the world, a good name has an attractive faculty; it is a precious ointment that draws hearers to attend good preachers, patients to attend physicians, clients to attend lawyers, scholars to attend

schoolmasters, and customers to attend shopkeepers. "Demetrius, who was well spoken of by everyone," 3rd epistle of John 12. Let a man's good name be but up, and he cannot easily lack anything that men or money can help him to. A good name will bring a man into favor, and keep a man in favor with all who are good.

Whatever commodity you lose, be sure yet to preserve that jewel of a good name. A Christian should be most watchful of his good name, for a good name answers to all things, as Solomon spoke of money. 'If I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough,' said the heathen Plautus. A Christian should rather forego gold than let go a good name. He who robs a Christian of his good name is a worse thief than he who robs him of his purse—and better deserves a hanging than he, etc. But,

(2.) Secondly, **It must be granted, that a good name once lost, is very hardly recovered again.** A man may more easily recover a lost friend, a lost estate, than a lost name. A good name is like a princely structure, quickly ruined—but long a-rearing. The father of the prodigal could say of his lost son, 'This my son was lost—but is found; he was dead—but is alive,' Luke 15:32; but how few Christians can say, This my good name was lost—but is found; it was dead—but now it lives. As when Orpah once left Naomi, she returned no more to her, Ruth 1:14; so when once a good name leaves a man, it hardly returns to him again. A cracked credit will hardly be soldered anew, new wine is rarely put into old bottles. A man should stand upon nothing more than the credit of his conscience, and the credit of his name.

In Japan, the very children are so zealous of their reputation, that in case you lose a trifle, and say to one of them, Sirrah, I believe you have stolen it; without any pause, the boy will immediately cut off a joint from one of his fingers, and say, Sir, if you say true, I wish my finger may never heal again. Three things a Christian should stiffly labor to maintain—1, the honor of God; 2, the honor of the gospel; 3, the honor of his own name. If once a Christian's good name sets in a cloud, it will be long before it rises again.

(3.) Thirdly, Though all this be true, yet it has been the portion of God's dearest saints and servants to be slandered, reproached, vilified, and

falsely accused. Psalm 31:18, 'Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly, and contemptuously against the righteous.' How sadly and falsely was Joseph accused by his wanton mistress; David by Doeg and Shimei; Job of hypocrisy, impiety, inhumanity, cruelty, partiality, pride, and irreligion! Was not Naboth accused of speaking blasphemy against God and the king? Did not Haman present the Jews to the king as unruly and rebellious? Esther 3. Was not Elijah accused to be the troubler of Israel, and Jeremiah the trumpet of rebellion; the Baptist a stirrer up of sedition, and Paul a pestilent incendiary? Were not the apostles generally accounted deceivers and deluders of the people, and the offscouring of the world? etc.

Athanasius and Eustathius were falsely accused of adultery. Heresy and treason were charged upon Cranmer, parricide upon Philpot, sedition upon Latimer. As the primitive persecutors usually put Christians into bears' skins and dogs' skins, and then baited them for the lions; so they usually loaded their names and persons with all the reproach, scorn, contempt, and false reports imaginable, and then baited them, and then acted all their malice and cruelty upon them. I think there is no Christian—but sooner or later, first or last, will have cause to say with David, Psalm 35:11, 'False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not;' they charged me with such things whereof I was both innocent and ignorant. It was the saying of one [Hippias], that there was nothing so intolerable as accusation, because there was no punishment ordained by law for accusers, as there was for thieves, although they stole friendship from men, which is the goodliest riches men can have. Well! Christians, seeing it has been the lot of the dearest saints to be falsely accused, and to have their names and reputes in the world reproached and fly-blown—you should remain silent before the Lord, seeing it is no worse with you than it was with them, 'of whom this world was not worthy.' The Rabbis say that the world cannot exist without patient bearing of reproaches. But,

(4.) Fourthly, **Our Lord Jesus Christ was sadly reproached and falsely accused.** His precious name, which deserves to be always written in characters of gold, was often eclipsed before the sun was eclipsed at his death. His sweet name, which was sweeter than all sweets,

was often crucified before his body. Oh, the stones of reproach which were frequently rolled upon that name by which we must be saved, if ever we are saved! Oh, the jeers, the scoffs, the scorns that were cast upon that name which alone can bless us! The name of Jesus, says Chrysostom, has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it. The name of a Savior, says Bernard, is honey in the mouth, and music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart. And yet where is the heart that can conceive, or the tongue that can express, how much dung and filth has been cast upon Christ's name; and how many sharp arrows of reproach and scorn has been, and daily, yes, hourly, are, shot by the world at Christ's name and honor? Such ignominious reproaches were cast upon Christ and his name in the time of his life and at his death, that the sun did blush, and masked himself with a cloud, that he might no longer behold them. Mat. 11:19, 'The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners.' But was he such an one? No—'Wisdom is justified of her children.' Wisdom's children will stand up and justify her before all the world. Mat. 27:63, 'Sir, we remember that that *deceiver* said, while he was yet alive, After three days, I will rise again.' But was he a deceiver of the people? No, he was the faithful and true witness, Rev. 1:5, chapter 3:14. John 7:20, 'The people answered and said, You have a *devil*, who goes about to kill you?' chapter 8:48, The Jews answered him—Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?' chapter 10:20, 'Many of them said—He is demon-possessed and raving mad.'

It was a wonder of wonders that the earth did not open and swallow up these monsters, and that God did not rain hell out of heaven upon these horrid blasphemers; but their blasphemous assertions were denied and disproved by some of wisdom's children—ver. 21, 'Others said, These are not the words of one who has a devil—can a devil open the eyes of the blind?' The devil has no such power, nor any such goodness, as to create eyes to him that was born blind.

Will you yet see more scorn, dirt, and contempt cast upon the Lord of glory? Why, then, cast your eyes upon that—Luke 16:14, 'The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus;' or as the Greek reads it, 'They blew their noses at him in scorn and derision.' The

Pharisees did not only laugh, flear, and jeer at Christ—but they have also external signs of scorn and derision in their countenance and gestures; they blew their noses at him, they contemned him as a thing of nothing. And in chapter 25:35, both people and rulers blew their noses at him; for the original word is the same with that in the fore-mentioned chapter. John 19:12, he is accused for being an enemy to Caesar. Now, who can seriously consider of the scorn, reproach, and contempt that has been cast upon the name and honor of our Lord Jesus—and not sit silent and mute under all the scorn and contempt that has been cast upon his name or person in this world?

(5.) Fifthly, **To be well spoken of by those who are ill spoken of by God; to be in favor with those who are out of favor with God—is rather a reproach than a honor to a man.** Our Savior himself testifies that in the church and nation of the Jews, those who had the most general approbation and applause, they who were most admired and cried up, were the worst—not the best, men; they were the false not the true, prophets—Luke 6:26, 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.' Augustine feared the praises of good men, and detested the praises of evil men. I would not, says Luther, have the glory and fame of Erasmus; my greatest fear is the praises of men. Phocion had not suspected his speech, had not the common people applauded it. Antisthenes suspected some ill in himself, for the vulgar commended him. Socrates always suspected that which passed with the most general commendations. To be praised by evil men, said Bion, is to be praised for evil doing; for the better they speak of a man the worse, and the worse the better. The Lacedaemonians would not have a good saying sullied with a wicked mouth. A wicked tongue soils all the good that drops into it.

It is a mercy to be delivered front the praises of wicked men; wicked men's applauses oftentimes become the saints' reproaches. The heathen Socrates could say—what evil have I done, that this bad man commends me. There is a truth in that saying of Seneca—the worst men are commonly most displeased with that which is best. Who can seriously dwell on these things, and not be mute and silent under all the reproaches and scorn that is cast upon his name and credit in this world?

(6.) Sixthly, **There will come a day when the Lord will wipe off all the dust and filth that wicked men have cast upon the good names of his people.** There shall be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies; their names that are now buried in the open sepulcher of evil throats shall surely rise again. 'Their innocence shall shine forth as the light, and their righteousness as the noon-day', Psalm 37:6. Though the clouds may for a time obscure the shining forth of the sun, yet the sun will shine forth again as bright and glorious as ever—'The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance,' Psalm 112:6. Though the malicious slanders and false accusations of wicked men may for a time cloud the names of the saints, yet those clouds shall vanish, and their names shall appear transparent and glorious. God will take that care of his people's good name—which the infamy, calumnies, and revilement which are cast upon it, shall not long stick.

The Jews rolled a stone upon Christ to keep him down, that he might not rise again—but an angel quickly rolls away the stone, and in despite of his keepers, he rises in a glorious triumphant manner, Mat. 28:2. So though the world may roll this stone and that of reproach and contempt upon the saints' good names, yet God will roll away all those stones; and their names shall have a glorious resurrection in despite of men and devils. That God who has always one hand to wipe away his children's tears from their eyes—that God has always another hand to wipe off the dust that lies upon his children's names. *Wronged innocence* shall not long lie under a cloud. Dirt will not stick long upon marble nor statues of gold!

Well! Christians, remember this, the slanders and reproaches that are cast upon you—they are but badges of your innocence and glory—Job 31:35, 36, 'If my adversary should write a book against me—surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me.' **All reproaches are pearls added to a Christian's crown!** Hence Augustine—he who willingly takes from me my good name, unwillingly adds to my reward! And this Moses knew well enough, which made him prefer Christ's reproach before Pharaoh's crown, Heb. 11:25, 26. That God who knows all his children by name, will not allow their names to be long buried under the ashes of reproach and scorn; and therefore remain silent before the Lord. The more the *foot of pride and scorn* tramples

upon your name for the present, the more splendid and radiant it will be, as the more men trample upon a figure engraved in gold, the more lustrous they make it. Therefore lay your hand upon your mouth. But,

(7.) Seventhly, **The Lord has been a swift and a terrible witness against such who have falsely accused his children**, and who have laded their names with scorn, reproach, and contempt, Isaiah 41:2; Jude 15. Ahab and Jezebel, that suborned false witness against Naboth, had their bloods licked up by dogs, 1 Kings 22:21, 22; 2 Kings 9:30. Amaziah, who falsely accused the prophet Amos to the king, met with this message from the Lord—'Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country,' Amos 7:17. Haman, who falsely accused the Jews, was one day feasted with the king—and the next day made a feast for crows, Esther 7:10, 9:10. The envious courtiers, who falsely accused Daniel, were devoured by lions, Dan. 6:24. Let me give you a taste of the judgments of God upon such people, out of histories.

Caiaphas the high-priest, who gathered the council and suborned false witnesses against the Lord Jesus, was shortly after put out of office, and one Jonathan substituted in his room, whereupon he killed himself. John Cooper, a godly man, being falsely accused in Queen Mary's days, by one Grimwood, shortly after the said Grimwood, being in perfect health, his bowels suddenly fell out of his body, and so he died miserably.

Narcissus, a godly bishop of Jerusalem, was falsely accused by three men of many foul matters, who sealed up with oaths and imprecations their false testimonies; but shortly after that, one of them, with his whole family and substance, was burnt with fire; another of them was stricken with a grievous disease, such as in his imprecation he had wished to himself; the third, terrified with the sight of God's judgement upon the former, became very penitent, and poured out the grief of his heart in such abundance of tears, that thereby he became blind.

A wicked wretch Nicephorus, accused Apollonius, a godly Christian, to the judges for certain grievous crimes, which, when he could not prove, he was adjudged to have his legs broken, according to an ancient law of

the Romans.

Gregory Bradway falsely accused one Brook; but shortly after, through terrors of conscience, he sought to cut his own throat—but being prevented, he fell mad.

I have read of Socrates' two false accusers, how that the one was trodden to death by the multitude, and the other was forced to avoid the like by a voluntary banishment. I might produce a multitude of other instances—but let these suffice, to evidence how swift and terrible a witness God has been against those who have been false accusers of his people, and who have laded their precious names with scorn and reproach, the serious consideration of which should make the accused and reproached Christian to sit dumb and silent before the Lord.

(8.) Eighthly, and lastly, **God himself is daily reproached.** Men tremble not to cast scorn and contempt upon God himself. Sometimes they charge the Lord that his ways are not equal, that it is a wryly way he goes in, Ezek. 18:25, Jer. 2:5, 6; sometimes they charge God with cruelty, 'My punishment is greater than I am able to bear,' Gen. 4:13; sometimes they charge God with partiality and respect of persons, because here he strokes—and there he strikes; here he lifts up—and there he casts down; here he smiles—and there he frowns; here he gives much—and there he gives nothing; here he loves—and there he hates; here he prospers one—and there he blasts another. Mal. 2:17 'Where is the God of judgment' that is, nowhere; either there is no God of judgment, or at least not a God of exact, precise, and impartial judgment, etc.

Sometimes they charge God with unbountifulness; that he is a God who will give his people too hard work, too much work—but will pay them no wages, nor give them no reward. Mal. 3:14, 'You have said, it is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?' Sometimes they charge God that he is a hard master and that he reaps where he has not sown, and gathers where he has not strewed, Mat. 25:24, etc. Oh! the infinite reproach and scorn that is every day, that is every hour in the day—cast upon the Lord, his name, his truth, his ways, his ordinances, his glory!

Alas! all the scorn and contempt that is cast upon all the saints all the world over, is nothing to that which is cast upon the great God every hour; and yet he is patient. Ah! how harshly do most men think of God, and how harshly do they speak of God, and how repulsive do they behave towards God; and yet he bears with it all. Those who will not spare God himself, his name, his truth, his honor; shall we think it much that they spare not us or our names? etc. Surely not. Why should we think that they should give us good words—who cannot afford God a good word from one week's end to another? yes, from one year's end to another? Why should we think that they should cry out 'Hosanna, hosanna!' to us—when as every day they cry out of Christ, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' Mat. 10:25, 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord; if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub' (or a master-fly, or a ash-heap god, or the chief devil), 'how much more shall they call those of his household!' It is preferment enough for the servant to be as his Lord; and if they make no bones of staining and blaspheming the name of the Lord, never wonder if they soil your name. And let this suffice to quiet and silence your hearts, Christians, under all that scorn and contempt that is cast upon your names and reputations in this world.

The tenth and last objection is this,

Objection 10. Sir, **In this my affliction I have sought to the Lord for this and that mercy, and still God delays me, and puts me off;** I have several times thought that mercy had been near, that deliverance had been at the door—but now I see it is afar off. How can I then hold my peace? How can I be silent under such delays and disappointments? To this objection, I shall give you these answers.

(1.) First, **The Lord does not always time his answers to the swiftness of his people's expectations.** He who is the God of our mercies—is the Lord of our times. God has delayed long his dearest saints—*times* belonging to him, as well as *outcomes*. Hab. 1:2, 'O How long, Lord, must I call for help and You do not listen, or cry out to You about violence and You do not save?' Job 19:7, 'Behold, I cry out of violence—but I have no answer; I cry—but there is no judgment.' Psalm 19:3, 'I am weary of crying, my throat is dry, my eyes fail while I wait for my God.' Psalm 40:17, 'Make no tarrying, O my God.' Though God had promised

him a crown, a kingdom; yet he puts him off from day to day, and for all his haste he must wait for it until the set time has come.

Paul was delayed so long, until he even despaired of life, and had the sentence of death in himself, 2 Cor. 1:8, 9. And Joseph was delayed so long, until the irons entered into his soul, Psalm 105:17-19. So God delayed long, the giving of comfort to Mr. Glover, though he had sought him frequently, earnestly, and denied himself to the death for Christ. Augustine being under convictions, a shower of tears came from him, and casting himself on the ground under a fig tree, he cries out, 'O Lord, how long? How long shall I say, Tomorrow, tomorrow? why not today, Lord, why not today?' Though Abigail made haste to prevent David's fury, and Rahab made haste to hang out her scarlet thread; yet God does not always make haste to hear and save his dearest children. Therefore remain silent before the Lord. **He deals no worse with you, than he has done by his dearest jewels.**

(2.) Secondly, **Though the Lord does defer and delay you for a time, yet he WILL come, and mercy and deliverance shall certainly come.** He will not always forget the cry of the poor. Heb. 10:37, 'For yet a little, little while, and he who shall come will come, and will not tarry.' Hab. 2:3, 'The vision is yet for an appointed time—but at the end it shall speak, and not lie—though it tarry, wait for it.' God will come, and mercy will come; though for the present your sun be set, and your God seems to neglect you, yet your sun will rise again, and your God will answer all your prayers, and supply all your necessities. Psalm 71:20, 21, 'You caused me to experience many troubles and misfortunes, but You will revive me again. You will bring me up again, even from the depths of the earth. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again.'

Three martyrs being brought to the stake, one of them falls down upon the ground, and wrestled earnestly with God for the sense of his love, and God gave it in to him then, and so he came and embraced the stake, and died cheerfully a glorious martyr. God delayed him until he was at the stake, and until he was bound, and then sweetly lets out himself to him.

(3.) Thirdly, **Though God do delays you—yet he does not forget you.** He remembers you still; you are still in his eye, Isaiah 49:14-16, and

always upon his heart, Jer. 31:20. He can as soon forget himself, as forget his people, Psalm 77:9, 10. The bride shall sooner forget her bridal ornaments, and the mother shall sooner forget her nursing child, Isaiah 54:7-10, and the wife shall sooner forget her husband, Isaiah 62:3-5 than the Lord shall forget his people. God always knows and remembers his people by name, Gen. 8:1; 19:29-31; 1 Sam. 1:9; Jonah 4:9-11, etc. Therefore be silent, hold your peace; your God has not forgotten you, though for the present he has delayed you.

(4.) Fourthly, **God's time is always the best time—God always takes the best and fittest seasons to do us good.** Isaiah 49:8, 'Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you.' I could have heard you before, and have helped you before—but I have taken the most acceptable time to do both. To set God his time—is to limit him, Psalm 78:41; it is to exalt ourselves above him, as if we were wiser than God. Though we are not wise enough to improve the times and seasons which God has set us, to serve and honor him in; yet we are apt to think that we are wise enough to set God his time—when to hear, and when to save, and when to deliver. To circumscribe God to our time, and to make ourselves lords of time; what is this, but to divest God of his royalty and sovereignty of appointing times? Acts 1:7, 17:26. It is but just and equal, that that God who has made time, and that has the sole power to appoint and dispose of time, that he should take his own time to do his people good.

We are many times impatient, unreasonable, and hasty—and *now* we must have mercy or we die, deliverance or we are undone. But our impatience will never help us to a mercy, one hour, one moment, before the time that God has set. **The best God will always take the best time to hand out mercies to his people.** There is no mercy so fair, so ripe, so lovely, so beautiful—as that which God gives out in his own time. Therefore remain silent before the Lord; though God delays you, yet be silent, for there is no possibility of wringing a mercy out of God's hand, until the mercy be ripe for us; and we ripe for the mercy! 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. God has made everything beautiful in its time.' Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11.

[6.] Fifthly, **The Lord in this life will certainly recompense, and**

**make his children amends for all the delays and put-offs that he exercises them with in this world**, as he did *Abraham* in giving him such a son as Isaac was; and *Hannah* in giving her a Samuel. He delayed *Joseph* long—but at length he changes his iron fetters into chains of gold, his rags into royal robes, his stocks into a chariot, his prison into a palace, his bed of thorns into a bed of down, his reproach into honor, and his thirty years of suffering into eighty years reigning in much grandeur and glory. So God delayed *David* long—but when his suffering hours were out, he is anointed, and the crown of Israel is set upon his head, and he is made very victorious, very famous and glorious for forty years together, 2 Sam. 1. Well! Christians, God will certainly pay you interest upon interest for all the delays that you meet with; and therefore remain silent before the Lord. But,

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, **The Lord never delays the giving of this mercy, or that deliverance, or the other favor—but upon great and weighty reason**; and therefore remain silent before the Lord.

Quest. But **what are the REASONS that God does so delay and put off his people from time to time**, as we see he does?

Ans. [1.] First, **for the trial of his people, and for the differencing and distinguishing of them from others**. As the furnace tries gold, so delays will try what metal a Christian is made of. Delays will try both the truth and the strength of a Christian's graces. Delays are a Christian touchstone—which will try what metal men are made of, whether they be gold or dross, silver or tin, whether they are sincere or unsound; whether they are real or rotten Christians. As a father, by crossing and delaying his children, tries their disposition and makes a full discovery of them; so that he can say—that child is of a muttering and grumbling disposition, and that it is of an impatient and wayward disposition—but the rest are of a meek sweet, humble, and gentle disposition. So the Lord, by the delaying and crossing of his children, discovers their different dispositions.

The manner of the Psylli, which are a tribe of people of that temper and constitution that no venom will hurt them, is, that if they suspect any child to be none of their own, they set an adder upon it to sting it, and if it

cries, and the flesh swells—they cast it away as a spurious child. But if it does not cry, and if it does not swell, then they account it for their own, and make very much of it. So the Lord by delays, which are as the stinging of the adder, tries his children; if they patiently, quietly, and sweetly can bear them, then the Lord still own them, and make much of them, as those that are near and dear unto him. But if under delays they fall a-crying, roaring, storming, vexing, and fretting—the Lord will not own them—but reckon them as bastard children, and not sons, Heb. 12:8.

[2.] Secondly, **That they may have the greater experience of God's power, grace, love, and mercy in the end.** Christ loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; yet he defers his coming for several days, and Lazarus must die, be put in the grave, and lie there until he reeks. And why so—but that they might have the greater experience of his power, grace, and love towards them! John 11:3, 5, 6, 17.

[3.] Thirdly, **To sharpen his children's spiritual appetite,** and to put a greater edge upon their desires; to make them cry out as a woman in travail, or as a man who is in danger of drowning, Cant. 3:1-4; Isaiah 26:8, 9, 16. God delays, that his people may flee to him with greater strength and importunity. He puts them off, that they may put on more life and vigor. God seems to be cold—that he may make us the more hot; he seems to be careless—that he may make us the more earnest; he seems to be backward—that he may make us the more forward in pressing upon him. The father delays the child—that he may make him the more eager; and so does God his children—that he may make them the more divinely violent.

When Balaam had once put off Balak, 'Then Balak sent other princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first', Num. 22:15. Balaam's put-offs did but make Balak the more importunate, it did but increase and whet his desires. This is that which God aims at by all his put-offs—to make his children more earnest, to whet up their spirits, and that they may send up more and yet more honorable prayers after him, that they may cry more earnestly, strive more mightily, and wrestle more importunately with God, and that they may take heaven with a more sacred violence.

Anglers draw back the hook, that the fish may be the more forward to bite; and God sometimes seems to draw back—but it is only that we may press the more on. Therefore, as anglers, when they have long waited, and perceive that the fish does not so much as nibble at the bait, yet do they not impatiently throw away the rod, or break the hook and line—but pull up, and look upon the bait and mend it, and so throw it in again, and then the fish bites. So when a Christian prays, and prays, and yet catches nothing, God seems to be silent, and heaven seems to be shut against him; yet let him not cast off prayer—but mends his prayer; pray more believingly, pray more affectionately, and pray more fervently—and then the fish will bite—then mercy will come, and comfort will come, and deliverance will come! But,

[4.] Fourthly, **God delays and puts off his people many times, that he may make a fuller discovery of themselves to themselves.**

Few Christians see themselves and understand themselves rightfully. By delays God discovers much of a man's sinful self to his pious self; much of his worser part to his better part; of his ignoble part to his most noble part. When the fire is put under the pot—then the scum appears; so when God delays a poor soul, Oh! how does the scum of pride, the scum of murmuring, the scum of quarreling, the scum of distrust, the scum of impatience, the scum of despair—discover itself in the heart of a poor creature? Ezek. 24:6.

I have read of a fool, who being left in a chamber, and the door locked when he was asleep; after he awakes, and finds the door locked and all the people gone, he cries out at the window, O myself, myself, O myself! So when God shuts the door upon his people, when he delays them, and puts them off, Ah! what cause have they to cry out of themselves, to cry out of proud self, and worldly self, and carnal self, and foolish self, and willful self, etc. We are very apt, says Seneca, to use eye-glasses to behold other men's faults, rather than looking-glasses to behold our own; but now God's delays are as a looking-glass, in which God gives his people to see their own faults, Psalm 73:11, 12. Oh! that looseness, that vileness, that wretchedness, that sink of filthiness, that gulf of wickedness, that God by delays discovers to be in the hearts of men! But,

[5.] Fifthly, **God delays and puts off his people to enhance, to**

**raise the price of mercy, the price of deliverance.** We usually set the highest price, the greatest esteem upon such things that we obtain with greatest difficulty. What we dearly buy—that we highly prize, Acts 21:8, Cant. 3:1. The more sighs, tears, weepings, wailings, watchings, strivings, and earnest longings, this mercy and that deliverance, and the other favor costs us—the more highly we shall value them. When a *delayed mercy* comes, it tastes more like a mercy, it sticks more like a mercy, it warms more like a mercy, works more like a mercy, and it endears the heart to God more like a mercy—than any other mercy which a man enjoys.

'This is the child,' said Hannah—after God had long delayed her—'for which I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of him.' 1 Sam. 1:27. Delayed mercy is *the cream of mercy*; no mercy so sweet, so dear, so precious to a man—as that which a man has gained after many put-offs. Mr. Glover, the martyr, sought the Lord earnestly and frequently for some special mercies, and the Lord delayed him long; but when he was even at the stake, then the Lord gave the mercies to him; and then, as a man overjoyed, he cries out to his friend, 'He has come! He has come!' But,

[6 ] Sixthly, **The Lord delays his people, that he may pay them back in his own coin.** God sometimes thinks best to **retaliate**, Prov. 1:23, 33. The spouse puts off Christ—Cant. 5:3, 'I have put off my coat, how can I put it on?' etc.; and Christ puts her off; verses 5-8. You have put off God from day to day, from month to month, yes, from year to year; and therefore, if God puts you off from day to day, or from year to year—have you any cause to complain? Surely not! You have often and long put off the motions of his Spirit, the directions of his word, the offers of his grace, the entreaties of his Son; and therefore what can be more just than that God should delay you for a time, and put you off for a season—who has delayed him, and put off him days without number? If God serves you as you have often served him—you have no reason to complain. But,

[7.] Seventhly, and lastly, **The Lord delays his people, that heaven may be the more sweet to them at last.** Here on earth, they meet with many delays and with many put-offs; but in heaven they shall never

meet with one put-off, with one delay. Here many times they call and cry—and can get no answer; here they knock and pound—and yet the door of grace and mercy opens not to them; but in heaven they shall have mercy at the first word, at the first knock! There, whatever heart can wish—shall without delay be given. Here God seems to say sometimes—Souls! you have mistaken the door; or it is not the right time; or others must be served before you; or come some other time, etc. But in heaven God always answers immediately; and all the sweetness and blessedness and happiness of that state presents itself every hour to the soul. There God has never, God will never—say to any of his saints in heaven, 'Come tomorrow.' Such language the saints sometimes hear here—but such language is no way suitable to a glorified condition.

Therefore, seeing that the Lord never delays his people—but for great and weighty reasons, let his people be silent before him, let them not mutter nor murmur—but be mute. And so I am done with the objections.

## Helps and Directions

I shall come now in the last place, to propound **some HELPS and DIRECTIONS which may contribute to the silencing and stilling of your souls under the greatest afflictions, the sharpest trials, and the saddest providences that you meet with** in this world; and so close up this discourse.

(1.) First, **All the afflictions which come upon the saints, are the fruits of divine love.** Rev. 3:19, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten—be zealous therefore, and repent.' Heb. 12:6, 'For whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.' Job 5:17, 'Behold! happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty.' chapter 7:17, 18, 'What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, that you examine him every morning and test him every moment?' Isaiah 48:10 'I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.'

When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did, and how he felt himself, he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, 'These are God's gems and jewels with which he decks his best friends, and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world!'

A gentleman highly prizes his hawk, he feeds her with his own hand, he carries her upon his arm, he takes a great deal of delight and pleasure in her; and therefore he puts a chain upon her leg, and a hood upon her head; he hoodwinks her, and fetters her, because he loves her, and takes delight in her. So the Lord by afflictions hoodwinks and fetters his children—but all is because he loves them, and takes delight and pleasure in them.

**There cannot be a greater evidence of God's hatred and wrath—than his refusing to correct men for their sinful courses and vanities** 'Why should you be smitten any more? you will revolt more and more,' Isaiah 1:5. Where God refuses to correct—there God resolves

to destroy! There is no man so near God's axe, so near the flames, so near hell—as he whom God will not so much as spend a rod upon! **God is most angry—when He shows no anger!**

Jerome, writing to a sick friend, has this expression, 'I account it a part of unhappiness not to know adversity.' 'Nothing,' says Demetrius, 'seems more unhappy to me, than he to whom no adversity has happened. God afflicts you, O Christian, in love; and therefore Luther cries out, 'Strike, Lord; strike, Lord, and spare not!' Who can seriously meditate upon this, and not be silent under God's most smarting rod?

(2.) Secondly, **Consider Christian, that all the trials and troubles, the calamities and miseries, the crosses and losses,**

**which you meet with in this world—is all the hell that you shall ever have!** Here and now you have your hell. Hereafter you shall have your heaven! This is the worst of your condition; the best is yet to come! Lazarus had his hell first, his heaven last; but Dives had his heaven first, and his hell at last. You have all your pangs, and pains, and throes here—that ever you shall have! Your ease, and rest, and pleasure—is yet to come. Here you have all your bitters; your sweets are yet to come! Here you have your sorrows; your joys are yet to come! Here you have all your winter nights; your summer days are yet to come! Here you have your evil things; your good things are yet to come! Death will put an end to all your sins—and to all your sufferings! Death will be an inlet to those joys, delights, and comforts—which shall never have an end! Who can seriously meditate upon this, and not be silent under God's most smarting rod?

(3.) Thirdly, **Get an assurance that Christ is yours, and pardon of sin yours, and divine favor yours, and heaven yours.** The sense of this will exceedingly quiet and silence the soul under the sorest and sharpest trials a Christian can meet with in this world. He who is assured that God is his portion, will never mutter nor murmur under his greatest burden! He who can groundedly say, 'Nothing shall separate me from the love of God in Christ!' will be able to triumph in the midst of the greatest tribulations, Rom. 8:33-39. He who with the spouse can say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his!' Cant. 2:16 will bear up quietly and sweetly under

the heaviest afflictions!

In the time of the Marian persecution there was a gracious woman, who being convened before bloody Bonner, then bishop of London, upon the trial of her religion, he threatened her that he would take away her husband from her. Says she, 'Christ is my husband!' I will take away your child. 'Christ,' says she, 'is better to me than ten sons!' I will strip you, says he, of all your outward comforts. 'Yes—but Christ is mine,' says she, 'and you cannot strip me of him.' Oh! the assurance that Christ was hers bore up her heart, and quieted her spirit under all.

'You may take away my life,' says Basil—'but you cannot take away my comfort. You may take away my head—but not my crown.' 'Yes,' says he—'had I a thousand lives, I would lay them all down for my Savior's sake, who has done abundantly more for me!'

John Ardley when he told he was going to be burned at the stake for Christ, said that if he had as many lives as he had hairs on his head, he would lose them all in the fire before he would lose his Christ!

Assurance will keep a man from muttering and murmuring under the sorest afflictions. Mr, Rogers, the first martyr who was burnt in Queen Mary's days, did sing in the flame! A soul who lives in the assurance of divine favor, and in its title to glory, cannot but bear up patiently and quietly under the greatest sufferings which possibly can befall it in this world. That scripture is worth its weight in gold, 'The inhabitants of Zion shall not say, I am sick. The people who dwell there, shall be forgiven their iniquity,' Isaiah 33:24. He does not say, they were not sick. No! But though they were sick, yet they would not say that they were sick. But why should they forget their sorrows, and not remember their pains, nor be sensible of their sickness? Why! the reason is—because the Lord had forgiven them their iniquities! The sense of pardon took away the sense of pain; the sense of forgiveness took away the sense of sickness.

Assurance of pardon will take away the pain, the sting, the trouble of every trouble and affliction that a Christian meets with! No affliction will daunt, startle, or stagger an assured Christian. An assured Christian will be patient and silent under all, Psalm 23.

Melanchthon makes mention of a godly woman, who, having upon her deathbed been in much conflict, and afterward much comforted, broke out into these words—Now, and not until now, I understand the meaning of these words, 'Your sins are forgiven!' the sense of which did mightily cheer and quiet her. He who has got *this jewel of assurance* in his bosom, will be far enough off from vexing or fretting under the saddest dispensations that he meets with in this world.

(4.) Fourthly, **If you would be quiet and silent under your present troubles and trials, then dwell much upon the benefit, the profit, the advantage that has redounded to your souls by all your FORMER troubles and afflictions.** Eccles. 7:14, 'In the day of adversity *consider.*' Oh! now consider, how by former afflictions the Lord has discovered sin, prevented sin, and mortified sin! Consider how the Lord by former afflictions has discovered to you the impotency, the mutability, the insufficiency, and the vanity of the world, and all worldly concerns! Consider how the Lord by former afflictions has melted your heart, and broken your heart, and humbled your heart, and prepared your heart for clearer, fuller, and sweeter enjoyments of himself! Consider what pity, what compassion, what affections, what tenderness, and what sweetness former afflictions have wrought in you, towards others in misery! Consider what room former afflictions have made in your soul for God, for his word, for good counsel, and for divine comfort! Consider how by former afflictions the Lord has made you more partaker of his Christ, his Spirit, his holiness, his goodness, etc. Consider how by former afflictions the Lord has made you to look towards heaven more, to mind heaven more, to prize heaven more, and to long for heaven more, etc.

Now, who can seriously consider of all that good that he has gotten by former afflictions—and not be silent under present afflictions? Who can remember those choice, those great, and those precious earnings that his soul has made of former afflictions, and not reason himself into a holy silence under present afflictions thus, "O my soul! has not God done you much good, great good, special good—by former afflictions? Yes! O my soul! has not God done that for you by former afflictions—which you would not undo for ten thousand worlds? Yes! And is not God, O my soul!

as powerful as ever, as faithful as ever, as gracious as ever, and as ready and willing as ever—to do you good by present afflictions, as he has been to do you good by former afflictions? Yes! Yes! Why, why then do you not sit silent and mute before him, under your present troubles, O my soul?"

It was the saying of one, that *an excellent memory* was needful for three sorts of men—First, for tradesmen; for they, having many businesses to do, many reckonings to make up, many irons in the fire, had need of a good memory. Secondly, great talkers; for they, being full of words, had need to have a good storehouse in their heads to feed their tongues. Thirdly, for liars; for they telling many untruths, had need of a good memory, lest they should be discovered in their lying contradictions. And I may add for a fourth, that is—those that are afflicted, that they may remember the great good which they have gained by former afflictions, that so they may be the more silent and quiet under present troubles!

(5.) Fifthly, To **quiet and silence your souls under the sorest afflictions and sharpest trials, consider, that your choicest, your chief treasure is safe!** Your God is safe, your Christ is safe, your portion is safe, your crown is safe, your inheritance is safe, your royal palace is safe, and your jewels—your graces—are safe! Therefore remain silent before the Lord! 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:8.

I have read a story of a man that had a suit, and when his cause was to be heard, he applied himself to *three friends*, to see what they could do for him—one answered, he would bring him as far on his journey as he could; the second promised him that he would go with him to his journey's end; the third engaged himself to go with him before the judge, and to speak for him, and not to leave him until his cause was heard and determined. These three are a man's **riches**, his **friends**, and his **graces**. His RICHES will help him to comfortable accommodations while they stay with him—but they often take leave of a man before his soul takes leave of his body. His FRIENDS will go with him to his grave, and then leave him. But his GRACES will accompany him before God, they will not leave him nor forsake him; they will go to the grave, to glory, with him! 1 Tim. 6:18, 19.

In that famous battle at Leuctrum, the Thebans got a great victory. But

their captain, Epaminondas, a little before his death, asked whether his shield was taken by the enemy. When he was assured that it was safe—he died most willingly, cheerfully, and quietly. Well! Christians, your *shield of faith* is safe, your portion is safe, your royal robe is safe, your kingdom is safe, your heaven is safe, your happiness and blessedness is safe! Therefore, under all your afflictions and troubles—be mute under the smarting rod. But,

(6.) Sixthly, **If you would be silent and quiet under your sorest troubles and trials, then set yourselves in good earnest upon the mortification of your lusts.** It is unmortified lust, which is the sting of every trouble, and which makes every sweet bitter, and every bitter more bitter. Sin unmortified adds weight to every burden, it puts gall to our wormwood, it adds chain to chain—it makes the bed uneasy, the home a prison, relaxations troublesome, and everything vexatious to the soul. James 4:1, 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members?' So I say—from whence comes all this muttering, murmuring, fretting, and vexing, etc. Don't they come from your unmortified lusts? Don't they come from your unmortified pride, and unmortified self-love, and unmortified unbelief, and unmortified passion, etc.? Surely they do! Oh, therefore, as ever you would be silent under the afflicting hand of God, labor for more and more of the *grace of the Spirit*—by which you may mortify the lusts of the flesh! Rom. 8:13.

It is not your strongest resolutions or purposes, without the grace of the Spirit, which can overmaster a lust. A *soul-sore* will continue to run—though we resolve and say it shall not. It was the *blood* of the sacrifice, and the *oil*, which cleansed the leper in the law. And by them is meant the *blood of Christ* and the *grace of his Spirit*. Lev. 14:14-16. It was a *touch of Christ's garment* which cured the woman of her bloody issue, Mark 5:25.

Your strongest resolutions or purposes may hide a sin—but cannot quench it. They may cover a sin—but cannot cut off a sin. A black patch may cover some sores—but it cures them not! Neither is it the papists' purgatories, watchings, whippings, etc., nor the kissing of the statue of St. Francis, or licking of lepers' sores—which will cleanse the fretting leprosy of sin! **In the strength of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit—**

**set soundly upon the mortifying of every lust!** Oh, hug none, indulge none—but resolutely set upon the ruin of every lust!

One leak in a ship will sink it! One stab strikes Goliath just as dead—as twenty-three did Caesar! One Delilah may do Samson as much mischief as all the Philistines! One broken wheel spoils the whole clock! One vein bleeding will let out all the vitals! One fly will spoil a whole box of ointment! One bitter herb will spoil all the pottage! By eating one apple, Adam lost paradise! One lick of honey endangered Jonathan's life! One Achan was a trouble to all Israel! One Jonah raises a storm and becomes load too heavy for the whole ship! Just so—one unmortified lust will raise very strong storms and tempests in the soul, in the days of affliction.

And therefore, as you would have a blessed calm and quietness in your own spirits under your sharpest trials, set thoroughly upon the work of mortification. Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard child, yet that bastard child destroyed all his seventy sons! Judges 8:30, 31, chapter 9:1, 2. Ah, Christian! do you not know what a world of mischief one unmortified lust may do? And therefore let nothing satisfy you, but the blood of all your lusts!

(7.) Seventhly, If you would be silent under your greatest afflictions, your sharpest trials, then make this consideration your daily companion, that is, That **all the afflictions which come upon you—come upon you by and through that covenant of grace, which God has made with you.** In the covenant of grace, God has engaged himself to keep you from the evils, snares, and temptations of the world; in the covenant of grace, God has engaged himself to purge away your sins, to brighten and increase your graces, to crucify your hearts to the world, and to prepare you and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom; and by afflictions he effects all this, and that according to his covenant too.

"I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my

covenant or alter what my lips have uttered." Psalms 89:28-34. In these words you have a supposition that the saints may both fall into sins of commission and sins of omission; in the following words you have God's gracious promise—"Then I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging." God engages himself by promise and covenant—not only to chide and check—but also to correct his people for their sins—"but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered."

**Afflictions are fruits of God's faithfulness—to which the covenant binds him.** God would be unfaithful, if he did not afflict his people. Afflictions are part of that gracious covenant which God has made with his people; afflictions are mercies, yes, covenant mercies! Psalm 119:75. Hence it is that God is called the 'God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love,' Neh. 1:5; because, by his covenant of mercy, he is bound to afflict and chastise his people. God by covenant is bound to preserve his people, and not to allow them to perish; and happy are those who are preserved, whether in salt and vinegar—or in wine and sugar.

All the afflictions which come upon a wicked man, come upon him by virtue of a covenant of works—and so all are cursed unto him. But all the afflictions which come upon a gracious man, they come upon him by virtue of a covenant of grace—and so they are blessed unto him. Therefore he has eminent cause to be silent, to lay his hand upon his mouth.

(8 ) Eighthly, If you would be silent and quiet under afflictions, then dwell much upon this—**That all your afflictions do but reach the worser, the baser, and the more ignoble part of a Christian, that is, his body,** his outward man. 'Though our outward man decays, yet our inward man is renewed day by day,' 2 Cor. 4:16. As Aristarchus said, when he was beaten by the tyrants—'Beat on! It is not Aristarchus you beat, it is only his shell.' Timothy had a very healthful soul—in a sick body, 1 Tim. 5:23. Gaius had a very prosperous soul—in a weak distempered body, 3 John 2.

Epictetus and many of the more refined heathens, have long since

concluded that the *body* was but the shell—the *soul* was the man. Now, all the troubles and afflictions which a Christian meets with, they do not reach his soul, they touch not his conscience, they make no breach upon his noble part; and therefore he has cause to be silent, and to lay his hand upon his mouth. The soul is the breath of God, Heb. 12:9, Zech. 12:1, the beauty of man, the wonder of angels, and the envy of devils. The soul is a celestial plant, and of a divine offspring; it is an immortal spirit. Souls are of an angelic nature; a man is somewhat of an angel clothed in clay. The soul is a greater miracle in man, than all the miracles wrought among men. The soul is a demi-semi-god dwelling in a house of clay. Now it is not in the power of any outward troubles and afflictions which a Christian meets with, to reach his soul; and therefore he may well sit mute under the smarting rod.

(9.) Ninthly, If you would be silent and quiet under the saddest providences and sorest trials, then **keep up FAITH in continual exercise**. "We live by faith, not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7. Now faith, in the exercise of it, will quiet and silence the soul, thus,

[1.] By bringing the soul to sit down satisfied in the naked enjoyments of God, John 14:8, Psalm 17:13.

[2.] By drying up the springs of pride, self-love, impatience, murmuring, unbelief, and the carnal delights of this world.

[3.] By presenting to the soul greater, sweeter, and better things in Christ, than anything this world can afford, Heb. 11:3, Philip. iii 7, 8.

[4.] By lessening the soul's esteem of all outward vanities. Do but keep up the exercise of faith, and you will keep silent before the Lord. No man so mute, as he whose faith is still busy about invisible objects.

(10.) Tenthly, If you would keep silent, then **keep HUMBLE before the Lord**. Oh! labor every day to be more humble and more low and little in your own eyes. 'Who am I,' says the humble soul—'but that God should cross me in this mercy, and take away that mercy, and pass a sentence of death upon every mercy? I am not worthy of the least mercy, I deserve not a crumb of mercy, I have forfeited every mercy, I have never

improved a mercy.'

Only by pride comes contention. It is only pride that puts men upon contending with God and men. A humble soul will lie quiet at the foot of God, it will be contented with bare necessities, Prov. 13:16. As you know that sheep can live upon the bare commons, which a fat ox cannot. A dinner of green herbs relishes well with the humble man's palate; whereas a stalled ox is but a coarse dish to a proud man's stomach. A humble heart thinks none less than himself, nor none worse than himself. **A humble heart looks upon small mercies as great mercies; and great afflictions as small afflictions; and small afflictions as no afflictions;** and therefore sits mute and quiet under all. Do but keep humble, and you will keep silent before the Lord. Pride kicks, and flings, and frets—but a humble man has still his hand upon his mouth. Everything on this side hell is mercy—much mercy, rich mercy to a humble soul; and therefore he remains mute under the smarting rod.

(11.) Eleventh, If you would keep silence under the afflicting hand of God, then keep close, and hold fast, these **soul-silencing and soul-quieting maxims or principles.** As,

[1.] First, That **the worst that God does to his people in this world, is only to make them a little heaven on earth.** He brings them into a wilderness—but it is, that he may speak comfortably to them, Hosea 2:14. He casts them into the fiery furnace—but it is, that they may have more of his company. Do the stones come thick and heavy around Stephen's ears—it is but to knock him the nearer to Christ, the corner-stone, etc.

[2.] Secondly, If you would be silent, then hold fast this—**What God, our Father wills, is best.** "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but **God disciplines us for our good,** that we may share in his holiness." Hebrews 12:10. When he wills sickness, sickness is better than health; when he wills weakness, weakness is better than strength; when he wills want, want is better than wealth; when he wills reproach, reproach is better than honor; when he wills death, death is better than life. As God is wisdom itself, and so knows that which is best; so he is goodness itself, and therefore cannot do anything but that

which is best—therefore remain silent before the Lord.

[3.] Thirdly, If you would be silent under your greatest afflictions, then hold fast to this principle—That **the Lord will bear you company in all your afflictions**, Isaiah 41:10; chapter 43:1-3; Psalm 23; Psalm 90:15; Dan. 3:25, Gen. 39:20, 21; 2 Tim. 4:16, 17. These scriptures are *breasts full of divine consolation!* These wells of salvation are full; will you turn to them and draw out, that your souls may be satisfied and quieted?

[4.] Fourthly, If you would be silent under your afflictions, then hold fast this principle, That **the Lord has more high, more noble, and more blessed ends in the afflicting of you—than he has in the afflicting of the men of the world.** The stalk, and the ear of corn, both fall upon the threshing floor—one is cast away, the other is preserved. From one and the same olive tree, and from under one and the same press—is crushed both oil and dregs—but the one is stored for use, the other thrown out as unserviceable. Just so, though afflictions do befall good and bad alike, as the Scripture speaks, Eccles. 9:2, yet the Lord will effect more glorious ends by those afflictions which befall his people, than he will effect by those that befall wicked men. Therefore the Lord puts his people into the furnace for their *trial*—but the wicked for their *ruin*. The one is bettered by affliction—the other is made worse. The one is made soft and tender by afflictions—the other is more hard and obdurate. The one is drawn nearer to God by afflictions—the other is driven further from God, etc.

[5.] Fifthly, If you would be silent under your afflictions, then you must hold fast this principle—That **the best way in this world to have your own will, is to lie down in the will of God, and quietly to resign up yourself to the good will and pleasure of God.** Mat. 15:21, 29. Luther was a man who could have anything from God, and why? Why! because he submitted his will to the will of God! He lost his will in the will of God. O soul! it shall be even as you will—if your will be swallowed up in the will of God.

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, If you would be silent under the afflicting hand of God, then you must hold fast to this principle—That **God will make**

**times of afflictions to be times of special manifestations of divine love and favor to you.** Tiburtius saw a paradise when he walked upon hot burning coals. I could affirm this by a cloud of witnesses—but that I must close. Ah, Christians! as ever you would be quiet and silent under the smarting rod, hold fast to these principles, and keep them as your lives! But,

(12) Twelfthly and lastly, To silence and quiet your soul under the afflicting hand of God,  **dwell much upon the brevity or shortness of man's life. This present life is not life—but a motion, a journey towards life.** Man's life, says one, is the shadow of smoke, yes, the dream of a shadow! Says another, man's life is so short, that Augustine doubted whether to call it a *dying life* or a *living death*. You have but a *day* to live, and perhaps you may be now in the last hour of that day; therefore hold out faith and patience. Your troubles and your life, shall shortly end together; therefore remain silent before the Lord. Your grave is going to be made; your sun is near setting; death begins to call you off the stage of this world. Death stands at your back; you must shortly sail forth upon the ocean of eternity; though you have a great deal of work to do—a God to honor, a Christ to close with, a soul to save, a race to run, a crown to win, a hell to escape, a pardon to beg, a heaven to make sure; yet you have but a little time to do it in!

You have one foot in the grave—you are even going ashore on eternity—and will you now cry out of your affliction? Will you now mutter and murmur when you are entering upon an unchangeable and eternal condition? What extreme folly and madness is it for a man to mutter and murmur when he is just a-going out of prison, and his bolts and chains are just a-knocking off! Why, Christian, this is just your case! Therefore remain silent before the Lord. Your life is but short—therefore your troubles cannot be long! Hold up and hold out quietly and patiently a little longer—and **heaven shall make amends for all!**

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us!" Romans 8:18.

# **PRECIOUS REMEDIES AGAINST SATAN'S DEVICES**

**By Thomas Brooks (1608 - 1680)**

**"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us--for we are not ignorant of his devices." 2 Corinthians 2:11**

[The Epistle Dedicatory](#)

[A Word to the Reader](#)

[Introduction](#)

[I. THE PROOF OF THE POINT](#)

[II. SATAN'S DEVICES TO DRAW THE SOUL TO SIN](#)

[12 devices and their remedies]

[I. By presenting the bait and hiding the hook: For remedies, consider that](#)

- 1) we ought to keep at the greatest distance from sin and from playing with the bait
- 2) sin is but a bitter sweet
- 3) sin will usher in the greatest and the saddest losses
- 4) sin is very deceitful and bewitching

[II. By painting sin with virtue's colors: For remedies, consider that](#)

- 1) sin is never the less vile by being so painted
- 2) the more sin is so painted the more dangerous it is

- 3) we ought to look on sin with that eye with which within a few hours we shall see it
- 4) sin cost the life-blood of the Lord Jesus

### **III. By the extenuating and lessening of sin: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) sin which men account small brings God's great wrath on men
- 2) the giving way to a less sin makes way for the committing of a greater
- 3) it is sad to stand with God for a trifle
- 4) often there is most danger in the smallest sins
- 5) the saints have chosen to suffer greatly rather than commit the least sin
- 6) the soul can never stand under the guilt and weight of sin when God sets it home upon the soul
- 7) there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction

### **IV. By showing to the soul the best men's sins and by hiding from the soul their virtues, their sorrows, and their repentance: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) the Spirit of God records not only the sins of the saints, but also their repentance
- 2) these saints did not make a trade of sin
- 3) though God does not disinherit his sinning people, He punishes them severely
- 4) God has two main ends in recording the falls of His saints

### **V. By presenting God to the soul as One made up all of mercy: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) It is the sorest of judgments to be left to sin upon any pretense whatever
- 2) God is as just as He is merciful
- 3) sins against mercy will bring the greatest and sorest judgments on men
- 4) though God's general mercy is over all His works, yet His special mercy is confined to those that are divinely qualified
- 5) the saints now glorified regarded God's mercy as a most powerful argument against, and not for, sin

### **VI. By persuading the soul that repentance is easy and that**

**therefore the soul need not scruple about sinning: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) repentance is a difficult work above our own power
- 2) repentance changes and converts the whole man from sin to God
- 3) repentance is a continued act
- 4) if repentance were easy, the lack of it would not strike millions with terror and drive them to hell
- 5) to repent of sin is as great a mark of grace as not to sin
- 6) Satan now suggests that repentance is easy, but shortly he will drive his dupes to despair by presenting it as the hardest work in the world

**VII. By making the soul bold to venture upon the occasions of sin: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) certain scriptures expressly command us to avoid occasions of sin and the least appearance of evil
- 2) there is no conquest over sin unless the soul turns from the occasions of sin
- 3) saints now glorified have turned from the occasions of sin as from hell itself
- 4) to avoid the occasions of sin is an evidence of grace

**VIII. By representing to the soul the outward mercies enjoyed by men walking in sin, and their freedom from outward miseries: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) we cannot judge of how the heart of God stands towards a man by the acts of His providence
- 2) nothing provokes God's wrath so much as men's abuse of His goodness and mercy
- 3) there is no greater curse or affliction in this life than not to be in misery or affliction
- 4) the wants of evil men are far greater than their outward blessings
- 5) outward things are not as they seem, nor as they are esteemed
- 6) God has ends and designs in giving evil men outward mercies and present rest from sorrows and sufferings that cause saints to sigh
- 7) God often plagues and punishes those whom others think He most spares and loves
- 8) God will call evil men to a strict account for all the outward good that

they have enjoyed

**IX. By presenting to the soul the crosses, losses, sorrows and sufferings that daily attend those who walk in the ways of holiness: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) all afflictions suffered by Christians turn to their profit
- 2) all such afflictions only reach their worst, not their best, part
- 3) all such afflictions are short and momentary
- 4) all such afflictions proceed from God's dearest love
- 5) it is our duty and glory to measure afflictions not by the smart but by the end
- 6) God's design in saints' afflictions is to try, not to ruin, their souls
- 7) the afflictions, wrath and misery consequent upon wickedness are far worse than those linked with holiness

**X. By causing saints to compare themselves and their ways with those reputed to be worse than themselves: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) to be quick-sighted abroad and blind at home proves a man a hypocrite
- 2) it is far better to compare our internal and external actions with the Word than to compare ourselves with others worse than ourselves
- 3) though our sins may not appear as great as those of others, yet without repentance responding to mercy, we shall be as certainly damned as others

**XI. By polluting the souls and judgments of men with dangerous errors that lead to looseness and wickedness: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) an erroneous vain mind is as odious to God as a wicked life
- 2) it is needful to receive the truth affectionately and plenteously
- 3) error makes its owner suffer loss
- 4) it is needful to hate and reject all doctrines that are contrary to godliness, that lead to self-righteousness, and that make good works co-partners with Christ
- 5) it is needful to hold fast the truth
- 6) it is needful to keep humble
- 7) errors have been productive of great evils

## **XII. By leading men to choose wicked company: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) there are express commands of God to shun such company
- 2) wicked company is infectious and dangerous
- 3) it is needful to look upon the wicked in such terms as Scripture describes them
- 4) the company of wicked men was once a grief and burden also to saints now glorified

## **III. SATAN'S DEVICES TO KEEP SOULS FROM HOLY DUTIES, TO HINDER SOULS IN HOLY SERVICES, TO KEEP THEM OFF FROM RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCES**

[8 devices and their remedies]

### **I. By presenting the world in such a garb as to ensnare the soul: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) all things here below are impotent and weak
- 2) they are also full of vanity
- 3) all things under the sun are uncertain and mutable
- 4) the great things of the world are hurtful to men owing to the corruption of their hearts
- 5) all the felicity of this world is mixed
- 6) it is needful to get better acquainted with, and assurance of, more blessed and glorious things
- 7) true happiness and satisfaction does not arise from worldly good
- 8) the value and dignity of the soul is to be a subject of contemplation

### **II By presenting to the soul the dangers, losses and sufferings that accompany the performance of certain religious duties: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) all such troubles cannot harm the true Christian
- 2) saints now glorified encountered such dangers, but persevered to the end
- 3) all such dangers are but for a moment, whereas the neglect of the service of God lays the Christian open to spiritual and eternal dangers
- 4) God knows how to deliver from troubles by troubles, from dangers by dangers
- 5) In the service of God, despite troubles and afflictions, the gains

outweigh the losses

### **III. By presenting to the soul the difficulty of performing religious duties: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) it is better to regard the necessity of the duty than the difficulty of it
- 2) the Lord Jesus will reveal Himself to the obedient soul and thus make the service easy
- 3) the Lord Jesus has Himself engaged in hard service and in suffering for your temporal and eternal good
- 4) religious duties are only difficult to the worse, not to the more noble part of a saint
- 5) a glorious recompense awaits saints who serve the Lord in the face of difficulties and discouragements

### **IV. By causing saints to draw false inferences from the blessed and glorious things that Christ has done: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) it is as needful to dwell as much upon scriptures that state Christian duty as upon those that speak of the glorious things that Christ has done for us
- 2) the glorious things that Christ has done and is now doing for us should be our strongest motives and encouragements for the performance of our duties
- 3) other precious souls who have rested on Christ's work have been very active and lively in religious duties
- 4) those who do not walk in God's ways cannot have such evidence of their righteousness before God as can those who rejoice in the service of the Lord
- 5) duties are to be esteemed not by their acts but by their ends

### **V. By presenting to view the fewness and poverty of those who hold to religious practices: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) though saints are outwardly poor, they are inwardly rich
- 2) in all ages God has had some that have been rich, wise and honorable
- 3) spiritual riches infinitely transcend temporal riches, and satisfy the poorest saints
- 4) saints now appear to be 'a little flock', but they belong to a company that cannot be numbered

5) it is but as a day before these despised saints will shine brighter than the sun

6) the time will come even in this life when God will take away the reproach and contempt of His people, and make those the 'head' who have been the 'tail'

**VI. By showing saints that the majority of men make light of God's ways and walk in the ways of their own hearts: For remedies, consider that**

1) certain scriptures warn against following the sinful examples of men

2) those who sin with the multitude will suffer with the multitude

3) the soul of a man is of more worth than heaven and earth

**VII. By casting in vain thoughts while the soul is seeking God or waiting on God: For remedies, consider that**

1) the God with whom we have to do is great, holy, majestic and glorious

2) despite wandering thoughts it is needful to be resolute in religious service

3) vain and trifling thoughts that Satan casts into our souls are not sins if they are abhorred, resisted and disclaimed

4) watching against, resisting and lamenting sinful thoughts evidences grace and the sincerity of our hearts

5) we must labor to be filled with the fullness of God and enriched with all spiritual blessings

6) we must labor to keep up holy and spiritual affections

7) we must labor to avoid multiplicity of worldly business

**VIII. By tempting Christians to rest in their performances: For remedies, consider that**

1) our choicest services have their imperfection and weaknesses

2) our choicest services are unable to minister comfort and aid in days of trouble

3) good works, if rested upon, will as certainly destroy us as the greatest sins that we commit

4) God has met our need of a resting place in Christ Himself

**IV. SATAN'S DEVICES TO KEEP SAINTS IN A SAD, DOUBTING, QUESTIONING AND UNCOMFORTABLE**

## **CONDITION**

[8 devices and their remedies]

I. By causing saints to remember their sins more than their Savior, yes, even to forget and neglect their Savior: For remedies, consider that

- 1) though Jesus Christ has not freed believers from sin's presence, He has freed them from its damnatory power
- 2) though Jesus Christ has not freed believers from the vexing and molesting power of sin, He has freed them from the reign and dominion of sin
- 3) it is needful to keep one eye on the promise of remission of sin, and the other eye on the inward operations of sin
- 4) believers' sins have been charged to the account of Christ as debts which He has fully satisfied
- 5) the Lord has good reasons for allowing His people to be troubled with sinful corruption
- 6) believers must repent of their being discouraged by their sins

## **II. By causing saints to make false definitions of their graces: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) there may be true faith, even great faith, where there is no assurance
- 2) the Scriptures define faith other than Satan tempts the saints to define it
- 3) there may be true faith where there is much doubting
- 4) assurance is an effect of faith, not faith itself

## **III. By causing saints to make false inferences from the cross actings of Providence: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) many things, though contrary to our desires, are not contrary to our good
- 2) God's hand may be against a man when His love and His heart are set upon him
- 3) Cross providences are sent by God to work some noble good for saints
- 4) all the strange and deep providences that believers meet with further them in their way to heaven

## **IV. By suggesting to saints that their graces are not true, but counterfeit: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) grace may mean either the good will and favor of God, or the gifts of

grace

2) there are differences between renewing grace and restraining grace, between sanctifying and temporary grace (to particulars given)

**V. By suggesting to saints that the conflict that is in them is found also in hypocrites and profane souls: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) the whole frame of a believer's soul is against sin
- 2) a saint conflicts against sin universally, the least sin as well as the greatest
- 3) the conflict in a saint is maintained for several reasons
- 4) the saint's conflict is constant
- 5) the saint's conflict is within the same faculties
- 6) the saint's conflict is blessed, successful and prevailing

**VI. By suggesting to the saint who has lost joy and comfort that his state is not good: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) the loss of comfort is a separable adjunct from grace
- 2) the precious things still enjoyed are far better than the joys and comforts lost
- 3) the glorified saints were once in the same condition
- 4) the causes of joy and comfort are not always the same
- 5) God will restore the comforts of His people

**VII. By reminding the saint of his frequent relapses into sin formerly repented of and prayed against: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) many scriptures show that such relapses have troubled saints
- 2) God nowhere promises that such relapses will not happen
- 3) the most renowned of glorified saints have, on earth, experienced such relapses
- 4) relapses into enormities must be distinguished from relapses into infirmities
- 5) involuntary and voluntary relapses must be distinguished
- 6) no experience of the soul, however deep or high, can in itself secure the soul against relapses

**VIII. By persuading saints that their state is not good nor their**

### **graces sound: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) the best of Christians have been most tempted by Satan
- 2) all the saints' temptations are sanctified to them by a hand of love
- 3) temptations cannot harm the saints as long as they are resisted by them

## **V. SATAN'S DEVICES TO DESTROY AND ENSNARE ALL SORTS AND RANKS OF MEN IN THE WORLD**

[5 devices and their remedies]

### **I. DEVICES AGAINST THE GREAT AND HONORABLE OF THE EARTH**

1. By causing them to seek greatness, position, riches and security: For remedies, consider that
  - 1) self-seeking sets men upon sins against the law, the Gospel, and Nature itself
  - 2) self-seeking exceedingly abases a man
  - 3) the Word pronounces curses and woes against self-seekers
  - 4) self-seekers are self-losers and self-destroyers
  - 5) saints have denied self and set public good above personal advantage
  - 6) self hinders the sight of divine things: hence prophets and apostles, when seeing visions, were carried out of themselves

### **II. By causing them to act against the people of the Most High: For remedies, consider that**

- 1) all who have acted against the saints have been ruined by the God of saints
- 2) the Scriptures show that God gives victory to His people against their enemies
- 3) to fight against the people of God is to fight against God Himself
- 4) men of the world owe their preservation from instant ruin, under God, to the saints

### **II. DEVICE AGAINST THE LEARNED AND THE WISE**

By moving them to pride themselves on their parts and abilities, and to despise men of greater grace but inferior abilities: For remedies, consider that

- 1) men have nothing but what they have received, gifts as well as saving

grace coming alike from Christ

- 2) men's trusting to their parts and abilities has been their utter ruin
- 3) you do not transcend others more in parts and abilities than they do you in grace and holiness
- 4) men who pride themselves on their gifts and set themselves against the saints will find that God blasts and withers their gifts

### **III. DEVICE AGAINST THE SAINTS**

By dividing them and causing them to 'bite and devour one another.' For remedies, consider that

- 1) it is better to dwell on the saints' graces rather than on their weaknesses and infirmities
- 2) love and union best promote safety and security
- 3) God commands and requires the saints to love one another
- 4) it is better to eye the things in which saints agree rather than those things wherein they differ
- 5) God is the God of peace, Christ the Prince of peace, and the Spirit the Spirit of peace
- 6) it is needful for the saints to make more care and conscience of maintaining their peace with God
- 7) it is needful to dwell much upon the relationship and union of the people of God
- 8) discord is productive of miseries
- 9) it is good and honorable to be the first in seeking peace and reconciliation
- 10) saints should agree well together, making the Word the only touchstone and judge of their words and actions
- 11) saints should be much in self-judging
- 12) saints should labor to be clothed with humility

### **IV. DEVICE AGAINST POOR AND IGNORANT SOULS**

By causing them to affect ignorance and to neglect and despise the means of knowledge: For remedies, consider that

- 1) an ignorant heart is an evil heart
- 2) ignorance is the deformity of the soul
- 3) ignorance makes men objects of God's hatred and wrath
- 4) ignorance is a sin that leads to all sins

## **APPENDIX**

### **I. FIVE MORE OF SATAN'S DEVICES**

1. By suggesting to men the greatness and vileness of their sins [Eight Remedies]
2. By suggesting to sinners their unworthiness [Four Remedies]
3. By suggesting to sinners their want of certain preparations and qualifications [Three Remedies]
4. By suggesting to sinners that Christ Is unwilling to save them [Six Remedies]
5. By causing sinners to give more attention to the secret decrees and counsels of God than to their own duty [Two Remedies]

### **II. SEVEN CHARACTERS OF FALSE TEACHERS**

### **III. SIX PROPOSITIONS CONCERNING SATAN AND HIS DEVICES**

[Five reasons of the point added]

### **IV. CONCLUSION: TEN SPECIAL HELPS AND RULES AGAINST SATAN'S DEVICES**

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." Ephesians 6:11-13

## **THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY**

To his most dear and precious ones, the sons and daughters of the Most High God, over whom the Holy Spirit has made him a Watchman.

Beloved in our dearest Lord,

**Christ, the Scripture, your own hearts, and Satan's devices, are the four prime things that should be first and most studied and searched.** If any cast off the study of these, they cannot be safe here, nor happy hereafter. It is my work as a Christian, but much more as I am a Watchman, to do my best to **discover the fullness of Christ, the emptiness of the creature, and the snares of the great deceiver;** which I have endeavored to do in the following discourse, according to that measure of grace which I have received from the Lord. God once accepted a handful of meal for a sacrifice (Lev. 2:2; 5:12), and a small quantity of goat's hair for an oblation; and I know that you have not so "learned the Father," as to despise "the day of small things" (Zech. 4:10).

Beloved, **Satan being fallen from light to darkness, from felicity to misery, from heaven to hell, from an angel to a devil, is so full of malice and envy that he will leave no means unattempted, whereby he may make all others eternally miserable with himself;** he being shut out of heaven, and shut up "under the chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6), makes use of all his power and skill to bring all the sons of men into the same condition and condemnation with himself. Satan has cast such sinful seed into our souls, that now he can no sooner tempt, but we are ready to assent; he can no sooner have a plot upon us, but he makes a conquest of us. If he does but show men a little of the beauty and finery of the world, how ready are they to fall down and worship him! **Whatever sin the heart of man is most prone to, that the devil will help forward.**

If David is proud of his people, Satan will provoke him to number them, that he may be yet prouder (2 Sam. 24). If Peter is slavishly fearful, Satan will put him upon rebuking and denying of Christ, to save his own skin (Matt. 16:22; 26:69-75). If Ahab's prophets are given to flatter, the devil will immediately become a lying spirit in the mouths of four hundred of them, and they shall flatter Ahab to his ruin (2 Kings 22). If Judas will be a traitor, Satan will quickly enter into his heart, and make him sell his master for money, which some heathen would never have done (John 13:2). If Ananias will lie for advantage, Satan will fill his heart that he

may lie, with a witness, to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3). **Satan loves to sail with the wind, and to suit men's temptations to their conditions and inclinations.** If they be in prosperity, he will tempt them to deny God (Proverbs 30:9); if they be in adversity, he will tempt them to distrust God; if their knowledge be weak, he will tempt them to have low thoughts of God; if their conscience be tender, he will tempt to scrupulosity; if large, to carnal security; if bold-spirited, he will tempt to presumption; if timorous, to desperation; if flexible, to inconstancy; if stiff, to impenitency.

**From the power, malice and skill of Satan--proceeds all the soul-killing plots, devices, stratagems and machinations, which are in the world.** Several devices he has to draw souls to sin, and several plots he has to keep souls from all holy and heavenly services, and several stratagems he has to keep souls in a mourning, staggering, doubting and questioning condition.

He has several devices to destroy the great and honorable, the wise and learned, the blind and ignorant, the rich and the poor, the real and the nominal Christians.

At one time, he will restrain from tempting, that we may think ourselves secure, and neglect our watch. At another time he will seem to flee, that he may make us proud of the victory. At one time he will fix men's eyes on others' sins than their own, that he may puff them up. At another time he may fix their eyes more on others' graces than their own, that he may discourage them. A man may as well count the stars, and number the sands of the sea, as reckon up all the Devices of Satan; yet those which are most considerable, and by which he does most mischief to the precious souls of men, are in the following treatise discovered, and the Remedies against them prescribed.

Beloved, I think it necessary to give you and the world a faithful account of the reasons moving me to appear in print, in these days, wherein we may say, **there was never more writing and yet never less practicing,** and they are these that follow:

Reason 1. Because Satan has a greater influence upon men, and higher

advantages over them than they think he has--and the knowledge of his high advantage is the highway to disappoint him, and to render the soul strong in resisting, and happy in conquering.

Reason 2. Your importunity, and the importunity of many other "precious sons of Zion" (Lam. 4:2), has after much striving with God, my own heart, and others, made a conquest of me, and forced me to do that at last, which at first was not a little contrary to my inclination and resolution.

Reason 3. The strange opposition that I met with from Satan, in the study of this following discourse, has put an edge upon my spirit, knowing that Satan strives mightily to keep those things from seeing the light, that tend eminently to shake and break his kingdom of darkness, and to lift up the kingdom and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the souls and lives of the men.

Reason 4. Its exceeding usefulness to all sorts, ranks and conditions of men in the world. Here you have *salve* for every sore, and a *plaster* for every wound, and a *remedy* against every disease, especially against those that tend most to the undoing of souls, and the ruin of the State.

Reason 5. I know not of any one or other that have written of this subject; all that ever I have seen have only touched upon this theme, which has been no small provocation to me, to attempt to do something this way, that others, that have better heads and hearts, may be the more stirred to improve their talents in a further discovery of Satan's Devices, and in making known of such choice Remedies, as may enable the souls of men to triumph over all his plots and stratagems.

Reason 6. I have many precious friends in several countries, who are desirous that my pen may reach them, now that my voice cannot. I have formerly been, by the help of the mighty God of Jacob, a weak instrument of good to them, and cannot but hope and believe that the Lord will also bless these labors to them; they being, in part, the fruit of their desires and prayers.

Reason 7. Lastly, Not knowing how soon my hour-glass may be out, and how soon I may be cut off by a hand of death from all opportunities of

doing further service for Christ or your souls in this world, I was willing to sow a little handful of spiritual seed among you; that so, when I put off this earthly tabernacle, my love to you, and that dear remembrance of you, which I have in my soul, may strongly engage your minds and spirits to make this book your companion, and under all external or internal changes, to make use of this heavenly salve, which I hope will, by the blessing of the Lord, be as effectual for the healing of all your wounds, as their looking up to the bronze serpent was effectual to heal theirs--who were bit and stung with fiery serpents. I shall leave this book with you as a legacy of my dearest love, desiring the Lord to make it a far greater and sweeter legacy than all those carnal legacies that are left by the high and mighty ones of the earth to their nearest and dearest relations.

Beloved, I would not have affection carry my pen too much beyond my intention. Therefore, only give me leave to signify my desires for you, and my desires to you, and I shall draw to a close,

My desires for you are, "that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:16-19) "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." (Col. 1:10-12) "That you do no evil." (2 Cor. 13:7); "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." "That you may approve things that are excellent, that you may be sincere, and without offence until the day of Christ." (Phil. 1:27, 4:1) That "our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (2

Thess. 1:11, 12) And that you may be eminent in sanctity, sanctity being Zion's glory (Psalm 93:5); that your hearts may be kept upright, your judgments sound, and your lives unblamable. That as you are now "my joy", so in the day of Christ you may be "my crown"; that I may see my labors in your lives; that your lives may not be earthly, when the things you hear are heavenly; but that it may be "as becomes the gospel" (Phil. 1:9, 10).

That as the fish which live in the salt sea yet are fresh, so you, though you live in an ungodly world, may yet be godly and loving; that you may, like the bee, suck honey out of every flower; that you may shine in a sea of troubles, as the pearl shines in the sky, though it grows in the sea; that in all your trials you may shine like the stone in Thracia, which neither burns in the fire nor sinks in the water; that you may be like the heavens, excellent in substance and beautiful in appearance; that so you may meet me with joy in that day wherein Christ shall say to his Father, "Lo, here am I, and the children that you have given me" (Is. 8:18).

My desires to you are--That you would make it your business to study Christ, his Word, your own hearts, Satan's plots, and eternity--more than ever. That you would endeavor more to be inwardly sincere than outwardly glorious; to live, than to have a mere name to live. That you would labor with all your might to be thankful under mercies, and faithful in your places, and humble under divine appearances, and fruitful under precious ordinances. That as your means and mercies are greater than others--so your account before God may not prove a worse than others. That you would pray for me, who am not worthy to be named among the saints, that I may be a precious instrument in the hand of Christ to bring in many souls unto him, and to build up those who are brought in, in their most holy faith; and "that utterance may be given to me, that I may make known all the will of God" (Eph. 6:19); that I may be sincere, faithful, frequent, fervent and constant in the work of the Lord, and that my labor be not in vain in the Lord; that my labors may be accepted in the Lord and his saints, and I may daily see the travail of my soul.

But, above all, pray for me--that **I may more and more find the power and sweet of those things upon my own heart**, that I give out to you and others; that my soul may be so visited with strength from

on high, that I may live up fully and constantly to those truths that I hold forth to the world; and that I may be both in life and doctrine "a burning and a shining light," that so, when the Lord Jesus shall appear, "I may receive a crown of glory which he shall give to me in that day, and not only to me, but to all who love his appearing." (John 5:35 and 2 Tim. 1:8).

For a close, remember this, that your life is short, your duties many, your assistance great, and your reward sure; therefore faint not, hold on and hold up, in ways of well-doing, and **heaven shall make amends for all!**

I shall now take leave of you, when my heart has by my hand subscribed, that I am, your loving pastor under Christ, according to all pastoral affections and engagements in our dearest Lord,  
Thomas Brooks

### **A WORD TO THE READER**

Dear Friend!

Solomon bids us buy the **truth** (Proverbs 23:23), but does not tell us what it must cost, because we must get it though it be ever so dear. We must love truth both shining and scorching. Every parcel of truth is precious as the filings of gold; we must either live with it, or die for it, As Ruth said to Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge, and nothing but death shall part you and me" (Ruth 1:16, 17); so must gracious spirits say, Where truth goes I will go, and where truth lodges I will lodge, and nothing but death shall part me and truth. A man may lawfully sell his house, land and jewels—but truth is a jewel that exceeds all price, and must not be sold; it is our heritage: "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever" (Psalm 119:111). It is a legacy that our forefathers have bought with their blood, which should make us willing to lay down anything, and to lay out anything, that we may, with the wise merchant in the Gospel (Matt. 13:45), purchase this precious pearl, which is more worth than heaven and earth, and which

will make a man live happily, die comfortably, and reign eternally!

And now, if you please, read the work, and receive this counsel from me.

First, You must know that every man cannot be excellent, yet every man may be useful. An iron key may unlock the door with a golden treasure behind it; yes, iron can do some things that gold cannot.

Secondly, Remember, **it is not hasty reading—but serious meditating upon holy and heavenly truths**, that make them prove sweet and profitable to the soul. It is not the bee's touching of the flower, which gathers honey—but her abiding for a time upon the flower, which draws out the sweet. It is not he who reads most—but he who meditates most, who will prove the choicest, sweetest, wisest and strongest Christian.

Thirdly, Know that it is not the *knowing*, nor the *talking*, nor the *reading* man—but the *doing* man, that at last will be found the happiest man. "If you *know* these things, blessed and happy are you if you DO them." "Not everyone that *says*, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven—but he who DOES the will of my Father that is in heaven" (John 13:17, Matt. 7:21). Judas called Christ Lord, Lord; and yet betrayed him, and has gone to his place. **Ah! how many Judases have we in these days**, that kiss Christ, and yet betray Christ; that in their words profess him—but in their works deny him; that bow their knee to him, and yet in their hearts despise him; that call him Jesus, and yet will not obey him for their Lord.

Reader, If it is not strong upon your heart to practice what you read, to what end do you read? To increase your own condemnation? If your light and knowledge be not turned into practice, the more knowing a man you are, the more miserable a man you will be in the day of recompense; your light and knowledge will more torment you than all the devils in hell. Your knowledge will be that rod that will eternally lash you, and that scorpion that will forever bite you, and that worm that will everlastingly gnaw you; therefore *read*, and labor to *know*, that you may *do*—or else you are undone forever.

When Demosthenes was asked, what was the first part of an orator, what the second, what the third? he answered, Action! The same may I say. If any should ask me, what is the first, the second, the third part of a Christian? I must answer, Action! As that man who reads that he may know, and that labors to know that he may do, will have two heavens—a heaven of joy, peace and comfort on earth, and a heaven of glory and happiness after death.

Fourthly and lastly, If in your reading you will cast a serious eye upon the margin, you will find many sweet and precious notes, that will oftentimes give light to the things you read, and pay you for your pains with much comfort and profit. So desiring that you may find as much sweetness and advantage in reading this Treatise as I have found, by the overshadowings of heaven, in the studying and writing of it; I recommend you "to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Your soul's servant in every office of the gospel,  
Thomas Brooks

## INTRODUCTION

In the fifth verse, the apostle shows, that the incestuous person had by his incest saddened those precious souls who God would not have saddened. Souls who walk sinfully are Hazael's to the godly (2 Kings 8:12-15), and draw many sighs and tears from them. Jeremiah weeps in secret for Judah's sins (Jer. 9:1); and Paul cannot speak of the belly-gods with dry eyes (Phil. 3:18, 19). And Lot's righteous soul was burdened, vexed and racked by the filthy Sodomites (2 Peter 2:7, 8). Every sinful Sodomite was a Hazael to his eyes, a Hadadrimmon to his heart (Zech. 12:11). Gracious souls use to mourn for other men's sins as well as their own, and for their souls and sins who make a mock of sin, and a jest of damning their own souls. **Guilt or grief is all that gracious souls get by communion with vain souls!** "Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is

not obeyed." Psalm 119:136. "I look on the faithless with loathing, for they do not obey your word." Psalms 119:158.

In the 6th verse, he shows that the punishment which was inflicted upon the incestuous person was sufficient, and therefore they should not refuse to receive him who had repented and sorrowed for his former faults and follies. It is not for the honor of Christ, the credit of the gospel, nor the good of souls, for professors to be like those bloody wretches, that burnt some that recanted at the stake, saying, "That they would send them into another world while they were in a good mind."

In the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, the apostle stirs up the church to forgive him, to comfort him, and to confirm their love towards him, lest he should be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," Satan going about to mix the detestable weeds (Matt. 13:25) of despair, with the godly sorrow of a pure penitent heart. It was a sweet saying of Jerome, "Let a man grieve for his sin, and then joy for his grief." That sorrow for sin which keeps the soul from looking towards the mercy-seat, and that keeps Christ and the soul asunder, or that shall render the soul unfit for the communion of saints--is a sinful sorrow.

In the 11th verse, he lays down another reason to work them to show pity and mercy to the penitent sinner who was mourning and groaning under his sin and misery; that is, lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. A little for the opening of the words.

Lest Satan should get an **advantage** of us—lest Satan overreach us. The word in the Greek signifies to have more than-belong to one. The comparison is taken from the greedy merchant, who seeks and takes all opportunities to beguile and deceive others. Satan is that wily merchant, that devours, not widows' houses—but most men's souls!

We are not ignorant of Satan's **devices**, or plots, or machinations, or stratagems. He is but a Christian in title only, who has not personal experience of Satan's stratagems, his set and composed machinations, his artificially molded methods, his plots, darts, depths, whereby he outwitted our first parents.

The main observation that I shall draw from these words is this—That **Satan has his several devices to deceive, entangle, and undo the souls of men.** I shall—

1. Prove the point.
2. Show you his several devices.
3. Show the remedies against his devices.
4. Show how it comes to pass that he has so many various devices to deceive, entangle, and undo the souls of men.
5. Lay down some propositions concerning Satan's devices.

### **THE PROOF OF THE POINT**

For the proof of the point, take these few Scriptures: (Eph. 6:11), "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the **wiles** of the devil." The Greek word that is here rendered "wiles," is a notable emphatic word.

(1) It signifies such snares as are laid behind one, such treacheries as come upon one's back by surprise, it notes the methods or waylayings of that old subtle serpent, who, like Dan's adder "in the path," bites the heels of passengers, and thereby transfuses his venom to the head and heart (Gen. 49:17). The word signifies an ambush or stratagem of war, whereby the enemy sets upon a man at unawares.

(2) It signifies such snares as are set to catch one in one's road. A man walks in his road, and thinks not of it; but suddenly he is caught by thieves, or falls into a pit, etc.

(3) It signifies such as are purposely, artificially, and craftily set for the taking the prey at the greatest advantage that can be. The Greek signifies

properly a waylaying, circumvention, or going about, as they do, who seek after their prey. Julian, by his craft, drew more away from the faith than all his persecuting predecessors could do by their cruelty. So does Satan more hurt in his *sheep's skin* than by roaring like a lion.

Take one scripture more for the proof of the point, and that is in 2 Tim. 2:26, "And that they might recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." The Greek word that is here rendered recover themselves, signifies to awaken themselves. The apostle alludes to one who is asleep or drunk, who is to be awakened and restored to his senses; and the Greek word that is here rendered "taken captive," signifies to be taken alive. The word is properly a military word, and signifies to be taken alive, as soldiers are taken alive in the wars, or as birds are taken alive and ensnared in the fowler's net. Satan has snares for the wise and snares for the simple; snares for hypocrites, and snares for the upright; snares for generous souls, and snares for timorous souls; snares for the rich, and snares for the poor; snares for the aged, and snares for youth. Happy are those souls that are not taken and held in the snares that he has laid!

Take one proof more, and then I will proceed to the opening of the point, and that is in Rev. 2:24, "But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you no other burden but to hold fast until I come." These poor souls called their opinions the depths of God, when indeed they were the depths of Satan. You call your opinions depths, and so they are—but they are such depths as Satan has brought out of hell. They are the whisperings and hissings of that serpent, not the inspirations of God.

## **SATAN'S DEVICES TO DRAW THE SOUL TO SIN**

### **DEVICE 1. TO PRESENT THE BAIT AND HIDE THE HOOK**

Satan's first device to draw the soul into sin is, to present the bait—and hide the hook; to present the golden cup—and hide the poison; to present the sweet, the pleasure, and the profit that may flow in upon the soul by yielding to sin—and to hide from the soul the wrath and misery that will certainly follow the committing of sin. By this device he deceived our first parents, "And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die—for God does know, that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5). Your eyes shall he opened, and you shall be as gods! Here is the bait, the sweet, the pleasure, the profit. Oh—but he hides the hook—the shame, the wrath, and the loss that would certainly follow!

There is an opening of the eyes of the mind to contemplation and joy—and there is an opening of the eyes of the body to shame and confusion. He promises them the former—but intends the latter, and so Satan cheats them—giving them an apple in exchange for a paradise, as he deals by thousands now-a-days.

Satan with ease pawns falsehoods upon us, by his golden baits, and then he leads us and leaves us in a fool's paradise. He promises the soul honor, pleasure, profit—but pays the soul with the greatest contempt, shame, and loss that can be. By a golden bait he labored to catch Christ (Matt. 4:8, 9). He shows him the beauty and the finery of a bewitching world, which doubtless would have taken many a carnal heart; but here the devil's fire fell upon wet tinder, and therefore did not ignite. These tempting objects did not at all win upon his affections, nor dazzle his eyes, though many have eternally died of the 'wound of the eye', and fallen forever by this vile strumpet the world, who, by laying forth her two fair breasts of PROFIT and PLEASURE, has wounded their souls, and cast them down into utter perdition. She has, by the glistening of her pomp and preferment, slain millions; as the serpent Scytale, which, when she cannot overtake the fleeing passengers, does, with her beautiful colors, dazzle and amaze them, so that they have no power to pass away

until she has stung them to death! **Adversity has slain her thousand—but prosperity her ten thousand.**

Remedy (1). First, **Keep at the greatest distance from sin, and from playing with the golden bait which Satan holds forth to catch you;** for this you have (Romans 12:9), "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." When we meet with anything extremely evil and contrary to us, nature abhors it, and retires as far as it can from it. The Greek word that is there rendered "abhor," is very significant; it signifies to hate it as hell itself, to hate it with horror.

Anselm used to say, "That if he should see the shame of sin on the one hand, and the pains of hell on the other, and must of necessity choose one; he would rather be thrust into hell without sin; than to go into heaven with sin," so great was his hatred and detestation of sin. It is our wisest and our safest course to stand at the farthest distance from sin; not to go near the house of the harlot—but to fly from all appearance of evil (Proverbs 5:8, 1 Thess. 5:22). The best course to prevent falling into the pit is to keep at the greatest distance from it; he who will be so bold as to attempt to dance upon the brink of the pit, may find by woeful experience that it is a righteous thing with God that he should fall into the pit. *Joseph* keeps at a distance from sin, and from playing with Satan's golden baits, and stands. *David* draws near, and plays with the bait, and falls, and swallows bait and hook! *David* comes near the snare, and is taken in it, to the breaking of his bones, the wounding of his conscience, and the loss of fellowship with his God.

Sin is a plague, yes, the worst and most infectious plague in the world; and yet, ah! how few are there who tremble at it--who keep at a distance from it! (1 Cor. 5:6)—"Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" As soon as one sin had seized upon Adam's heart, all sin entered into his soul and infested it. How has Adam's one sin spread over all mankind! (Romans 5:12)—"Therefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Ah, how does the father's sin infect the child, the husband's infect the wife, the master's the servant! The sin that is in one man's heart is able to infect a whole world, it is of such a spreading and infectious nature.

The story of the Italian, who first made his enemy deny God, and then stabbed him, and so at once murdered both body and soul, declares the unmixed malignity of sin; and oh! that what has been spoken upon this head may prevail with you, to stand at a distance from sin!

Remedy (2). **Consider that sin is but a bitter sweet.** That seeming sweet that is in sin will quickly vanish; and lasting shame, sorrow, horror, and terror will come in the room thereof—"He enjoyed the taste of his wickedness, letting it melt under his tongue. He savored it, holding it long in his mouth. But suddenly, the food he has eaten turns sour within him, a poisonous venom in his stomach." (Job 20:12-14). Forbidden profits and pleasures are most pleasing to vain men, who count madness mirth. Many long to be meddling with the murdering morsels of sin, which nourish not—but rend and consume the belly—and the soul that receives them. Many eat that on earth what they digest in hell. Sin's murdering morsels will deceive those who devour them. Adam's apple was a bitter sweet; Esau's bowl of stew was a bitter sweet; the Israelites' quails a bitter sweet; Jonathan's honey a bitter sweet; and Adonijah's dainties a bitter sweet. After the meal is ended, then comes the reckoning. Men must not think to dance and dine with the devil, and then to sup with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; to feed upon the poison of asps, and yet that the viper's tongue should not slay them.

When the asp stings a man, it does first tickle him so as it makes him laugh, until the poison, little by little, gets to the heart, and then it pains him more than ever it delighted him. So does sin; it may please a little at first—but it will pain the soul at last; yes, if there were the least real delight in sin, there could be no consummate hell, where men shall most completely be tormented with their sin.

Remedy (3). Solemnly to **consider that sin will usher in the greatest and the saddest losses that can be upon our souls.** It will usher in the loss of that divine favor which is better than life, and the loss of that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, and the loss of that peace which passes understanding, and the loss of those divine influences by which the soul has been refreshed, quickened, raised, strengthened, and gladdened, and the loss of many outward desirable mercies, which

otherwise the soul might have enjoyed.

Remedy (4). Seriously to **consider that sin is of a very deceitful and bewitching nature**. Sin is from the greatest deceiver, it is a child of his own begetting, it is the ground of all the deceit in the world, and it is in its own nature exceeding deceitful. "But exhort one another daily, while it is called 'today', lest any of you be hardened through *the deceitfulness of sin*." Heb. 3:13. It will kiss the soul, and look enticing to the soul, and yet betray the soul forever. It will with Delilah smile upon us, that it may betray us into the hands of the devil, as she did Samson into the hands of the Philistines. Sin gives Satan a power over us, and an advantage to accuse us and to lay claim to us, as those who wear his badge; it is of a very bewitching nature; it bewitches the soul, where it is upon the throne, that the soul cannot leave it, though it perish eternally by it.

Sin so bewitches the soul, that it makes the soul call evil good, and good evil; bitter sweet and sweet bitter, light darkness and darkness light; and a soul thus bewitched with sin will stand it out to the death, at the sword's point with God; let God strike and wound, and cut to the very bone, yet the bewitched soul cares not, fears not—but will still hold on in a course of wickedness, as you may see in Pharaoh, Balaam, and Judas. Tell the bewitched soul that sin is a viper that will certainly kill when it is not killed, that sin often kills secretly, insensibly, eternally, yet the bewitched soul cannot, and will not, cease from sin.

When the physicians told Theotimus that except he did abstain from drunkenness and uncleanness he would lose his eyes; his heart was so bewitched to his sins, that he answered, "Then farewell, sweet light"; he had rather lose his eyes than leave his sin. So a man bewitched with sin had rather lose God, Christ, heaven, and his own soul—than part with his sin. Oh, therefore, forever take heed of playing with or nibbling at Satan's golden baits!

## **DEVICE 2. BY PAINTING SIN WITH VIRTUE'S COLORS.**

Satan knows that if he would present sin in its own nature and dress, the

soul would rather fly from it than yield to it; and therefore he presents it unto us, not in its own proper colors—but painted and gilded over with the name and show of virtue, that we may the more easily be overcome by it, and take the more pleasure in committing of it. PRIDE, he presents to the soul under the name and notion of neatness and cleanliness; and COVETOUSNESS (which the apostle condemns for idolatry) to be but good business; and DRUNKENNESS to be good fellowship, and RIOTOUSNESS under the name and notion of liberality, and WANTONNESS as a trick of youth.

Remedy (1). **Consider that sin is never a whit the less filthy, vile, and abominable—by its being colored and painted with virtue's colors.** A poisonous pill is never a whit the less poisonous because it is gilded over with gold; nor a wolf is never a whit the less a wolf because he has put on a sheep's skin; nor the devil is never a whit the less a devil because he appears sometimes like an angel of light. So neither is sin any whit the less filthy and abominable by its being painted over with virtue's colors.

Remedy (2). **That the more sin is painted forth under the color of virtue, the more dangerous it is to the souls of men.** This we see evident in these days, by those very many souls that are turned out of the way that is holy—and in which their souls have had sweet and glorious communion with God—into ways of highest vanity and folly, by Satan's neat coloring over of sin, and painting forth vice under the name and color of virtue. This is so notoriously known that I need but name it. The most dangerous vermin is too often to be found under the fairest and sweetest flowers, the fairest glove is often drawn upon the foulest hand, and the richest robes are often put upon the filthiest bodies. So are the fairest and sweetest names upon the greatest and the most horrible vices and errors that be in the world. Ah! that we had not too many sad proofs of this among us!

Remedy (3). **To look on sin with that eye with which within a short time, we shall see it.** Ah, souls! when you shall lie upon a dying bed, and stand before a judgment-seat, sin shall be unmasked, and its dress and robes shall then be taken off, and then it shall appear more vile, filthy, and terrible than hell itself; then, that which formerly appeared

most sweet will appear most bitter, and that which appeared most beautiful will appear most ugly, and that which appeared most delightful will then appear most dreadful to the soul. Ah, the shame, the pain, the gall, the bitterness, the horror, the hell that the sight of sin, when its dress is taken off, will raise in poor souls! Sin will surely prove evil and bitter to the soul when its robes are taken off. A man may have the stone who feels no fit of it. Conscience will work at last, though for the present one may feel no fit of accusation. Laban showed himself at parting. Sin will be bitterness in the latter end, when it shall appear to the soul in its own filthy nature.

The devil deals with men as the panther does with beasts; he hides his deformed head until his sweet scent has drawn them into his danger. Until we have sinned, Satan is a parasite; when we have sinned, he is a tyrant. O souls! the day is at hand when the devil will pull off the paint and garnish that he has put upon sin, and present that monster, sin, in such a monstrous shape to your souls, that will cause your thoughts to be troubled, your countenance to be changed, the joints of your loins to be loosed, and your knees to be dashed one against another, and your hearts to be so terrified, that you will be ready, with Ahithophel and Judas, to strangle and hang your bodies on earth, and your souls in hell, if the Lord has not more mercy on you than he had on them. Oh! therefore, look upon sin now as you must look upon it to all eternity, and as God, conscience, and Satan will present it to you another day!

Remedy (4). Seriously to consider, **That even those very sins that Satan paints, and puts new names and colors upon, cost the best blood, the noblest blood, the life-blood, the heart-blood of the Lord Jesus.** That Christ should come from the eternal bosom of his Father to a region of sorrow and death; that God should be manifested in the flesh, the Creator made a creature; that he who was clothed with glory should be wrapped with rags of flesh; he who filled heaven and earth with his glory should be cradled in a manger; that the almighty God should flee from weak man—the God of Israel into Egypt; that the God of the law should be subject to the law, the God of the circumcision circumcised, the God who made the heavens working at Joseph's homely trade; that he who binds the devils in chains should be tempted; that he, whose is the

world, and the fullness thereof, should hunger and thirst; that the God of strength should be weary, the Judge of all flesh condemned, the God of life put to death; that he who is one with his Father should cry out of misery, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46); that he who had the keys of hell and death at his belt should lie imprisoned in the sepulcher of another, having in his lifetime nowhere to lay his head, nor after death to lay his body; that that HEAD, before which the angels do cast down their crowns, should be crowned with thorns, and those EYES, purer than the sun, put out by the darkness of death; those EARS, which hear nothing but hallelujahs of saints and angels, to hear the blasphemies of the multitude; that FACE, which was fairer than the sons of men, to be spit on by those beastly wretched Jews; that MOUTH and TONGUE, which spoke as never man spoke, accused for blasphemy; those HANDS, which freely swayed the scepter of heaven, nailed to the cross; those FEET, "like unto fine brass," nailed to the cross for man's sins; each **sense** pained with a spear and nails; his SMELL, with stinking odor, being crucified on Golgotha, the place of skulls; his TASTE, with vinegar and gall; his HEARING, with reproaches, and SIGHT of his mother and disciples bemoaning him; his SOUL, comfortless and forsaken; and all this for those very sins that Satan paints and puts fine colors upon! Oh! how should the consideration of this stir up the soul against sin, and work the soul to fly from it, and to use all holy means whereby sin may be subdued and destroyed!

After Julius Caesar was murdered, Antonius brought forth his coat, all bloody and cut, and laid it before the people, saying, "Look, here you have the emperor's coat thus bloody and torn"—whereupon the people were presently in an uproar, and cried out to slay those murderers; and they took their tables and stools which were in the place, and set them on fire, and ran to the houses of those who had slain Caesar, and burnt them. So that **when we consider that sin has slain our Lord Jesus, ah, how should it provoke our hearts to be revenged on sin—which has murdered the Lord of glory, and has done that mischief that all the devils in hell could never have done?**

It was good counsel one gave, "Never let go out of your minds the thoughts of a crucified Christ." Let these be food and drink unto you; let

them be your sweetness and consolation, your honey and your desire, your reading and your meditation, your life, death, and resurrection.

### **DEVICE 3. BY EXTENUATING AND LESSENING OF SIN**

Ah! says Satan, it is but a little pride, a little worldliness, a little uncleanness, a little drunkenness, etc. As Lot said of Zoar, "It is but a little one, and my soul shall live" (Gen. 19:20). Alas! says Satan, it is but a very little sin that you stick so at. You may commit it without any danger to your soul. It is but a little one; you may commit it, and yet your soul shall live.

Remedy (1). First, Solemnly consider, **that those sins which we are apt to account small, have brought upon men the greatest wrath of God**, as the eating of an apple, gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath day, and touching of the ark. Oh! the dreadful wrath that these sins brought down upon the heads and hearts of men! The least sin is contrary to the law of God, the nature of God, the being of God, and the glory of God; and therefore it is often punished severely by God; and do not we see daily the vengeance of the Almighty falling upon the bodies, names, states, families, and souls of men—for those sins that are but little ones in their eyes? Surely if we are not utterly forsaken by God, and blinded by Satan—we cannot but see it! Oh! therefore, when Satan says it is but a little one—you must say, Oh! but those sins which you call little, are such as will cause God to rain hell out of heaven upon sinners as he did upon the Sodomites!

Remedy (2). Seriously to consider, **That the giving way to a less sin makes way for the committing of a greater sin.** He who, to avoid a greater sin, will yield to a lesser, ten thousand to one but God in justice will leave that soul to fall into a greater. If we commit one sin to avoid another, it is just we should avoid neither, we having not law nor power in our own hands to keep off sin as we please; and we, by yielding to the lesser, do tempt the tempter to tempt us to the greater. Sin is of an encroaching nature; it creeps on the soul by degrees, step by step, until it has the soul to the very height of sin. David gives way to his wandering

eye, and this led him to those foul sins that caused God to break his bones, and to turn his day into night, and to leave his soul in great darkness. Jacob and Peter, and other saints, have found this true by woeful experience, that the yielding to a lesser sin has been the ushering in of a greater. The little thief will open the door, and make way for the greater; and the little wedge knocked in, will make way for the greater.

Satan will first draw you to sit with the drunkard, and then to sip with the drunkard, and then at last to be drunk with the drunkard. He will first draw you to be unclean in your thoughts, and then to be unclean in your looks, and then to be unclean in your words, and at last to be unclean in your practices. He will first draw you to look upon the golden wedge, and then to desire the golden wedge, and then to handle the golden wedge, and then at last by wicked ways to take the golden wedge, though you run the hazard of losing God and your soul forever; as you may see in Gehazi, Achan, and Judas, and many in these our days. Sin is never at a standstill (Psalm 1:1), first ungodly, then sinners, then scorners. Here they go on from sin to sin, until they come to the top of sin, that is, to sit in the seat of scorners.

By all this we see, that the yielding to lesser sins, draws the soul to the committing of greater. Ah! how many in these days have fallen, first to have low thoughts of Scripture and ordinances, and then to slight Scripture and ordinances, and then to make a nose of wax of Scripture and ordinances, and then to cast off Scripture and ordinances, and then at last to advance and lift up themselves, and their Christ-dishonoring and soul-damning opinions, above Scripture and ordinances.

Sin gains upon man's soul by insensible degrees. "The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talking is mischievous madness." (Eccles. 10:13) Corruption in the heart, when it breaks forth, is like a breach in the sea, which begins in a narrow passage, until it eats through, and cast down all before it. The debates of the soul are quick, and soon ended; and that may be done in a moment that may undo a man forever. When a man has begun to sin, he knows not where, or when, or how he shall make a stop of sin. Usually the soul goes on from evil to evil, from folly to folly, until it is ripe for eternal misery!

Remedy (3). The third remedy against this third device that Satan has to draw the soul to sin, is solemnly to consider, **That it is sad to sin against God for a trifle.** Dives would not give a crumb, therefore he should not receive a drop (Luke 16:21). **It is the greatest folly in the world—to adventure the going to hell for a small matter.** "I tasted but a little honey," said Jonathan, "and I must die" (1 Sam. 14:29). It is a most unkind and unfaithful thing to break with God, for a little. Little sins carry with them but little temptations to sin, and then a man shows most viciousness and unkindness, when he sins on a little temptation. It is devilish to sin without a temptation; it is little less than devilish to sin on a little occasion. **The less the temptation is to sin—the greater is that sin.** Saul's sin in not waiting for Samuel, was not so much in the matter—but it was much in the malice of it; for though Samuel had not come at all, yet Saul should not have offered sacrifice; but this cost him dear—his soul and kingdom.

It is the greatest unkindness that can be showed to a friend, to venture the complaining, bleeding, and grieving of his soul—upon a light and a slight occasion. So it is the greatest unkindness that can be showed to God, Christ, and the Spirit, for a soul to put God upon complaining, Christ upon bleeding, and the Spirit upon grieving—by yielding to little sins. Therefore, when Satan says it is but a little one, you must answer—that oftentimes there is the greatest unkindness showed to God's glorious majesty, in the acting of the least folly, and therefore you will not displease your best and greatest friend—by yielding to his greatest enemy.

Remedy (4). The fourth remedy against this device of Satan, is seriously to consider, **That there is great danger, yes, many times most danger—in the smallest sins.** "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). If the serpent sneaks in his head, he will draw in his whole body after him. Greater sins do sooner startle the soul, and awaken and rouse up the soul to repentance, than lesser sins do. Little sins often slide into the soul, and breed, and work secretly and indiscernibly in the soul, until they come to be so strong, as to trample upon the soul, and to cut the throat of the soul. There is oftentimes greatest danger to our bodies in the least diseases that hang upon us, because we are apt to make light of them, and to neglect the timely use of means for removing of them, until

they are grown so strong that they prove mortal to us. So there is most danger often in the least sins.

We are apt to take no notice of them, and to neglect those heavenly helps whereby they should be weakened and destroyed, until they are grown to that strength, that we are ready to cry out, the medicine is too weak for the disease! I would pray, and I would hear—but I am afraid that sin is grown up by degrees to such a head, that I shall never be able to prevail over it; but as I have begun to fall, so I shall utterly fall before it, and at last perish in it, unless the power and free grace of Christ acts gloriously, beyond my present apprehension and expectation. The viper is killed by the little young ones that are nourished and cherished in her belly—so are many men eternally killed and betrayed by the little sins, as they call them, that are nourished in their own bosoms.

I know not, says one, whether the nurture of the least sin be not worse than the commission of the greatest—for this may be of frailty, that argues obstinacy. A little hole in the ship sinks it. A small breach in a dyke carries away all before it. A little stab at the heart kills a man. A little sin, without a great deal of mercy, will damn a man!

Remedy (5). The fifth remedy against this device of Satan, is solemnly to consider, **That other saints have chosen to suffer the worst of torments, rather than commit the least sin**, that is, such as the world accounts little sins. So as you may see in Daniel and his companions, that would rather choose to burn, and be cast to the lions—than they would bow to the idol which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When this 'slight offense', in the world's account, and a hot fiery furnace stood in competition, that they must either fall into sin, or be cast into the fiery furnace—such was their tenderness of the honor and glory of God, and their hatred and indignation against sin, that they would rather burn than sin! They knew that it was far better to burn for their not sinning, than that God and conscience should raise a hell, a fire in their bosoms for sin.

I have read of that noble servant of God, Marcus Arethusius, minister of a church in the time of Constantine, who had been the cause of overthrowing an idol's temple; afterwards, when Julian came to be emperor, he would force the people of that place to build it up again. They

were ready to do it—but Marcus refused; whereupon those who were his own people, to whom he preached, took him, and stripped him of all his clothes, and abused his naked body, and gave it up to the children, to lance it with their pen-knives, and then caused him to be put in a basket, and drenched his naked body with honey, and set him in the sun, to be stung with wasps. And all this cruelty they showed, because he would not do anything towards the building up of this idol temple! No, they came to this, that if he would do but the least towards it, if he would give but a half-penny to it, they would save him. But he refused all, though the giving of a half-penny might have saved his life; and in doing this, he did but live up to that principle that most Christians talk of, and all profess—but few come up to, that is—that we must choose rather to suffer the worst of torments that men and devils can invent and inflict, than to commit the least sin whereby God should be dishonored, our consciences wounded, religion reproached, and our own souls endangered.

Remedy (6). The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That the soul is never able to stand under the guilt and weight of the least sin, when God shall set it home upon the soul.** The least sin will press and sink the stoutest sinner as low as hell, when God shall open the eyes of a sinner, and make him see the horrid filthiness and abominable vileness that is in sin! What so little, base, and vile creatures—as lice or gnats—and yet by these little poor creatures, God so plagued stout-hearted Pharaoh, and all Egypt, that, fainting under it, they were forced to cry out, "This is the finger of God!" (Exod. 8:16; 10. 19). When little creatures, yes, the least creatures, shall be armed with a power from God, they shall press and sink down the greatest, proudest, and stoutest tyrants who breathe!

So when God shall cast a sword into the hand of a little sin, and arm it against the soul, the soul will faint and fall under it. Some, who have but contemplated adultery, without any actual acting it; and others, having found a trifle, and made no conscience to restore it, knowing, by the light of natural conscience, that they did not do as they would be done by; and others, that have had some unworthy thought of God, have been so frightened, amazed, and terrified for those sins, which are small in men's account, that they have wished they had never been born; that they could

take no delight in any earthly comfort, that they have been put to their wits' end, ready to make away themselves, wishing themselves annihilated.

William Perkins mentions a good man—but very poor, who, being ready to starve, stole a lamb, and being about to eat it with his poor children, and as his manner was afore eating, to ask God's blessing, dare not do it—but fell into a great perplexity of conscience, and acknowledged his fault to the owner, promising payment if ever he should be able.

Remedy (7). The seventh remedy against this device is, solemnly to consider, **That there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction**; and this appears as clear as the sun, by the severe dealing of God the Father with his beloved Son, who let all the vials of his fiercest wrath upon him, and that for the least sin as well as for the greatest.

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23); of ALL sin, whether great or small, Oh! how should this make us tremble—as much at the least spark of lust as at hell itself; considering that God the Father would not spare his bosom Son, no, not for the least sin—but would make him drink the dregs of his wrath!

And so much for the remedies that may fence and preserve our souls from being drawn to sin by this third device of Satan.

**DEVICE 4. By presenting to the soul the best men's sins, and by hiding from the soul their virtues; by showing the soul their sins, and by hiding from the soul their sorrows and repentance:** as by setting before the soul the adultery of David, the pride of Hezekiah, the impatience of Job, the drunkenness of Noah, the blasphemy of Peter, etc., and by hiding from the soul the tears, the sighs, the groans, the meltings, the humblings, and repentings of these precious souls.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That the Spirit of the Lord has been as careful to note**

**the saints' rising by repentance out of sin, as he has to note their falling into sins.** David falls fearfully—but by repentance he rises sweetly. 'Blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin; for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow; deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation.' It is true, Hezekiah's heart was lifted up under the abundance of mercy that God had cast in upon him; and it is as true that Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon him, nor upon Jerusalem, in the days of Hezekiah. It is true, Job curses the day of his birth, and it is as true that he rises by repentance: 'Behold, I am vile,' says he; 'what shall I answer you? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken—but I will not answer; yes twice—but I will proceed no further. I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear—but now my eye sees you; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' (Job 40:4, 5; 42:5, 6). Tertullian says that he was born for no other purpose but to repent.

Peter falls dreadfully—but rises by repentance sweetly; a look of love from Christ melts him into tears. He knew that repentance was the key to the kingdom of grace. As once his **faith** was so great that he leaped, as it were, into a sea of waters to come to Christ; so now his **repentance** was so great that he leaped, as it were, into a sea of tears, because he had denied Christ. Some say that, after his sad fall, he was ever and always weeping, and that his face was even furrowed with continual tears. He had no sooner took in poison but he vomited it up again, before it got to the vitals; he had no sooner handled this serpent but he turned it into a rod to scourge his soul with remorse for sinning against such clear light, and strong love, and sweet discoveries of the heart of Christ to him. Luther confesses that, before his conversion, he met not with a more displeasing word in all his study of divinity than *repent*—but afterward he took delight in the word. Clement notes that Peter so repented, that all his life after, every night when he heard the cock crow, he would fall upon his knees, and, weeping bitterly, would beg pardon of his sin. Ah, souls, you can easily sin as the saints—but can you repent with the saints? Many can sin with David and Peter, that cannot repent with David and Peter—and so must perish forever!

Theodosius the emperor, pressing that he might receive the Lord's supper, excuses his own foul act by David's doing the like; to which Ambrose replies, You have followed David transgressing, follow David repenting, and then think you of the table of the Lord.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That these saints did not make a trade of sin.** They fell once or twice, and rose by repentance, that they might keep the closer to Christ forever. They fell accidentally, occasionally, and with much reluctancy; and you sin presumptuously, obstinately, readily, delightfully, and customarily. The saints cannot sin with a whole will—but, as it were, with a half-will, an unwillingness; not with a full consent—but with a dissenting consent. You have, by your making a trade of sin, contracted upon your soul a kind of cursed necessity of sinning, that you can as well cease to be, or cease to live, as you can cease to sin. Sin is, by custom, become as another nature to you, which you can not, which you will not lay aside, though you know that if you do not lay sin aside, God will lay your soul aside forever; though you know that if sin and your soul do not part, Christ and your soul can never meet. If you will make a trade of sin, and cry out—Did not David sin thus, and Noah sin thus, and Peter sin thus? No! their hearts turned aside to folly one day—but your heart turns aside to folly every day (2 Peter 2:14, Prov. 4:6); and when they were fallen, they rise by repentance, and by the actings of faith upon a crucified Christ. But you fall, and have no strength nor will to rise—but wallow in sin, and will eternally die in your sins, unless the Lord be the more merciful to your soul. Do you think, O soul, this is good reasoning? — Such a one tasted poison but once, and yet narrowly escaped; but I daily drink poison, yet I shall escape. Yet such is the mad reasoning of vain souls. David and Peter sinned once foully and fearfully; they tasted poison but once, and were sick to death; but I taste it daily, and yet shall not taste of eternal death. Remember, O souls! that the day is at hand when self-flatterers will be found self-deceivers, yes, self-murderers! Though **sin dwells** in the regenerate, yet it does not **reign** over the regenerate; they rise by repentance.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That though God does not, nor never will, disinherit**

**his people for their sins, yet he has severely punished his people for their sins.** David sins, and God breaks his bones for his sin: 'Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which you have broken may rejoice' (Psalm 51:8). 'And because you have done this, the sword shall never depart from your house, to the day of your death' (2 Sam. 12:10). Though God will not utterly take from them his loving-kindness, nor allow his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth, yet will he 'visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes' (Psalm 89:30, 35). The Scripture abounds with instances of this kind. This is so known a truth among all that know anything of truth, that to cite more scriptures to prove it would be to light a candle to see the sun at noon. Josephus reports that, not long after the Jews had crucified Christ on the cross, so many of them were condemned to be crucified that there were not places enough for crosses nor crosses enough for the bodies that were to be hung thereon.

The Jews have a proverb, 'That there is no punishment comes upon Israel in which there is not one ounce of the golden calf'; meaning that that was so great a sin, as that in every plague God remembered it; that it had an influence into every trouble that befell them. Every man's heart may say to him in his sufferings, as the heart of Apollodorus in the kettle, 'I have been the cause of this.' **God is most angry when he shows no anger.** God keep me from this mercy; this kind of mercy is worse than all other kind of misery.

One writing to a dead friend has this expression: 'I account it a part of unhappiness not to know adversity; I judge you to be miserable, because you have not been miserable.' Luther says, 'There is not a Christian that carries not his cross.' It is mercy that our affliction is not execution—but a correction. He who has deserved hanging, may be glad if he escape with a whipping. God's corrections are our instructions, his lashes our lessons, his scourges our schoolmasters, his chastisements our admonitions. And to note this, both the Hebrews and the Greeks express **chastening** and **teaching** by one and the same word (*Musar, Paideia*),\*\*\* because the latter is the true end of the former, according to that in the proverb, 'Smart makes wit, and vexation gives understanding.' Whence Luther fitly

calls affliction The Christian man's divinity.' So says Job (Chap. 33:14-19), 'But God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it. He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in bed. He whispers in their ear and terrifies them with his warning. He causes them to change their minds; he keeps them from pride. He keeps them from the grave, from crossing over the river of death. Or God disciplines people with sickness and pain, with ceaseless aching in their bones.' When Satan shall tell you of other men's sins to draw you to sin—then think of the same men's sufferings to keep you from sin. Lay your hand upon your heart, and say, O my soul! if you sin with David, you must suffer with David!

***Remedy (4).*** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That there are but two main ends of God's recording of the falls of his saints.**

And the one is, to keep those from fainting, sinking, and despair, under the burden of their sins, who fall through weakness and infirmity.

And the other is, that their falls may be as landmarks to warn others to take heed lest they fall. It never entered into the heart of God to record his children's sins, that others might be encouraged to sin—but that others might look to themselves, and hang the faster upon the skirts of Christ, and avoid all occasions and temptations that may occasion the soul to fall, as others have fallen, when they have been left by Christ. The Lord has made their sins as landmarks, to warn his people to take heed how they come near those sands and rocks, those snares and baits, that have been fatal to the choicest treasures, namely—the joy, peace, comfort, and glorious enjoyments of the bravest spirits and noblest souls that ever sailed through the ocean of this sinful troublesome world; as you may see in David, Job, and Peter. There is nothing in the world that can so notoriously cross the grand end of God's recording of the sins of his saints, than for any from thence to take encouragement to sin; and wherever you find such a soul, you may write him Christless, graceless, a soul cast off by God, a soul that Satan has by the hand, and the eternal God knows where he will lead him. I have known a good man, says Bernard, who, when he heard of any that had committed some notorious sin, he was accustomed to say with himself—he fell today, so may I

tomorrow.

**DEVICE 5. To present God to the soul as one made up all of mercy.**

Oh! says Satan, you need not make such a matter of sin, you need not be so fearful of sin, not so unwilling to sin; for God is a God of mercy, a God full of mercy, a God that delights in mercy, a God that is ready to show mercy, a God that is never weary of showing mercy, a God more prone to pardon his people than to punish his people; and therefore he will not take advantage against the soul; and why then, says Satan, should you make such a matter of sin?

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy is, seriously to consider, **That it is the greatest judgment in the world to be left to sin, upon any pretense whatever.** O unhappy man! when God leaves you to yourself, and does not resist you in your sins. Woe, woe to him at whose sins God does wink. When God lets the way to hell be a smooth and pleasant way, that is hell on this side hell, and a dreadful sign of God's indignation against a man; a token of his rejection, and that God does not intend good unto him. That is a sad word, 'Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone' (Hosea 4:17); he will be unteachable and incorrigible; he has made a match with mischief, he shall have his bellyful of it; he falls with open eyes; let him fall at his own peril. And that is a terrible saying, 'So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels' (Psalm 81:12). A soul given up to sin is a soul ripe for hell, a soul hastening to destruction!

Ah Lord! this mercy! humbly beg, that whatever you give me up to, you will not give me up to the ways of my own heart; if you will give me up to be afflicted, or tempted, or reproached, I will patiently sit down, and say, It is the Lord; let him do with me what seems good in his own eyes. Do anything with me, lay what burden you will upon me, so you do not give me up to the ways of my own heart.

Augustine says, 'It is a human thing to fall into sin, devilish to persevere therein, and divine to rise from it. Deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man —myself!

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That God is as JUST, as he is merciful.** As the Scriptures speak Him out to be a very merciful God, so they speak Him out to be a very just God. Witness His casting the angels out of heaven and His binding them in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day.\* Witness His turning Adam out of Paradise. Witness His drowning of the old world. Witness His raining hell out of heaven upon Sodom. Witness all the troubles, losses, sicknesses, and diseases, which are in the world. Witness Tophet, which "has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze." (Isaiah 30:33) Witness His treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath. But above all, witness the pouring forth of all His wrath upon His bosom Son, when Jesus bore the sins of His people, and cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

\*God hanged them up in gibbets, as it were, that others might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That sins against God's mercy will bring the greatest and sorest judgments upon men's heads and hearts. Mercy is God's Alpha, justice is His Omega.** David, speaking of these attributes, places mercy in the forefront, and justice in the rearward, saying, "I will sing of Your love and justice." (Psalm 101:1). When God's mercy is despised, then His justice takes the throne!\* God is like a prince, who sends not his army against rebels before he has sent his pardon, and proclaimed it by a herald of arms: he first hangs out the white flag of mercy; if this wins men in, they are happy forever; but if they remain rebellious, then God will put forth his red flag of justice and judgment. If His mercy is despised, His justice shall be felt!

The higher we are in dignity, the more grievous is our fall and misery.

God is slow to anger—but he recompenses his slowness with grievousness of punishment. If we abuse His mercy to serve our lust, then, in Salvian's phrase, God will rain hell out of heaven, rather than not visit for such

sins.

See this in the Israelites. He loved them and chose them when they were in their blood, and most unlovely. He multiplied them, not by means—but by miracle; from seventy souls they grew in few years to six hundred thousand; the more they were oppressed, the more they prospered. Like camomile, the more you tread it, the more you spread it; or like a palm-tree, the more it is pressed, the further it spreads; or like fire, the more it is raked, the more it burns. Their mercies came in upon them like Job's messengers, one upon the neck of the other: He put off their sackcloth, and girded them with gladness, and 'compassed them about with songs of deliverance'; he 'carried them on the wings of eagles'; he kept them 'as the apple of his eye.' (Psalm 32:7; Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:10) But they, abusing his mercy, became the greatest objects of his wrath. As I know not the man who can reckon up his mercies; so I know not the man who can sum up the miseries which are coming upon him for their sins!

For as our Savior prophesied concerning Jerusalem, 'that a stone should not be left upon a stone,' so it was fulfilled forty years after his ascension, by Vespasian the emperor and his son Titus, who, having besieged Jerusalem, the Jews were oppressed with a grievous famine, in which their food was old shoes, leather, old hay, and the dung of beasts. There died, partly by the sword and partly by the famine, eleven hundred thousand of the poorer sort; two thousand in one night were slaughtered; six thousand were burned in a porch of the temple; the whole city was sacked and burned, and laid level to the ground; and ninety-seven thousand taken captives, and forced to base and miserable service, as Eusebius and Josephus says. (Vespasian broke into their city at Kedron, where they took Christ, on the same feast day that Christ was taken; he whipped them where they whipped Christ; he sold twenty Jews for a penny, as they sold Christ for thirty pence.) And to this day, in all parts of the world, are they not the offscouring of the world? None more abhorred, than they. Men shall be deeper in hell, because heaven was offered unto them; but they abused God's mercy. Men's offences are increased by their obligations.

And so Capernaum, that was lifted up to heaven, was threatened to be thrown down to hell. No souls fall so low into hell, if they fall, as those

souls that by a hand of mercy are lifted up nearest to heaven. You who are so apt to abuse God's mercy, consider this, that in the gospel days, the plagues that God inflicts upon the despisers and abusers of mercy are usually spiritual plagues; as blindness of mind, hardness of heart, benumbedness of conscience, which are ten thousand times worse than the worst of outward plagues which can befall you. And therefore, though you may escape temporal judgments, yet you shall not escape spiritual judgments: 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' (Heb. 2:3) says the apostle. Oh! therefore, whenever Satan shall present God to the soul as one made up all of mercy, that he may draw you to do wickedly, say unto him, that **sins against God's mercy, will bring upon the soul the greatest misery**; and therefore whatever becomes of you, you will not sin against mercy.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan, is seriously to consider, **That though God's general mercy is over all his works, yet his special mercy is confined to those who are divinely qualified.** Augustus, in his solemn feasts, gave trifles to some—but gold to others whom his heart was most set upon. So God, by a hand of general mercy, gives these poor trifles—outward blessings, to those who he least loves; but his gold, special mercy, is only towards those who his heart is most set upon. So in Exodus 34:6, 7: 'And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' Exodus 20:6, 'And showing mercy unto thousands of those who love me, and keep my commandments.' Psalm 25:10, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.' Psalm 32:10, 'Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.' Psalm 33:18, 'Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him, upon those who hope in his mercy.' Psalm 103:11, 'For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him.' Ver. 17, 'But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him.'

When Satan attempts to draw you to sin by presenting God as a God all

made up of mercy, oh then reply, that though God's general mercy extend to all the works of his hand, yet his special mercy is confined to those who are divinely qualified, to those who love him and keep his commandments, to those who trust in him, that by hope hang upon him, and who fear him; and that you must be such a one here, or else you can never be happy hereafter; you must partake of his special mercy, or else eternally perish in everlasting misery, notwithstanding God's general mercy.

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That those who were once glorious on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven, did look upon the mercy of God as the most powerful argument to preserve them from sin, and to fence their souls against sin; and not as an encouragement to sin.** Psalm 26:3-5: 'For I am constantly aware of your unfailing love, and I have lived according to your truth. I do not spend time with liars or go along with hypocrites. I hate the gatherings of those who do evil, and I refuse to join in with the wicked.'

So **Joseph** strengthens himself against sin from the remembrance of mercy: 'How then can I,' says he, 'do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' (Gen. 39:9). He had his eye fixed upon mercy, and therefore sin could not enter, though the irons entered into his soul; his soul being taken with mercy, was not moved with his mistress's impudence. Satan knocked often at the door—but the sight of mercy would not allow him to answer or open. Joseph, like a pearl in a puddle, keeps his virtue still. (The stone called *Pontaurus*, is of that virtue, that it preserves him who carries it, from taking any hurt by poison. The mercy of God in Christ to our souls is the most precious stone or pearl in the world, to prevent us from being poisoned with sin.)

Likewise with **Paul**: 'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' (Rom. 6:1, 2). There is nothing in the world that renders a man more unlike to a saint, and more like to Satan—than to argue from God's mercy to sinful liberty; from divine goodness to licentiousness. This is the devil's logic, and in whomever you find it, you may write, 'This soul is lost!' A man may as truly say, 'the sea burns', or 'the fire cools'—as that God's free

grace and mercy should make a truly gracious soul to live wickedly.

So the same apostle: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service' (Rom. 12:1). So John: 'These things I write unto you, that you sin not (1 John 2:1, 2). What was it that he wrote? He wrote: 'That we might have fellowship with the Father and his Son; and that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin; and that if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and that if we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' These choice favors and mercies the apostle holds forth as the choicest means to preserve the soul from sin, and to keep at the greatest distance from sin; and if this will not do it—you may write the man void of Christ and grace, and undone forever!

**DEVICE 6. By persuading the soul that the work of repentance is an easy work; and that therefore the soul need not make such a matter of sin.** Why! Suppose you do sin, says Satan, it is no such difficult thing to return, and confess, and be sorrowful, and beg pardon, and cry, 'Lord, have mercy upon me!' and if you do but this, God will forgive your debt, and pardon your sins, and save your souls.

By this device Satan draws many a soul to sin, and makes many millions of souls servants of sin, or rather slaves to sin.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy is, seriously to consider, **That repentance is a mighty work, a difficult work, a work that is above our power.** There is no power below that power which raised Christ from the dead, and which made the world—which can break the heart of a sinner, or turn the heart of a sinner! You are as well able to melt adamant, as to melt your own heart; to turn a flint into flesh, as to turn your own heart to the Lord; to raise the dead and to make a world, as to repent. **Repentance is a flower which does not grow in nature's garden!** 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.' (Jer. 13:23). Repentance is a gift that comes down from above. Men are not born with

repentance in their hearts, as they are born with tongues in their mouths: (Acts 5:31): 'Him has God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior—to **give** repentance.' Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." (2 Timothy 2:25-26) It is not in the power of any mortal to repent at pleasure. Some ignorant deluded souls vainly conceit that these five words, '*Lord! have mercy upon me,*' are efficacious to send them to heaven; but as many are undone by buying a counterfeit jewel, so many are in hell by mistake of their repentance. Many rest in their repentance, which caused on to say, 'Repentance damns more than sin!' It was a vain brag of king Cyrus, that caused it to be written upon his tombstone, 'I can do all things!' So could Paul, too—but it was 'through Christ, who strengthened him.'

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to **consider of the nature of true repentance**. Repentance is some other thing, than what vain men conceive. The Hebrew word for repentance signifies to return, implying a going back from what a man had done. It denotes a turning or converting from one thing to another, from sin to God. The Greeks have two words by which they express the nature of repentance, one signifies to be careful, anxious, solicitous, after a thing is done; the other word denotes after-wisdom, the mind's recovering of wisdom, or growing wiser after our folly. True repentance is a thorough change both of the mind and life. Repentance *for* sin is nothing worth without repentance *from* sin. "If you repent with a contradiction," says Tertullian, "God will pardon you with a contradiction; if you repent and yet continue in your sin, God will pardon you, and yet send you to hell—there is a pardon with a contradiction. Negative goodness serves no man's turn, to save him from the axe."

Repentance is sometimes taken, in a more strict and narrow sense, for godly sorrow; sometimes repentance is taken, in a large sense, for amendment of life. Repentance has in it three things, namely, the **act**, **subject**, and **terms**.

(1) *The formal ACT of repentance is a changing and converting.* It is

often set forth in Scripture by turning. 'Turn me, and I shall be turned,' says Ephraim; 'after I was turned, I repented,' says he (Jer. 31:18, 19). It is a turning from darkness to light.

(2) *The **SUBJECT** changed and converted is the whole man;* it is both the sinner's heart and life: first his heart, then his life; first his person, then his practice and lifestyle. 'Wash, be clean,' there is the change of their persons; 'Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well' (Is. 1:16, 17); there is the change of their practices. 'Cast away,' says Ezekiel, 'all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed;' there is the change of the life; 'and make you a new heart and a new spirit' (18:31); there is the change of the heart.

(3) *The **TERMS** of this change and conversion, from which and to which both heart and life must be changed; **from sin to God.*** The heart must be changed from the state and power of sin, the life from the acts of sin—but both unto God; the heart to be under his power in a state of grace, the life to be under his rule in all new obedience; and the apostle speaks, 'To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God' (Acts 26:18). So the prophet Isaiah says, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord' (55:7).

Thus much of the nature of evangelical repentance. Now, souls, tell me whether it be such an easy thing to repent, as Satan does suggest. Besides what has been spoken, I desire that you will take notice, that repentance does include turning from the most darling sin. Ephraim shall say, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' (Hosea 14:8). Yes, it is a turning from all sin to God (Ezek. 18:30): 'Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, everyone according to his ways, says the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.'

**Herod** turned from many—but turned not from his Herodias, which was his ruin. **Judas** turned from all visible wickedness, yet he would not cast out that golden devil 'covetousness', and therefore was cast into the hottest place in hell. **He who turns not from every sin, turns not aright from any one sin.** Every sin strikes at the honor of God, the being of God, the glory of God, the heart of Christ, the joy of the Spirit,

and the peace of a man's conscience; and therefore a soul truly penitent strikes at all, hates all, conflicts with all, and will labor to draw strength from a crucified Christ to crucify all sins. A true penitent knows neither father nor mother, neither right eye nor right hand—but will pluck out the one and cut off the other. **Saul** spared but one Agag, and that cost him his soul and his kingdom (1 Sam. 15:9).

Besides, repentance is not only a turning from all sin—but also a **turning to all good**; to a love of all good, to a prizing of all good, and to a following after all good (Ezek. 18:21): 'But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.' Mere *negative righteousness and holiness* is neither true righteousness nor true holiness. The evil servant did not use his one talent in debauchery (Matt. 25:18). Those reprobates (Matt. 25:41-45), did not rob the saints—but merely did not help them. For this they must eternally perish.

David fulfilled *all* the will of God, and had respect unto *all* his commandments, and so had Zacharias and Elizabeth. It is not enough that the tree does not bear bad fruit; but it must bring forth good fruit, else it must be 'cut down and cast into the fire' (Luke 13:7). So it is not enough that you are not thus and thus wicked—but you must be thus and thus gracious and godly, else divine justice will put the axe of divine vengeance to the root of your souls, and cut you off forever. 'The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.' (Matt. 3:10). Besides, repentance does include a sensibleness of sin's sinfulness—how opposite and contrary sin is to the blessed God. God is light, sin is darkness; God is life, sin is death; God is heaven, sin is hell; God is beauty, sin is deformity.

Also true repentance includes a sensibleness of sin's destructiveness; how it cast angels out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise; how it laid the first cornerstone in hell, and brought in all the curses, crosses, and miseries, that are in the world; and how it makes men liable to all temporal, spiritual and eternal wrath; how it has made men Godless, Christless, hopeless and heavenless.

Further, true repentance includes sorrow for sin, contrition of heart. It breaks the heart with sighs, and sobs, and groans—that by sin—a loving God and Father is offended; a blessed Savior afresh crucified, and the sweet Comforter, the Spirit, grieved and vexed.

Again, repentance does include, not only a loathing of sin—but also a loathing of ourselves for sin. As a man does not only loathe poison—but he loathes the very dish or vessel that has the smell of the poison; so a true penitent does not only loathe his sin—but he loathes himself, the vessel that smells of it; so Ezek. 20:43: 'And there shall you remember your ways and all your doings, wherein you have been defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that you have committed.' True repentance will work your hearts, not only to loathe your sins—but to loathe yourselves.

True repentance is a sorrowing for sin, as it is an offence to God and against God. Repentance both comes from God, and drives a man to God, as it did the church in the Canticles, and the prodigal.

Again, true repentance does not only work a man to loathe himself for his sins—but it makes him ashamed of his sin also: 'What fruit had you in those things whereof you are now ashamed?' says the apostle (Rom. 6:21). So Ezekiel: 'And you shall be confounded, and never open your mouth any more, because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, says the Lord God' (16:63). When a penitent soul sees his sins pardoned, the anger of God pacified, the divine justice satisfied, then he sits down and blushes, as one ashamed. 'So much the more God has been displeased with the blackness of sin, the more will he be pleased with the blushing of the sinner' (Bernard). **Those who do not burn now in zeal against sin must before long burn in hell for sin.**

Yes, true repentance makes a man to deny his sinful self, and to walk contrary to sinful self, to take a holy revenge upon sin, as you may see in Paul, the jailor, Mary Magdalene, and Manasseh. This the apostle shows in 2 Cor. 7:10, 11: 'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear

yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.'

Now souls, sum up all these things together, and tell me whether it would be such an easy thing to repent as Satan would make the soul to believe, and I am confident your heart will answer that **it is as hard a thing to repent as it is to make a world, or raise the dead!**

I shall conclude this second remedy with a worthy saying of a precious holy man: 'Repentance,' says he, 'strips us stark naked of all the garments of the old Adam, and leaves not so much as a shirt behind.' In this rotten building it leaves not a stone upon a stone. As the flood drowned Noah's own friends and servants, so must the flood of repenting tears drown our sweetest and most darling sins.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is seriously to consider, **That repentance is a continued act.** The word *repent* implies the continuation of it. Anselm confesses, that all his life was either damnable for sin committed, or unprofitable for good omitted; and at last concludes, "Oh, what then remains, but in our whole life—but to lament the sins of our whole life." True repentance inclines a man's heart to perform God's statutes always, even unto the end. A true penitent must go on from faith to faith, from strength to strength; he must never stand still nor turn back. Repentance is a grace, and must have its daily operation as well as other graces. **True repentance is a continued spring, where the waters of godly sorrow are always flowing:** 'My sin is ever before me' (Psalm 51:3). A true penitent is often casting his eyes back to the days of his former vanity, and this makes him morning and evening to 'water his couch with his tears.' 'Remember not against me the sins of my youth,' says one blessed penitent; and 'I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man,' says another penitent.

Repentance is a continued act of turning, a repentance never to be repented of, a turning never to turn again to folly. A true penitent has ever something within him to turn from; he can never get near enough to God; no, not so near him as once he was; and therefore he is still turning and turning that he may get nearer and nearer to him, who is his chief

good and his only happiness, *optimum maximum*, the best and the greatest. They are every day a-crying out, 'O wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us from this body of death!' (Rom. 7:24). They are still sensible of sin, and still conflicting with sin, and still sorrowing for sin, and still loathing of themselves for sin. Repentance is no transient act—but a continued act of the soul.

And tell me, O tempted soul, whether it be such an easy thing as Satan would make you believe, to be every day a-turning more and more from sin, and a-turning nearer and nearer to God, your choicest blessedness. A true penitent can as easily content himself with one act of faith, or one act of love, as he can content himself with one act of repentance.

A Jewish Rabbi, pressing the practice of repentance upon his disciples, and exhorting them to be sure to repent the day before they died, one of them replied, that the day of any man's death was very uncertain. 'Repent, therefore, every day,' said the Rabbi, 'and then you shall be sure to repent the day before you die.' You are wise, and know how to apply it to your own advantage.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is solemnly to consider, **That if the work of repentance were such an easy work as Satan would make it to be, then certainly so many would not lie roaring and crying out of wrath and eternal ruin under the horrors and terrors of conscience, for not repenting! Yes, doubtless, so many millions would not go to hell for not repenting, if it were such an easy thing to repent.** Ah, do not poor souls under horror of conscience cry out and say, Were all this world a lump of gold, and in our hand to dispose of—we would give it for the least particle of true repentance! And will you say it is an easy thing to repent?

When a poor sinner, whose conscience is awakened, shall judge the exchange of all the world for the least particle of repentance to be the happiest exchange that ever a sinner made; tell me, O soul, is it good going to hell? Is it good dwelling with the devouring fire, with everlasting burnings? Is it good to be forever separated from the blessed and glorious presence of God, and saints, and to be forever shut out from those good things of eternal life, which are so many, that they exceed number; so

great, that they exceed measure; so precious, that they exceed all estimation? We know it is the greatest misery that can befall the sons of men; and would they not prevent this by repentance, if it were such an easy thing to repent as Satan would have it?

Well, then, do not run the hazard of losing God, Christ, heaven, and your soul forever, by hearkening to this device of Satan—that is, that it is an easy thing to repent. If it be so easy, why, then, do wicked men's hearts so rise against those who press the doctrine of repentance upon them in the sweetest way, and by the strongest and the choicest arguments that the Scriptures afford? And why do they kill two at once: the faithful laborer's name and their own souls, by their wicked words and actings, because they are put upon repenting, which Satan tells them is so easy a thing? Surely, were repentance so easy, wicked men would not be so much enraged when that doctrine is, by evangelical considerations, pressed upon them.

"If you be backward in the thoughts of repentance, be forward in the thoughts of hell, the flames whereof only the streams of the penitent eye can extinguish" (*Tertullian*). "Oh, how shall you tear and rend yourself! how shall you lament fruitless repenting! What will you say? Woe is me, that I have not cast off the burden of sin; woe is me, that I have not washed away my spots—but am now pierced with my iniquities; now have I lost the surpassing joy of angels!" (*Basil*).

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is seriously to consider, **That to repent of sin is as great a work of grace, as not to sin.** (Yet it is better to be kept from sin than cured of sin by repentance; as it is better for a man to be preserved from a disease than to be cured of the disease.) By our sinful falls—the powers of the soul are weakened; the strength of grace is decayed; our evidences for heaven are blotted; fears and doubts in the soul are raised (will God once more pardon this scarlet sin, and show mercy to this wretched soul?); the corruptions in the heart are more advantaged and confirmed; and the conscience of a man after falls is the more enraged or the more benumbed. Now for a soul, notwithstanding all this, to repent of his falls—this shows that it is as great a work of grace to repent of sin as it is not to sin.

Repentance is the vomit of the soul; and of all purgatives, none so difficult and hard as it is to vomit. The same means that tends to preserve the soul from sin, the same means works the soul to rise by repentance when it is fallen into sin. We know the mercy and loving-kindness of God is one special means to keep the soul from sin; as David spoke, 'I am constantly aware of your unfailing love, and I have lived according to your truth. I do not spend time with liars or go along with hypocrites. I hate the gatherings of those who do evil, and I refuse to join in with the wicked.' (Psalm 26:3-5). So by the same means the soul is raised by repentance out of sin, as you may see in Mary Magdalene, who loved much, and wept much, because much was forgiven her (Luke 7:37-39). So those in Hosea: 'Come, let us return to the LORD! He has torn us in pieces; now he will heal us. He has injured us; now he will bandage our wounds. In just a short time, he will restore us so we can live in his presence.' (Hos. 6:1, 2); as the Hebrew has it, 'in his favor'. Confidence in God's mercy and love, that he would heal them, and bind up their wounds, and revive their dejected spirits, and cause them to live in his favor, was that which worked their hearts to repent and return unto him.

I might further show you this truth in many other particulars—but this may suffice: only remember this in the general, that there is as much of the power of God, and love of God, and faith in God, and fear of God, and care to please God, zeal for the glory of God (2 Cor. 7:11) requisite to work a man to repent of sin, as there is to keep a man from sin; by which you may easily judge, that to repent of sin is as great a work as not to sin. And now tell me, O soul, is it an easy thing not to sin? We know then certainly it is not an easy thing to repent of sin.

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That he who now tempts you to sin upon this account, that repentance is easy, will, before long, to work you to despair, and forever to break the neck of your soul, present repentance as the most difficult and hardest work in the world;** and to this purpose he will set your sins in order before you, and make them to say, 'We are yours, and we must follow you.' Bede tells of a certain great man that was admonished in his sickness to repent, who answered that he would not repent yet; for if he should recover, his

companions would laugh at him; but growing more and more sick, his friends pressed him again to repent—but then he told them it was too late, for now, said he; I am judged and condemned.

Now, Satan will help to work the soul to look up, and see God angry; and to look inward, and to see conscience accusing and condemning; and to look downwards, and see hell's mouth open to receive the impenitent soul: and all this to render the work of repentance impossible to the soul. What, says Satan, do you think that that is easy which the whole power of grace cannot conquer while we are in this world? Is it easy, says Satan, to turn from some outward act of sin to which you have been addicted? Do you not remember that you have often complained against such and such particular sins, and resolved to leave them? And yet, to this hour, you have not, you cannot! What will it then be to turn from every sin? Yes, to mortify and cut off those sins, those darling lusts, which are as joints and limbs, which are as right hands and right eyes? Have you not loved your sins above your Savior? Have you not preferred earth before heaven? Have you not all along neglected the means of grace? and despised the offers of grace? and vexed the Spirit of grace? There would be no end, if I would set before you the infinite evils that you have committed, and the innumerable good services that you have omitted, and the frequent checks of your own conscience that you have condemned; and therefore you may well conclude that you can never repent, that you shall never repent.

Now, says Satan, do but a little consider your numberless sins, and the greatness of your sins, the foulness of your sins, the heinousness of your sins, the circumstances of your sins—and you shall easily see that those sins that you thought to be but motes, are indeed mountains; and is it not now in vain to repent of them? Surely, says Satan, if you should seek repentance and grace with tears, as Esau, you shall not find it! Your sand has run through the hour-glass, your sun has set, the door of mercy is shut, the golden scepter is withdrawn; and now you that have despised mercy, shall be forever destroyed by justice. For such a wretch as you are to attempt repentance is to attempt a thing impossible. It is impossible that you, that in all your life could never conquer one sin, should master such a numberless number of sins; which are so near, so dear, so

necessary, and so profitable to you, that have so long bedded and boarded with you, that have been old acquaintance and companions with you. Have you not often purposed, promised, vowed, and resolved to enter upon the practice of repentance—but to this day could never attain it? Surely it is in vain to strive against the stream, where it is so impossible to overcome; you are lost and cast off forever; to hell you must go, to hell you shall go! Ah, souls! he who now tempts you to sin, by suggesting to you the easiness of repentance, will at last work you to despair, and present repentance as the hardest work in all the world, and a work as far above man as heaven is above hell, as light is above darkness. Oh that you were wise, to break off your sins by timely repentance. Repentance is a work that must be timely done, or utterly undone forever.

**DEVICE 7. By making the soul bold to venture upon the occasions of sin.**

Says Satan, You may walk by the harlot's door though you won't go into the harlot's bed; you may sit and sup with the drunkard, though you won't be drunk with the drunkard; you may look upon Jezebel's beauty, and you may play and toy with Delilah, though you do not commit wickedness with the one or the other; you may with Achan handle the golden wedge, though you do not steal the golden wedge.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy is, **solemnly to dwell upon those scriptures which expressly command us to avoid the occasions of sin, and the least appearance of evil** (1 Thess. 5:22): 'Abstain from all appearance of evil.' Whatever is heterodox, unsound and unsavory, shun it, as you would do a serpent in your way, or poison in your food. Epiphanius says that in the old law, when any dead body was carried by any house, they were enjoined to shut their doors and windows. Theodosius tore the Arian's arguments presented to him in writing, because he found them repugnant to the Scriptures. Augustine retracted even ironies, because they had the appearance of lying.

When God had commanded the Jews to abstain from swine's flesh, they would not so much as name it—but in their common talk would call a sow

another thing. To abstain from all appearance of evil, is to do nothing wherein sin appears, or which has a shadow of sin. Bernard 'Abstained from whatever is of evil show, or of ill report, that he may neither wound conscience nor credit.' We must shun and be shy of the very show and shadow of sin, if either we have a regard to. our credit abroad, or our comfort at home.

It was good counsel that Livia gave her husband Augustus: 'It behooves you not only not to do wrong—but not to seem to do so.' So Jude 23, 'And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.' It is a phrase taken from legal uncleanness, which was contracted by touching the houses, the vessels, the garments, of unclean people. Under the law, men might not touch a menstruous cloth, nor would God accept of a blemished peace-offering. So we must not only hate and avoid gross sins—but everything that may carry a savor or suspicion of sin; we must abhor the very signs and tokens of sin. So in Prov. 5:8, 'Remove your way far from her, and come not near the door of her house.' He who would not be burnt, must dread the fire; he who would not hear the bell, must not meddle with the rope. One speaks of two young men that flung away their belts, when, being in an idol's temple, the laving water fell upon them, detesting, says the historian, the garment spotted by the flesh. One said, As often as I have been among vain men, I returned home less a man than I was before.

To venture upon the occasion of sin, and then to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' is all one as to thrust your finger into the fire, and then to pray that it might not be burnt. So, in Prov. 4:14, 15, you have another command: 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men: avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' This triple gradation of Solomon shows with a great emphasis, how necessary it is for men to flee from all appearance of sin, as the seaman shuns rocks and shelves; and as men shun those who have the plague-sores running upon them. As weeds endanger the corn, as an infection endangers the blood, or as an infected house endanger the neighborhood; so does the company of the wicked endanger the godly. Friendship with wicked consorts is one of the strongest chains of hell, and binds us to a participation in both their sin and their punishment.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That ordinarily there is no conquest over sin, without the soul turning from the occasion of sin.** It is impossible for that man to get the conquest of sin—who plays and sports with the occasions of sin. God will not remove the temptation to sin, except you turn from the occasion of sin. It is a just and righteous thing with God, that he should fall into the pit, who will adventure to dance upon the brink of the pit, and that he should be a slave to sin, that will not flee from the occasions of sin. As long as there is fuel in our hearts for a temptation, we cannot be secure. He who has gunpowder about him had need keep far enough off from sparks. To rush upon the occasions of sin is both to tempt ourselves, and to tempt Satan to tempt our souls! It is very rare that any soul plays with the occasions of sin—but that soul is then ensnared by sin!

The fable says, that the butterfly asked the owl how she should deal with the fire which had singed her wings, who counseled her not to behold so much as its smoke.

It is seldom that God keeps that soul from the acts of sin, who will not keep off from the occasions of sin. He who adventures upon the occasions of sin, is as he who would quench the fire with gasoline. Ah, souls, often remember how frequently you have been overcome by sin, when you have boldly gone upon the occasions of sin! Look back, souls, to the days of your vanity, wherein you have been as easily conquered as tempted, vanquished as assaulted—when you have played with the occasions of sin. As you would for the future be kept from the acting of sin, and be made victorious over sin, oh! flee from the occasions of sin!

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That other precious saints, who were once glorious on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven, have turned from the occasion of sin, as hell itself;** as you may see in Joseph (Gen. 39:10), 'And it came to pass, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.' Joseph was famous for all the four cardinal virtues, if ever any were. In this one temptation you may see his fortitude, justice, temperance, and prudence, in that he shuns the occasion: for he would not so much as be with her.

And what a man is indeed, that he is in a temptation, which is but a tap to give vent to corruption. The Nazarite might not only not drink wine—but not taste a grape, or the husk of a grape. The leper was to shave his hair, and pare his nails.

The devil knows that corrupt nature has a seed-plot for all sin, which being drawn forth and watered by some sinful occasion, is soon set a-work to the producing of death and destruction. God will not remove the temptation, until we remove the occasion to temptation. A bird while aloft is safe—but she comes not near the snare, without danger. The shunning the occasions of sin renders a man most like the godliest of men. A soul eminently gracious dares not come near the temptation. So Job 31:1, 'I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust upon a young woman.' I set a watch at the entrance of my senses, that my soul might not by them be infected or endangered. The eye is the window of the soul, and if that should be always open, the soul might smart for it. A man may not look intently upon that, that he may not love entirely. The disciples were set a-gog, by beholding the beauty of the temple. It is best and safest to have the eye always fixed upon the highest and noblest objects: as the mariner's eye is fixed upon the star, when their hand is on the stern. So David, when he was himself, he shuns the occasion of sin (Psalm 26:4, 5): 'I do not spend time with liars or go along with hypocrites. I hate the gatherings of those who do evil, and I refuse to join in with the wicked.'

Stories speak of some who could not sleep when they thought of the trophies of other worthies that went before them. The highest and choicest examples are to some, and should be to all, very quickening and provoking; and oh that the examples of those worthy saints, David, Joseph, and Job, might prevail with all your souls to shun and avoid the occasions of sin! Everyone should strive to be like them in grace, that they desire to be equal with in glory. He who shoots at the sun, though he be far short, will shoot higher than he who aims at a shrub. It is best, and it speaks out much of Christ within, to eye the highest and the worthiest examples.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That the avoiding the occasions of sin, is an**

**evidence of grace, and that which lifts up a man above most other men in the world.** That a man is indeed, which he is in temptation; and when sinful occasions present themselves before the soul, this speaks out both the truth and the strength of grace; when with Lot, a man can be chaste in Sodom, and with Timothy can live temperate in Asia, among the luxurious Ephesians; and with Job can walk uprightly in the land of Uz, where the people were profane in their lives, and superstitious in their worship; and with Daniel can be holy in Babylon; and with Abraham, righteous in Chaldea; and with Nehemiah, zealous in Damascus, etc.

Many a wicked man is full of corruption—but shows it not for lack of occasion; but that man is surely godly, who in his course will not be bad, though tempted by occasions to sin. A Christless soul is so far from refusing occasions to sin, when they come in his way, that he looks and longs after them, and rather than he will go without them he will buy them, not only with love or money—but also with the loss of his soul! Nothing but grace can fence a man against the occasions of sin, when he is strongly tempted thereunto. Therefore, as you would cherish a precious evidence in your own bosoms of the truth and strength of your graces, shun all sinful occasions.

Plutarch says of Demosthenes, that he was excellent at praising the worthy acts of his ancestors—but not so at imitating them. Oh that this were not applicable to many professors in our times!

**DEVICE 8. By representing to the soul the outward mercies that vain men enjoy, and the outward miseries that they are freed from, while they have walked in the ways of sin.**

Says Satan, Do you see, O soul, the many blessings that such and such enjoy, who walk in those very ways that your soul startles to think of, and the many crosses that they are delivered from, even such as makes other men, who say they dare not walk in such ways, to spend their days in sighing, weeping, groaning, and mourning? and therefore, says Satan, if ever you would be freed from the dark night of adversity, and enjoy the sunshine of prosperity—you must walk in their ways.

By this stratagem the devil took those in Jer. 44:16-18, "We will not listen to your messages from the Lord! We will do whatever we want. We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and sacrifice to her just as much as we like—just as we and our ancestors did before us, and as our kings and princes have always done in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For in those days we had plenty to eat, and we were well off and had no troubles! But ever since we quit burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and stopped worshiping her, we have been in great trouble and have suffered the effects of war and famine." This is just the language of a world of ignorant, profane, and superstitious souls, who would have returned to bondage, yes, to that bondage that was worse than that the Israelites groaned under.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy is, solemnly to consider, **That no man knows how the heart of God stands towards a person, by his outward blessings to that person.** His hand of mercy may be towards a man, when his heart may be against that man, as you may see in Saul and others; and the hand of God may be set against a man, when the heart of God is dearly set upon a man, as you may see in Job and Ephraim. The hand of God was severely set against them, and yet the heart and affections of God were strongly working towards them.

No man knows either the love or hatred of God—by his outward mercy or misery towards them; for all things come alike to all, to the righteous and to the unrighteous, to the good and to the bad, to the clean and to the unclean. The sun of prosperity shines as well upon brambles of the wilderness—as upon fruit-trees of the orchard; the snow and hail of adversity comes upon the best garden—as well as upon the stinking ash-heap or the wild waste. Ahab's and Josiah's ends concur in the very circumstances. Saul and Jonathan, though different in their natures, deserts, and deportments; yet in their deaths they were not divided. Health, wealth, honors, crosses, sicknesses, losses, are cast upon good men and bad men promiscuously. Moses dies in the wilderness—as well as those who murmured. Nabal is rich—as well as Abraham. Ahithophel wise—as well as Solomon. Doeg is honored by Saul—as well as Joseph was by Pharaoh. Usually the worst of men have most of these outward things. Usually the holiest of men have least of earth, though most of

heaven.

Cicero judged the Jews' religion to be nothing, because they were so often overcome, and impoverished, and afflicted; and the religion of Rome to be right, because the Romans prospered and became rulers of the world; and yet, though the Romans had God's hand, yet the Jews had his heart, for they were dearly beloved, though severely afflicted.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That there is nothing in the world that so provokes God to be wroth and angry, as men's taking encouragement from God's goodness and mercy—to do wickedly.** This you may see by that deluge of wrath which fell upon the old world, and by God's raining hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. This is clear in Jeremiah 44:20-28. The words are worthy of your best meditation. Oh that they were engraven in all your hearts, and constant in all your thoughts! Though they are too large for me to transcribe them, yet they are not too large for me to remember them. To argue from God's mercy to sinful liberty—is the devil's logic—and such logicians do ever walk as upon a mine of gunpowder ready to be blown up! No such soul can ever avert or avoid the wrath of God. This is wickedness at the height—for a man to be very bad, because God is very good. There is not a worse spirit than this in hell. Ah, Lord, does not wrath, yes, the greatest wrath, lie at this man's door? Are not the strongest chains of darkness prepared for such a soul? To sin against mercy is bestial; no, it is worse. To render good for evil is divine, to render good for good is human, to render evil for evil is brutish; but to render evil for good is devilish; and from this evil deliver my soul, O God.

Such souls make God into a mere doll—one that will not do as he says; but they shall find God to be as severe in punishing as he is to others gracious in pardoning. Good turns aggravate unkindnesses, and our guilt is increased by our obligations.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That there is no greater misery in this life, than not to be in misery; no greater affliction, than not to be afflicted.** Woe, woe to that soul that God will not spend a rod upon! This is the

saddest stroke of all—when God refuses to strike at all! (Hos. 4:17), 'Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.' 'Why should you be smitten any more? you will revolt more and more' (Is. 1:5). When the physician gives up the patient, you say, 'Ring out his knell—the man is dead.' So when God gives over a soul to sin without control, you may truly say, 'This soul is lost,' you may ring out his knell, for he is twice dead, and plucked up by the roots.

*Freedom from chastisement* is the mother of carnal security, the poison of religion, the moth of holiness, and the introducer of wickedness. 'Nothing,' said one, 'seems more unhappy to me, than he to whom no adversity has happened.' Outward mercies often times prove a snare to our souls. 'I will lay a stumbling block' (Ezek. 3:20). Vatablus's note there is, 'I will prosper him in all things, and not by affliction restrain him from sin.' Prosperity has been a stumbling-block, at which millions have stumbled and fallen, and broke the neck of their souls forever! "Religion brought forth riches, and the daughter soon devoured the mother," said Augustine. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:8-10

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That the lack of wicked men, under all their outward mercy and freedom from adversity, is far greater than all their outward enjoyments.** They have many mercies, yet they lack more than they enjoy. The mercies which they enjoy are nothing to the mercies they lack. It is true, they have honors and riches, and pleasures and friends, and are mighty in power; their family is established, and their offspring are before their eyes. 'Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.' 'They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.' 'They spend their days in wealth, their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart can wish: and they have no bands in their death—but their strength is firm; they are not in trouble as

other men.'

Yet all this is nothing to what they lack. They lack a saving interest in God, Christ, the Spirit, the promises, the covenant of grace, and everlasting glory. They lack acceptance and reconciliation with God; they lack righteousness, justification, sanctification, adoption, and redemption. They lack the pardon of sin, and power against sin, and freedom from the dominion of sin. They lack that favor with God, which is better than life, and that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, and that peace which passes understanding, and that grace, the least spark of which is more worth than heaven and earth. They lack a house that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. They lack those riches that perish not, the glory that fades not, that kingdom that shakes not.

Wicked men are the most needy men in the world, yes, they lack those two things that should render their mercies sweet, that is, the blessing of God, and contentment with their condition! Without these things, their heaven is but hell on this side hell. (Psalm 49:11, 73:7; Job 21:12) When their hearts are lifted up and grown big upon the thoughts of their abundance, if conscience does but put in a word and say, It is true, here is this and that outward mercy—Oh—but where is a saving interest in Christ? Where is the favor of God? Where are the comforts of the Holy Spirit? Where are the evidences for heaven? This word from conscience makes the man's countenance to change, his thoughts to be troubled, his heart to be amazed, and all his mercies on the right hand and left to be as dead and withered. Ah, were but the eyes of wicked men open to see their spiritual needs under their temporal abundance, they would cry out and say, as Absalom did, 'What are all these to me so long as I cannot see the king's face?' (2 Sam. 14:23, 32). What is honor, and riches, and the favor of creatures—so long as I lack the favor of God, the pardon of my sins, a saving interest in Christ, and the hope of glory! O Lord, give me these, or I die! Give me these, or else I shall eternally die!

Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolized. A crown of gold cannot cure the headache; a velvet slipper cannot ease the gout; honor or riches cannot quiet and still the conscience. **The heart of man is a three-sided triangle, which the whole round circle of the world cannot fill, as mathematicians say—but all the corners will**

**complain of emptiness, and hunger for something else.**

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That outward things are not as they seem and are esteemed.** They have, indeed, a glorious outside—but if you view their insides, you will easily find that they fill the head full of cares, and the heart full of fears. What if the fire should consume one part of my estate, and the sea should be a grave to swallow up another part of my estate! What if my servants should be unfaithful abroad, and my children should be deceitful at home! Ah, the secret fretting, vexing, and gnawing that does daily, yes hourly, attend those men's souls whose hands are full of worldly goods!

It was a good speech of an emperor: 'You,' said he, 'gaze on my purple robe and golden crown—but did you know what cares are under it, you would not take it up from the ground to have it.' It was a true saying of Augustine on the 26th Psalm: 'Many are miserable by loving hurtful things—but they are more miserable by having them.' It is not what men enjoy—but the principle from whence it comes, that makes men happy. Much of these outward things do usually cause great distraction, great vexation, and great condemnation at last, to the possessors of them. If God gives them in his wrath, and does not sanctify them in his love, they will at last be witnesses against a man, and millstones forever to sink a man in that day when God shall call men to an account, not for the use—but for the abuse of mercy.

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider **the end and the design of God in heaping up mercy upon the heads of the wicked, and in giving them rest and quiet from those sorrows and sufferings that others sigh under.** David shows the end and design of God in this. "When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will make them vanish from this life." Psalm 73:16-20. So in Psalm 92:7, "Although the wicked flourish like weeds, and evildoers blossom with success, there is only eternal

destruction ahead of them." God's setting them up, is but in order to his casting them down; his raising them high, is but in order to his bringing them low. Exod. 9:16: 'And in very deed, for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.' I have constituted and set you up as a target—that I may let fly at you, and follow you close with plague upon plague, until I have beaten the very breath out of your body, and got myself a name, by setting my feet upon the neck of all your pride, power, pomp, and glory.

Ah, souls, what man in his wits would be lifted up that he might be cast down; would be set higher than others, when it is but in order to his being brought down lower than others? There is not a wicked man in the world that is set up with Lucifer, as high as heaven—but shall with Lucifer be brought down as low as hell. Can you think seriously of this, O soul, and not say, O Lord, I humbly crave that you will let me be little in this world, that I may be great in another world; and low here, that I may be high forever hereafter. Let me be low, and feed low, and live low, so I may live with you forever; let me now be clothed with rags, so you will clothe me at last with your robes; let me now be set upon a ash-heap, so I may at last be advanced to sit with you upon your throne. Lord, make me rather gracious than great, inwardly holy than outwardly happy, and rather turn me into my first nothing, yes, make me worse than nothing, rather than set me up for a time, that you may bring me low forever. "Grant us, Lord, that we may so partake of temporal felicity, that we may not lose eternal happiness." (*Bernard*).

Valens, the Roman emperor, fell from being an emperor to be a footstool to Sapor, king of Persia. Dionysius, king of Sicily, fell from his kingly glory to be a schoolmaster. The brave Queen Zenobia was brought to Rome in golden chains. Belisarius, a famous general, Henry the Fourth, Bajazet Pythias, great Pompey, and William the Conqueror, these, from being very high were brought very low; they all fell from great glory and majesty to great poverty and misery.

**Remedy (7).** The seventh remedy against this device of Satan is solemnly to consider, **That God does often most plague and punish those whom others think he does most spare and love;** that is,

God does plague and punish them most with spiritual judgments—which are the greatest, the sorest, and the heaviest—whom he least punishes with temporal punishments. (Psalm 81:12, 78:26-31, 106:15) He gave them their requests—but sent leanness into their soul. It is a heavy plague to have a fat body and a lean soul; a house full of gold, and a heart full of sin. There are no men on earth so internally plagued as those who meet with least external plagues. Oh the blindness of mind, the hardness of heart, the searedness of conscience, that those souls are given up to, who, in the eye of the world, are reputed the most happy men, because they are not outwardly afflicted and plagued as other men.

Ah, souls, it were better that all the temporal plagues that ever befell the children of men since the fall of Adam should at once meet upon your souls, than that you should be given up to the least spiritual plague, to the least measure of spiritual blindness or spiritual hardness of heart. Nothing will better that man, nor move that man, who is given up to spiritual judgments. Let God smile or frown, stroke or strike, cut or kill—he minds it not, he regards it not; let life or death, heaven or hell, be set before him—it stirs him not; he is mad upon his sin, and God is fully set to do justice upon his soul. This man's preservation is but a reservation unto a greater condemnation; this man can set no bounds to himself; he is become a brat of fathomless perdition; he has guilt in his bosom and vengeance at his back wherever he goes. Neither ministry nor misery, neither miracle nor mercy, can mollify his heart! And if this soul be not in hell, on this side hell—who is? It is better to have an ulcerated body—than a seared conscience. It is better to have no heart—than a hard heart. It is better to have no mind—than a blind mind.

**Remedy (8).** The eighth remedy against this device of Satan is, **To dwell more upon that strict account that vain men must make for all that good that they do enjoy.** "In that day men shall give an account of good things committed unto them, of good things neglected by them, of evil committed by them, and of evils allowed by them. Then shall a good conscience be more worth than all the world's good." (*Bernard*) Ah! did men dwell more upon that account that they must before long—give for all the mercies that they have enjoyed, and for all the favors that they have abused, and for all the sins they have committed—it would

make their hearts to tremble and their lips to quiver, and rottenness to enter into their bones; it would cause their souls to cry out, and say, 'Oh that our mercies had been fewer and lesser, that our account might have been easier, and our torment and misery, for our abuse of so great mercy, not greater than we are able to bear. Oh cursed be the day wherein the crown of honor was set upon our heads, and the treasures of this world were cast into our laps; oh cursed be the day wherein the sun of prosperity shined so strong upon us, and this flattering world smiled so much upon us, as to occasion us to forget God, to slight Jesus Christ, to neglect our souls, and to put far from us the day of our account!'

Philip the Third of Spain, whose life was free from gross evils, professed, that he 'would rather lose his kingdom than offend God willingly.' Yet being in the agony of death, and considering more thoroughly of his account he was to give to God, fear struck into him, and these words broke from him 'Oh! would to God I had never reigned. Oh that those years that I have spent in my kingdom, I had lived a solitary life in the wilderness! Oh that I had lived a solitary life with God! How much more securely would I now have died! How much more confidently would I have gone to the throne of God! What does all my glory profit me—but that I have so much the more torment in my death?'

God keeps an exact account of every penny that is laid out upon him and his, and that is laid out against him and his; and this in the day of account men shall know and feel, though now they wink and will not understand. The sleeping of vengeance causes the overflowing of sin, and the overflowing of sin causes the awakening of vengeance. Abused mercy will certainly turn into fury. God's forbearance of sin, is not the overlooking of sin. The day is at hand when he will pay wicked men for the abuse of old and new mercies. If he seems to be slow, yet he is sure. He has leaden heels—but iron hands. The farther he stretches his bow, or draws his arrow, the deeper he will wound in the day of vengeance. Men's actions are all in print in heaven, and God will, in the day of account, read them aloud in the ears of all the world, that they may all say Amen to that righteous sentence that he shall pass upon all despisers and abusers of mercy.

Jerome still thought that voice was in his ears. 'Arise you dead, and come

to judgment.' As often as I think on that day, how does my whole body quake, and my heart within me tremble.

**DEVICE 9. By presenting to the soul the crosses, losses, reproaches, sorrows, and sufferings, which daily attend those who walk in the ways of holiness.** Says Satan, Do not you see that there are none in the world that are so vexed, afflicted, and tossed, as those who walk more circumspectly and holily than their neighbors? They are a byword at home, and a reproach abroad; their miseries come in upon them like Job's messengers, one upon the neck of another, and there is no end of their sorrows and troubles. Therefore, says Satan, you were better to walk in ways that are less troublesome, and less afflicted, though they be more sinful; for who but a madman would spend his days in sorrow, vexation, and affliction, when it may be prevented by walking in the ways that I set before him?

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That all the afflictions that attend the people of God, are such as shall turn to their profit and glorious advantage.** They shall discover that filthiness and vileness in sin, that yet the soul has never seen.

It was a speech of a German divine in his sickness, 'In this disease I have learned how great God is, and what the evil of sin is; I never knew in my experience, who God was, nor what sin meant—until now.' Afflictions are a crystal glass, wherein the soul has the clearest sight of the ugly face of sin. In this glass the soul comes to see sin to be but a bitter-sweet; yes, in this glass the soul comes to see sin not only to be an evil—but to be the greatest evil in the world, to be an evil far worse than hell itself.

Again, They shall contribute to the mortifying and purging away of their sins (Isa. 1:15, and 27:8, 9). Afflictions are God's furnace, by which he cleanses his people from their dross. Affliction is a fire to purge out our dross, and to make virtue shine. Afflictions are medicines which heal soul diseases, better than all the remedies of physicians. Aloes kill worms; colds and frosts do destroy vermin; so do afflictions the corruptions that are in our hearts. The Jews, under all the prophet's thunderings, retained

their idols; but after their Babylonish captivity, it is observed, there have been no idols found among them.

Again, Afflictions are sweet preservatives to keep the saints from sin, which is a greater evil than hell itself. As Job spoke, 'Surely it is fit to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach me; if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more. Once have I spoken foolishly, yes, twice, I will do so no more' (Job 34:31, 32; 40:5). The burnt child dreads the fire. Ah! says the soul under the rod, sin is but a bitter-sweet; and for the future I intend, by the strength of Christ, that I will not buy repentance at so dear a rate.

Salt brine preserves from putrefaction, and salt marshes keep the sheep from the rot: so do afflictions the saints from sin. The ball in the Emblem says, the harder you beat me down in affliction, the higher I shall bound in affection towards heaven and heavenly things.

The Rabbis, to scare their scholars from sin, were accustomed to tell them, 'That sin made God's head ache.' And saints under the rod have found by woeful experience, that sin makes not only their heads—but their hearts ache also.

Augustine, by wandering out of his way, escaped one that lay in wait to harm him. If afflictions did not put us out of our way, we would many times meet with some sin or other, that would harm our precious souls.

Again, They will work the saints to be more fruitful in holiness (Heb. 12:10, 11): 'But he afflicts us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' The flowers smell sweetest after a shower; vines bear the better fruit, after pruning; the walnut tree is most fruitful when most beaten. Saints spring and thrive most internally when they are most externally afflicted. Afflictions are called by some 'the mother of virtue.' Manasseh's chain was more profitable to him than his crown. Luther could not understand some Scriptures until he was in affliction. The Christ-cross is no letter, and yet that taught him more than all the letters in the row. God's house of correction is his school of instruction. All the stones that came about Stephen's ears did but knock him closer to Christ, the corner-stone. The waves did but lift Noah's ark nearer to heaven; and

the higher the waters grew, the more near the ark was lifted up to heaven.

Afflictions lift up the soul to more rich, clear, and full enjoyments of God (Hosea 2:14): 'Behold, I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her' (or rather, as the Hebrew has it), 'I will earnestly or vehemently speak to her heart.' God makes afflictions to be but inlets to the soul's more sweet and full enjoyment of his blessed self. When was it that Stephen saw the heavens open, and Christ standing at the right hand of God—but when the stones were about his ears, and there was but a short step between him and eternity? And when did God appear in his glory to Jacob—but in the day of his troubles, when the stones were his pillows, and the ground his bed, and the hedges his curtains, and the heavens his canopy? Then he saw the angels of God ascending and descending in their glistering robes.

The plant grows with cutting; being cut, it flourishes; it contends with the axe, it lives by dying, and by cutting it grows. So do saints by their afflictions which befall them; they gain more experience of the power of God supporting them, of the wisdom of God directing them, of the grace of God refreshing and cheering them, and of the goodness of God quieting and quickening of them, to a greater love to holiness, and to a greater delight in holiness, and to a more vehement pursuing after holiness.

It is reported of Tiberius the emperor that, passing by a place where he saw a cross lying in the ground upon a marble stone, and causing the stone to be dug up, he found a great deal of treasure under the cross. So many a precious saint has found much spiritual and heavenly treasure under the crosses they have met withal.

I have read of a fountain, that at noonday is cold, and at midnight it grows warm; so many a precious soul is cold God-wards, and heaven-wards, and holiness-wards, in the day of prosperity; that grow warm God-wards and heaven-wards, and holiness-wards, in the midnight of adversity.

Again, Afflictions serve to keep the hearts of the saints humble and tender (Lam. 3:19, 20): 'Remembering my affliction and my misery, the

wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me,' or bowed down in me, as the original has it. So David, when he was under the rod, could say, 'I was mute, I opened not my mouth; because you did it' (Psalm 39:4).

I have read of Gregory Nazianzen, who, when anything fell out prosperously, would read over the Lamentation of Jeremiah, and that kept his heart tender, humbled, and low. Prosperity does not contribute more to the puffing up the soul, than adversity does to the bowing down of the soul. This the saints by experience find; and therefore they can kiss and embrace the cross, as others do the world's crown. The more the purest spices are beaten and bruised—the sweeter scent and fragrance they send abroad. So do saints when they are afflicted.

Again, They serve to bring the saints nearer to God, and to make them more importunate and earnest in prayer with God. 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept your word.' 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.' 'I will be to Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away: I will take away, and none shall rescue him.' 'I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.' And so they did. 'Come,' say they, 'and let us return unto the Lord: for he has torn, and he will heal us; he has smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.' (Psalm 119:67, 71. Hosea 5:14, 15; 6:1, 2.)

So when God had hedged up their way with thorns, then they say, 'I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it with me better than now' (Hosea 2:6, 7). Ah the joy, the peace, the comfort, the delight, and contentment that did attend us, when we kept close communion with God, does bespeak our return to God. 'We will return to our first husband; for then was it with us better than now.'

When Tiribazus, a noble Persian, was arrested, he drew out his sword, and defended himself; but when they told him that they came to carry him to the king, he willingly yielded. So, though a saint may at first stand a little out, yet when he remembers that afflictions are to carry him nearer to God, he yields, and kisses the rod. Afflictions are like the prick at the nightingale's bosom—which awakens her, and puts her upon her sweet and delightful singing.

Again, Afflictions serve to revive and recover decayed graces; they inflame that love that is cold, and they quicken that faith that is decaying, and they put life into those hopes that are withering, and spirits into those joys and comforts that are languishing. Most men are like a top, which will not go unless you whip it, and the more you whip it the better it goes. You know how to apply it. Those who are in adversity, says Luther, do better understand Scriptures; but those who are in prosperity read them as a verse in Ovid. Bees are killed with too much honey, but quickened with vinegar. The honey of prosperity kills our graces—but the vinegar of adversity quickens our graces. Musk, says one, when it has lost its fragrance, if it is put into the sink among filth—that recovers it. So do afflictions recover and revive decayed graces. The more saints are beaten with the hammer of afflictions, the more they are made the trumpets of God's praises, and the more are their graces revived and quickened. Adversity abases the loveliness of the world which strives to entice us; it abates the lustiness of the flesh within, which strives to incite us to folly and vanity; and it assists the soul in his quarrel to the two former, which tends much to the reviving and recovering of decayed graces.

Now, suppose afflictions and troubles attend the ways of holiness, yet seeing that they all work for the great profit and singular advantage of the saints, let no soul be so mad as to leave an afflicted way of holiness, to

walk in a smooth path of wickedness.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, *that all the afflictions which befall the saints, only reach their worse part; they reach not, they hurt not, their noble part, their best part.* 'And who shall harm you, if you be followers of that which is good,' says the apostle (1 Peter 3:13). That is, none shall harm you. They may thus and thus afflict you—but they shall never harm you. The Christian soldier shall ever be master of the day. He may suffer death—but never conquest.

It was the speech of an heathen, when as by a tyrant he was commanded to be put into a mortar, and to be beaten to pieces with an iron pestle, he cries out to his persecutors: 'You do but beat the vessel, the case, the husk; you do not beat me.' His body was to him but as a case, a husk; he counted his soul himself, which they could not reach. You are wise, and know how to apply it.

Socrates said of his enemies, 'They may kill me—but they cannot hurt me.' So afflictions may kill us—but they cannot hurt us; they may take away my life—but they cannot take away my God, my Christ, my crown.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That the afflictions which attend the saints in the ways of holiness, are but short and momentary.** 'Sorrow may abide for a night—but joy comes in the morning' (Psalm 30:5). This short storm will end in an everlasting calm, this short night will end in a glorious day, that shall never have end. It is but a very short time between grace and glory, between our title to the crown and our wearing the crown, between our right to the heavenly inheritance and our possession of the heavenly inheritance. What is our life but a shadow, a bubble, a flower, a runner, a span, a dream? Yes, so small a while does the hand of the Lord rest upon us, that Luther cannot get diminutives enough to extenuate it, for he calls it a very little cross that we bear. The prophet in Isaiah 26:20, says the indignation does not pass—but overpass. The sharpness, shortness, and suddenness of it is set forth by the travail of a woman (John 16:21). And that is a sweet scripture: 'For you have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the

promise.' 'For yet a little while, he who shall come will come, and will not tarry' (Heb. 10:36, 37). 'A little, little, little while.'

There are none of God's afflicted ones that have not their intermissions and respites whiles under their short and momentary afflictions. When God's hand is on your back, let your hand be on your mouth, for though the affliction be sharp, it shall be but short.

When Athanasius's friends came to bewail him, because of his misery and banishment, he said, 'It is but a little cloud, and will quickly be gone.' It will be but as a day before God will give his afflicted ones beauty for ashes, the oil of gladness for the spirit of heaviness; before he will turn all your sighing into singing, all your lamentations into consolations, your sackcloth into silks, ashes into ointments, and your fasts into everlasting feasts!

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan, is seriously to consider, **That the afflictions which befall the saints are such as proceed from God's dearest love.** 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten' (Rev. 3:19). Saints, says God, think not that I hate you, because I thus chide you. He who escapes discipline may suspect his adoption. **God had one Son without corruption—but no son without correction.** A gracious soul may look through the darkest cloud, and see God smiling on him. We must look through the anger of his correction to the sweetness of his countenance; even as by the rainbow we see the beautiful image of the sun's light in the midst of a dark and watery cloud.

Augustine asks—If he were beloved, how came he to be sick? So are wicked men apt to say, because they know not that corrections are pledges of our adoption, and badges of our sonship. **God had one Son without sin—but none without sorrow.**

When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did and how he felt himself, he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, 'These are God's gems and jewels, with which he decks his best friends, and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world.' A soul at first conversion is but rough cast; but God by afflictions does square and fit, and fashion it for that glory above, which

shows that discipline flows from precious love; therefore the afflictions which attend the people of God should be no bar to holiness, nor no motive to draw the soul to ways of wickedness.

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That it is our duty and glory not to measure afflictions by the smart—but by the end.** When Israel was dismissed out of Egypt, it was with gold and ear-rings (Exod. 11:3); so the Jews were dismissed out of Babylon with gifts, jewels, and all necessary utensils (Ezra 1:7-11). Look more at the latter end of a Christian—than the beginning of his affliction. Consider the patience of Job, and what end the Lord made with him. Look not upon Lazarus lying at Dives's door—but lying in Abraham's bosom. Look not to the beginning of Joseph, who was so far from his dream that the sun and moon should reverence him, that for two years he was cast where he could see neither sun, moon, nor stars; but behold him at last made ruler over Egypt. Look not upon David as there was but a step between him and death, nor as he was envied by some, and slighted and despised by others; but behold him seated in his royal throne, and dying in his bed of honor, and his son Solomon and all his glistening nobles about him.

Afflictions, they are but as a dark entry into your Father's house; they are but as a dirty lane to a royal palace. Now, tell me, souls, whether it be not very great madness to shun the ways of holiness, and to walk in the ways of wickedness, because of those afflictions which attend the ways of holiness.

Afflictions, they are but our Father's goldsmiths, who are working to add pearls to our crowns. Tiberius saw paradise when he walked upon hot burning coals. Herodotus said of the Assyrians, Let them drink nothing but wormwood all their life long; when they die, they shall swim in honey. You are wise, and know how to apply it.

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That the design of God in all the afflictions which befall them, is only to try them; it is not to wrong them, nor to ruin them, as ignorant souls are apt to think.** 'He knows the way that I take: and when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold,' says

patient Job, 33:10. So in Deut. 8:2, 'And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.' God afflicted them thus, that he might make known to themselves and others what was in their hearts. When fire is put to green wood, there comes out abundance of watery stuff that before appeared not; when the pond is empty, the mud, filth, and toads come to light. The snow covers many a ash-heap, so does prosperity many a rotten heart. It is easy to wade in a warm bath, and every bird can sing in a sunshine day. Hard weather tries what health we have; afflictions try what sap we have, what grace we have. Withered leaves soon fall off in windy weather, rotten boughs quickly break with heavy weights. You are wise, and know how to apply it.

Afflictions are like pinching frosts, which will search us; where we are most unsound, we shall soonest complain, and where most corruptions lie, we shall most shrink. We try metal by knocking; if it sound well, then we like it. So God tries his by knocking, and if under knocks they yield a pleasant sound, God will turn their night into day, and their bitter into sweet, and their cross into a crown; and they shall hear that voice, 'Arise, and shine; for the glory of the Lord is risen upon you, and favors of the Lord are flowing in on you' (Is. 60:1).

Dunghills raked send out a filthy stream; ointments crushed send out a sweet perfume. This is applicable to sinners and saints under the rod.

**Remedy (7).** The seventh remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That the afflictions, wrath, and misery which attend the ways of wickedness, are far greater and heavier than those which attend the ways of holiness.** Oh, the galling, girding, lashing, and gnawing of conscience, which attend souls in a way of wickedness! 'The wicked,' says Isaiah, 'are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' 'There is no peace to the wicked, says my God.'

There are snares in all their mercies, and curses and crosses attend all their comforts, both at home and abroad. What is a fine suit of clothes with the plague in it? and what is a golden cup when there is poison at the

bottom? or what is a silken stocking with a broken leg in it? The curse of God, the wrath of God, the hatred of God, and the fierce indignation of God—always attend sinners walking in a way of wickedness. Turn to Deuteronomy 28, and read from ver. 15 to the end of the chapter; and turn to Leviticus 26, and read from ver. 14 to the end of the chapter, and then you shall see how the curse of God haunts the wicked, as it were a fury, in all his ways. In the city it attends him, in the country hovers over him; coming in, it accompanies him; going forth, it follows him, and in travel it is his comrade. It fills his heart with strife, and mingles the wrath of God with his sweetest morsels. It is a moth in his wardrobe, disease among his cattle, mildew in the field, rot among sheep, and oftentimes makes his children, his greatest vexation and confusion. There is no solid joy, nor lasting peace, nor pure comfort, which attends sinners in their sinful ways. **There is a sword of vengeance that every moment hang over their heads by a small thread!** And what joy and contentment can attend such souls, if the eye of conscience be but so far open as to see the sword? Ah! the horrors and terrors, the tremblings and shakings, that attend their souls!

Sin brings in sorrow and sickness. The Rabbis say, that when Adam tasted the forbidden fruit, his head ached. Sirens are said to sing curiously while they live—but to roar horribly when they die. So do the wicked.

(Sin oftentimes makes men insensible of the wrath of the Almighty. Sin transforms many a man, as it were, into those bears in Pliny, that could not be stirred with the sharpest prickles; or those fish in Aristotle, that though they have spears thrust into their sides, yet they awake not.)

**DEVICE 10. By working them to be frequent in comparing themselves and their ways, with those who are reputed or reported to be worse than themselves.**

By this device the devil drew the proud pharisee to bless himself in a cursed condition, 'God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-collector' (Luke 18:11). Why, says Satan—you are now and then a little lustful—but such and such

do daily defile and pollute themselves by actual immorality and filthiness; you deceive and take advantage your neighbors in things that are but as toys and trifles—but such and such deceive and take advantage of others in things of greatest concernment, even to their ruin and undoing; you do but sit, and chat, and sip with the drunkard—but such and such sit and drink and are drunk with the drunkard; you are only a little proud in heart and habit, in looks and words.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider this, **That there is not a greater nor a clearer argument to prove a man a hypocrite, than to be quick-sighted abroad—and blind at home**, than to see 'a mote in another man's eye, and not a beam in his own eye' (Matt. 7:3, 4); than to use spectacles to behold other men's sins rather than looking-glasses to behold his own; rather to be always holding his finger upon other men's sores, and to be amplifying and aggravating other men's sins—and mitigating of his own.

History speaks of a kind of witches that, stirring abroad, would put on their eyes—but returning home they boxed them up again. So do hypocrites.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, **To spend more time in comparing of your internal and external actions with the Rule, with the Word, by which you must be judged at last—than in comparing of yourselves with those who are worse than yourselves.** That man who, comparing his self with others that are worse than himself, may seem, to himself and others, to be an angel. Yet comparing himself with the word of God, may see himself to be like the devil, yes, a very devil. 'Have not I chosen twelve, and one of you is a devil?' (John 6:70). Such men are like him, as if they were spit out of his mouth.

The nearer we draw to God and his Word the more rottenness we shall find in our bones. The more any man looks into the body of the sun, the less he sees when he looks down again. It is said of the basilisk, that if he looks into a mirror he presently dies; so will sin, and a sinner (in a spiritual sense), when the soul looks into the Word, which is God's mirror.

Satan is called 'the god of this world' (2 Cor. 4:4), because, as God at first did but speak the word, and it was done, so, if the devil does but hold up his finger, give the least hint—they will obey his will, though they undo their souls forever. Ah, what monsters would these men appear to be, did they but compare themselves with a righteous rule, and not with the most unrighteous men; they would appear to be as black as hell itself.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That though your sins be not as great as those of others, yet without sound repentance on your side, and pardoning mercy on God's side—you will be as certainly damned as others, though not equally tormented with others.** What though hell shall not be so hot to you as to others, yet you must as certainly go to hell as others—unless the glorious grace of God shines forth upon you in the face of Christ. God will suit men's punishments to their sins; the greatest sins shall be attended with the greatest punishments, and lesser sins with lesser punishments. (As in heaven one is more glorious than another, so in hell one shall be more miserable than another—*Augustine.*)

Alas, what a poor comfort will this be to you when you come to die, to consider that you shall not be equally tormented with others, yet must be forever shut out from the glorious presence of God, Christ, angels, and saints, and from those good things of eternal life, that are so **many** that they exceed number, so **great** that they exceed measure, so **precious** that they exceed estimation! Sure it is, that the tears of hell are not sufficient to bewail the loss of heaven; the worm of grief gnaws as painful as the fire burns. If those souls (Acts 20:37) wept because they should see Paul's face no more, how deplorable is the eternal deprivation of the beautiful vision! The gate of blessedness, the gate of hope, the gate of mercy, the gate of glory, the gate of consolation, and the gate of salvation—will be forever shut against them (Matt. 25:10).

But this is not all: you shall not be only shut out of heaven—but shut up in hell forever; not only shut out from the presence of God and angels—but shut up with devils and damned spirits for ever; not only shut out from those sweet, surpassing, unexpressible, and everlasting pleasures that are at God's right hand—but shut up forever under those torments that are

ceaseless, remediless and endless. Ah, souls, were it not ten thousand times better for you to break off your sins by repentance, than to go on in your sins until you feel the truth of what now you hear? It was a good saying of Chrysostom, speaking of hell: 'Let us not seek to figure out where it is—but how we shall escape it!'

God is very merciful. Ah, that you would repent and return, that your souls might live forever! Remember this, grievous is the torment of the damned for the bitterness of the punishments—but most grievous for the **eternity** of the punishments! For to be tormented without end—this is that which goes beyond the bounds of all desperation. Ah, how do the thoughts of this make the damned to roar and cry out for unquietness of heart, and tear their hair, and gnash their teeth, and rage for madness, that they must dwell in 'everlasting burnings' forever!

Surely one good means to escape hell is to take a turn or two in hell by our daily meditations.

**DEVICE 11. By polluting and defiling the souls and judgments of men with such dangerous errors, which in their proper tendency tend to carry the souls of men to all looseness and wickedness, as woeful experience does abundantly evidence.**

Ah, how many are there filled with these and suchlike Christ-dishonoring and soul-undoing opinions, that is—that the Scriptures are full of fallacies and uncertainties, and no further to be heeded, than they agree with their own carnal thoughts; that it is a poor, low thing, if not idolatry too, to worship God in a Mediator; that the resurrection is already past; that there was never any such man or person as Jesus Christ—but that all is an allegory; that there is no God nor devil, heaven nor hell—but what is within us; that sin and grace are equally good—with a hundred other horrid opinions, which have caused wickedness to break in as a flood among us.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That an erroneous, vain MIND is as odious to God as a wicked LIFE.** He who had the leprosy in his head was to be

pronounced utterly unclean (Levit. 13:44). Gross errors make the heart foolish, and render the life loose. Error spreads and frets like a gangrene, and renders the soul a leper in the sight of God. The breath of the erroneous is infectious, and, like the dogs of Congo—they bite though they bark not.

It was God's heavy and dreadful plague upon the Gentiles, to be given up to a mind void of judgment, or an injudicious mind, or a mind rejected, disallowed, abhorred of God, or a mind that none have cause to glory in—but rather to be ashamed of (Rom. 1:28). I think that in these days **God punishes many men's former wickednesses, by giving them up to soul-ruining errors.** Ah, Lord, this mercy I humbly beg, that you would rather take me into your own hand, and do anything with me, than give me up to those sad errors to which thousands have married their souls and are in the way of perishing forever. It were best that we never erred; next to that, that we amended our error. To persist in error is diabolical.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, **To receive the truth affectionately, and let it dwell in your souls plenteously.** When men stand out against the truth, when truth would enter, and men bar the door of their souls against the truth, God in justice gives up such souls to be deluded and deceived by error, to their eternal undoing (2 Thess. 2:10-12): 'Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God shall send them strong delusions (or, as the Greek has it, "the efficacy of error,") that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth—but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'

Ah, sirs, as you love your souls, do not tempt God, do not provoke God, by your withstanding truth—to give you up to believe a lie, that you may be damned. There are no men on earth so fenced against error as those are that receive the truth in the love of it. Such souls are not 'easily tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, wherein they lie in wait to deceive' (The Greek, signifies such sleights as cheaters and false gamesters use at dice.) It is not he who receives most of the truth unto his head—but he who receives most of the truth affectionately into his heart—who shall enjoy

the happiness of having his judgment sound and clear, when others shall be deluded and deceived by them, who make it their business to infect the judgments and to undo the souls of men. The greatest sinners are sure to be the greatest sufferers.

Ah, souls, as you would not have your judgments polluted and defiled with error, 'Let the word of the Lord,' which is more precious than gold, yes than fine gold, 'dwell plenteously in you' (Col. 3:16). Let it well in you as an ingrafted word incorporated into your souls, so digested by you, as that you turn it into a part of yourselves. It is not the **hearing** of truth, nor the **knowing** of truth, nor the **commending** of truth, nor the **talking** of truth—but the **indwelling** of truth in your souls—which will keep your judgments chaste and sound, in the midst of all those glittering errors that betray many souls into his hands, who can easily 'transform himself into an angel of light' (2 Cor. 11:14), that he may draw others to lie in chains of darkness with him forever. Oh, let not the Word be a stranger—but make it your choicest familiar! Then will you be able to stand in the day wherein many shall fall on your right hand, and on your left, by the subtlety of those who shall say, 'Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there is Christ.'

Ah, souls, if truth dwell plenteously in you, you are happy; if not, you are unhappy under all your greatest felicity. Truth at last triumphs.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That error makes the owner to suffer loss.** All the pains and labor that men take to defend and maintain their errors, to spread abroad and infect the world with their errors, shall bring no profit, nor no comfort to them in that day, wherein 'every man's work shall be made manifest, and the fire shall try it of what sort it is,' as the apostle shows in that remarkable scripture (1 Cor. 3:11-15). Ah, that all those who rise early and go to bed late, that spend their time, their strength, their spirits, their all—to advance and spread abroad God-dishonoring and soul-undoing opinions, would seriously consider of this, that they shall lose all the pains, cost and charge that they have been, or shall be at, for the propagating of error; and if they are ever saved, it shall be by fire, as the apostle there shows. Ah, sirs, is it nothing to lay out your money for that which is not bread? and your strength for that which will not, which cannot, profit you in the day that you must make up your account, and all

your works must be tried by fire? Error as a glass, is bright, but brittle, and cannot endure the hammer, or fire—as gold can, which, though rubbed or melted, remains firm and lustrous.

Ah, that such souls would now at last 'buy the truth, and sell it not' (Prov. 23:23). Remember you can never over-buy it, whatever you give for it; you can never sufficiently sell it, if you should have all the world in exchange for it.

It is said of Caesar, that 'he had greater care of his books than of his royal robes,' for, swimming through the waters to escape his enemies, he carried his books in his hand above the waters—but lost his robes. Ah, what are Caesar's books to God's books? Well, remember this, that one day, yes, one hour spent in the study of truth, or spreading abroad of truth, will yield the soul more comfort and profit than many thousand years spent in the study and spreading abroad of corrupt and vain opinions, which have their rise from hell, and not from heaven, from the god of this world and not from the God who shall at last judge this world, and all the corrupt opinions of men.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, *To hate, reject and abominate all those doctrines and opinions which are contrary to godliness, and which open a door to profaneness, and all such doctrines and opinions which require men to hold forth a strictness above what the Scripture requires; and all such doctrines and opinions which advance and lift up corrupted nature to the doing of supernatural things, which none can do but by that supernatural power that raised Christ from the grave; and such opinions which lift our own righteousness in the room of Christ's righteousness, which place good works in the throne of Christ, and makes them co-partners with Christ.* And all those opinions and doctrines which so set up and cry up Christ and his righteousness, as to cry down all duties of holiness and righteousness, and all those doctrines and opinions which make the glorious and blessed privileges of believers in the days of the gospel to be lesser, fewer and weaker, than they were in the time of the law. Ah, did your souls arise with a holy hatred, and a strong indignation against such doctrines and opinions, you would stand when others fall, and you would shine as the sun in his glory, when many

who were once as shining stars may go forth as stinking snuffs. Gideon had seventy sons, and but one illegitimate child, and yet that illegitimate child destroyed all the rest (Judges 8:13, *et seq.*). One turn may bring a man quite out of the way. One old piece of gold is worth a thousand new counterfeits, and one old truth of God s more than a thousand new errors. True hatred is against all errors! It is sad to frown upon one error and smile upon another.

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, ***To hold fast the truth.*** As men take no hold on the arm of flesh—until they let go the arm of God (Jer. 17:5); so men take no hold on error until they have let go their hold of truth; therefore hold fast the truth (2 Tim. 1:13, and Titus 1:9). Truth is your crown, hold fast your crown, and let no man take your crown from you. Has not God made truth sweet to your soul, yes, sweeter than honey, or the honeycomb? and will not you go on to heaven, feeding upon truth, that heavenly honeycomb, as Samson did of his honeycomb.

Ah, souls, have you not found truth sweetening your spirits, and cheering your spirits, and warming your spirits, and raising your spirits, and corroborating your spirits? Have not you found truth a guide to lead you, a staff to uphold you, a cordial to strengthen you, and a medicine to heal you? And will not you hold fast the truth? Has not truth been your best friend in your worst days? Has not truth stood by you when friends have forsaken you? Has not truth done more for you than all the world could do against you, and will you not hold fast the truth? Is not truth your right eye, without which you cannot see for Christ? And your right hand, without which you cannot do for Christ? And your right foot, without which you cannot walk with Christ? And will you not hold truth fast? Oh! hold fast the truth in your judgments and understandings, in your wills and affections, in your profession and conversation.

Truth is more precious than gold or rubies, 'and all the things you can desire are not to be compared to her' (Prov. 3:15). Truth is that heavenly mirror wherein we may see the luster and glory of divine wisdom, power, greatness, love and mercifulness. In this mirror you may see the face of Christ, the favor of Christ, the riches of Christ, and the heart of Christ—beating and working sweetly towards your souls. Oh! let your souls cleave

to truth, as Ruth did to Naomi (Ruth 1:15, 16), and say, 'I will not leave truth, nor return from following after truth; but where truth goes I will go, and where truth lodges I will lodge; and nothing but death shall part truth and my soul.'

What John said to the church of Philadelphia I may say to you, 'Hold fast that which you have, that no man take your crown' (Rev. 3:11). The crown is the top of royalties: such a thing is truth: 'Let no man take your crown.' 'Hold fast the faithful word,' as Titus speaks. Hold fast as with tooth and nail, against those who would snatch it from us. It is better to let go of anything, rather than truth! It is better to let go, of your honors and riches, your friends and pleasures, and the world's favors; yes, your nearest and dearest relations, yes, your very lives—than to let go of the truth. Oh, keep the truth, and truth will make you safe and happy forever. Blessed are those who are kept by truth. 'Though I cannot dispute for the truth, yet I can die for the truth,' said a blessed martyr.

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, ***To keep humble.*** Humility will keep the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting, and erroneous snares of his spreading. As low trees and shrubs are free from many violent gusts and blasts of wind which shake and tear the taller trees, so humble souls are free from those gusts and blasts of error which shake and tear proud, lofty souls. Satan and the world have least power to fasten errors upon humble souls. The God of light and truth delights to dwell with the humble; and the more light and truth dwells in the soul, the further off darkness and error will stand from the soul. The God of grace pours in grace into humble souls, as men pour drink into empty vessels; and the more grace is poured into the soul, the less error shall be able to overpower the soul, or to infect the soul.

I have read of one who, seeing in a vision so many snares of the devil spread upon the earth, he sat down mourning, and said within himself, Who shall pass through these? whereupon he heard a voice answering, Humility shall pass through them.

That is a sweet word in Psalm 25:9, 'The humble, he will guide in judgment, and the meek he will teach his way.' And certainly souls guided by God, and taught by God, are not easily drawn aside into ways of error.

Oh, take heed of spiritual pride! Pride fills our fancies, and weakens our graces, and makes room in our hearts for error. There are no men on earth so soon entangled, and so easily conquered by error—as proud souls. Oh, it is dangerous to love to be wise above what is written, to be curious and unsober in your desire of knowledge, and to trust to your own capacities and abilities to undertake to pry into all secrets, and to be puffed up with a carnal mind. Souls that are thus a-soaring up above the bounds and limits of humility, usually fall into the very worst of errors, as experience does daily evidence. The proud soul is like him who gazed upon the moon—but fell into the pit. You know how to apply it.

**Remedy (7).** The seventh remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **The great evils that errors have produced.** Error is a fruitful mother, and has brought forth such monstrous children as has set towns, cities and nations on fire. Errors in conscience produce many great evils, not only in men's own souls—but also in human affairs. Error is that whorish woman that has cast down many, wounded many, yes, slain many strong men, many great men, and many learned men, and many professing men in former times and in our time, as is too evident to all who are not destitute of the truth, and blinded by Satan. Oh, the **graces** that error has weakened, and the sweet joys and **comforts** that error has clouded, if not buried! Oh, the **hands** that error has weakened, the **eyes** that error has blinded, the **judgments** of men that error has perverted, the **minds** that error has darkened, the **hearts** that error has hardened, the **affections** that error has cooled, the **consciences** that error has seared, and the **lives** of men that error has polluted! Ah, souls! can you solemnly consider of this, and not tremble more at error, than at hell itself?

**DEVICE 12. To choose wicked company, to keep wicked society.**

And oh! the horrid impieties and wickedness that Satan has drawn men to sin—by moving them to sit and associate themselves with vain people.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, **To dwell, until your hearts are affected, upon those commands of God which expressly require us to shun the society of the wicked**

(Eph. 5:11): 'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—but rather reprove them'; (Prov. 5:14-16): 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' 1 Cor. 5:9-11, 2 Thess. 3:6, Prov. 1:10-15. Turn to these Scriptures, and let your souls dwell upon them, until a holy indignation be raised in your souls against fellowship with vain men. 'God will not take the wicked by the hand,' as Job speaks (34:20; 30:24). Why then should you? God's commands are not like those who are easily reversed—but they are like those of the Medes, they cannot be changed. If these commands be not now observed by you, they will at last be witnesses against you, and millstones to sink you, in that day that Christ shall judge you. The commands of God must outweigh all authority and example of men. (*Jerome*).

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That their company is very infectious and dangerous**, as is clear from the scripture above mentioned. Ah, how many have lost their names, and lost their estates, and strength, and God, and heaven, and souls—by society with wicked men! As you shun a stinking carcass; as the seaman shuns sands and rocks, and shoals; as you shun those who have the plague-sores running upon them, so should you shun the society of wicked men. As weeds endanger the corn, as bad infections endanger the body, or as an infected house the neighborhood—so does wicked company the soul. (Prov. 13:20).

Eusebius reports of John the Evangelist, that he would not allow Cerinthus, the heretic, in the same bath with him, lest some judgment should abide them both. A man who keeps ill company is like him that walks in the sun—tanned insensibly.

Bias, a heathen man, being at sea in a great storm, and perceiving many wicked men in the ship calling upon the gods: 'Oh,' said he, 'refrain prayer, hold your tongues; I would not have your gods take notice that you are here; they sure will drown us all if they could.' Ah, sirs, could a heathen see so much danger in the society of wicked men, and can you see none?

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, **To look**

**always upon wicked men, under those names and notions which the Scripture describes them.** The Scripture calls them lions for their fierceness, and bears for their cruelty, and dragons for their hideousness, and dogs for their filthiness, and wolves for their subtleness. The Scripture styles them scorpions, vipers, thorns, briars, thistles, brambles, stubble, dirt, chaff, dust, dross, smoke, scum. (2 Tim. 4:17, Is. 11:7, Ezek. 3:10, Matt. 7:6, Rev. 22:15, Luke 13:32, Is. 10:17, Ezek. 2:6, Judges 9:14, Job 21:18, Psalm 83:13, Psalm 18:42, Ezek. 22:18, 19, Is. 65:5, Ezek. 24:6.)

It is not safe to look upon wicked men under those names and notions which they set out themselves by, or which flatterers set them out by; this may delude the soul—but the looking upon them under those names and notions that the Scripture sets them out by, may preserve the soul from frequenting their company and delighting in their society. Do not tell me what this man calls them, or how such and such count them; but tell me how does the Scripture call them, how does the Scripture count them? As Nabal's name was, so was his nature (1 Sam. 25:25), and, as wicked men's names are, so are their natures. You may know well enough what is within them, by the apt names that the Holy Spirit has given them. Such monsters are wicked men—which should render their company to all who have tasted of the sweetness of divine love, a burden and not a delight.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan, is, solemnly to consider, **That the society and company of wicked men have been a great grief and burden to those precious souls that were once glorious on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven** (Psalm 120:5, 6): 'Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul has long dwelt with him that hates peace.' So Jeremiah: 'Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men' (Jer. 9:2). So they vexed Lot's righteous soul by their filthy conversation' (2 Pet. 2:7); they made his life a burden, they made death more desirable to him than life, yes, they made his life a lingering death. Guilt or grief is all that godly gracious souls get by conversing with wicked men.

'O Lord, let me not go to hell, where the wicked are: for Lord, you know I

never loved their company here'—said a gracious gentlewoman, when she was to die.

### **SATAN'S DEVICES TO KEEP SOULS FROM HOLY DUTIES, TO HINDER SOULS IN HOLY SERVICES, AND TO KEEP THEM OFF FROM RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCES**

The next thing to be shown is, the several devices that Satan has, as to draw souls to sin, so to keep souls from holy duties, to hinder souls in holy services, and to keep them off from religious performances.

'And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him' (Zech. 3:1).

**DEVICE 1. By presenting the WORLD in such a dress, and in such a garb to the soul, as to ensnare the soul, and to win upon the affection of the soul.**

He represents the **world** to them in its beauty and finery, which proves a bewitching sight to a world of men. (It is true, this deceived not Christ, because Satan could find no matter in him for his temptation to work upon.) So that he can no sooner cast out his golden bait—but we are ready to play with it, and to nibble at it; he can no sooner throw out his golden ball—but men are apt to run after it, though they lose God and their souls in the pursuit!

Ah! how many professors in these days have for a time followed hard after God, Christ, and ordinances; until the devil has set before them the world in all its beauty and finery, which has so bewitched their souls that they have grown to have low thoughts of holy things, and then to be cold in their affections to holy things, and then to slight them, and at last, with the young man in the Gospel, to turn their backs upon them. Ah! the time, the thoughts, the hearts, the souls, the duties, the services--which

the inordinate love of this wicked world eats up and destroys! Where one thousand are destroyed by the world's frowns--ten thousand are destroyed by the world's smiles! The world, siren-like, sings to us, then sinks us! It kisses us, and betrays us, like Judas! It kisses us and smites us under the fifth rib, like Joab. The honors, splendor, and all the glory of this world, are but sweet poisons, which will much endanger us, if they do not eternally destroy us. Ah! the multitude of souls that have glutted on these sweet baits and died forever!

The inhabitants of Nilus are deaf from the noise of the waters; so the world makes such a noise in men's ears, that they cannot hear the things of heaven. The world is like the swallows' dung that put out Tobias's eyes. The champions could not wring an apple out of Milo's hand by a strong hand—but a fair maid, by fair means, got it presently.

**Remedy (1). The first remedy against this device of Satan is, to dwell upon the impotency and weakness of all these things here below.** They are not able to secure you from the least evil, they are not able to procure you the least desirable good. The crown of gold cannot cure the headache, nor the velvet slipper ease the gout, nor the jewel about the neck take away the pain of the teeth. The frogs of Egypt entered into the rich men's houses of Egypt, as well as the poor. Our daily experience does evidence this, that all the honors and riches that men enjoy, cannot free them from the cholic, the fever, or lesser diseases. No, that which may seem most strange, is that a great deal of wealth cannot keep men from falling into extreme poverty. You shall find seventy kings, with their fingers and toes cut off, glad, like dogs, to lick up crumbs under another king's table; and shortly after, the same king that brought them to this poverty, is reduced to the same poverty and misery (Judg. 1:6). Why then should that be a bar to keep you out of heaven--which cannot give you the least ease on earth?

Nugas the Scythian, despising the rich presents and ornaments which were sent unto him by the emperor of Constantinople, asked whether those things could drive away calamities, diseases, or death.

**Remedy (2). The second remedy against this device of Satan is, to dwell upon the vanity of them as well as upon the impotency**

**of all worldly good.** This is the sum of Solomon's sermon, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!' This our first parents found, and therefore named their second son Abel, or 'vanity.' Solomon, who had tried all these things, and could best tell the vanity of them—preaches this sermon over again and again. 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!' It is sad to think how many thousands there are, who can say with the preacher, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' no, swear it, and yet follow after these things as if there were no other glory, nor felicity—but what is to be found in these things they call vanity! **Such men will sell Christ, heaven, and their souls for a trifle**, who *call* these things vanity—but do not cordially believe them to be vanity—but set their hearts upon them as if they were their crown, the top of their royalty and glory. Oh let your souls dwell upon the vanity of all things here below, until your hearts be so thoroughly convinced and persuaded of the vanity of them, as to trample upon them, and make them a footstool for Christ to get up, and ride in a holy triumph in your hearts!

Oh the imperfection, the ingratitude, the levity the inconstancy, the treachery of those creatures we most servilely bow down to. Ah, did we but weigh man's pain with his payment, his crosses with his mercies, his miseries with his pleasures—we would then see that there is nothing got bargain, and conclude, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!'

Chrysostom once said, That if he were to preach a sermon to the whole world, gathered together in one congregation, and had some high mountain for his pulpit, from whence he might have a prospect of all the world in his view, and were furnished with a voice of brass, a voice as loud as the trumpets of the archangel, that all the world might hear him, he would choose to preach upon no other text than that in the Psalms, O mortal men, "How long will you love what is worthless and pursue a lie?" (Psalm 4:2).

Tell me, you that say all things under the sun are vanity, if you do really believe what you say, why do you spend more thoughts and time on the world, than you do on Christ, heaven and your immortal souls? Why do you then neglect your duty towards God, to get the world? Why do you then so eagerly pursue after the world, and are so cold in your pursuing after God, Christ and holiness? Why then are your hearts so exceedingly

raised, when the world comes in, and smiles upon you; and so much dejected, and cast down, when the world frowns upon you, and with Jonah's gourd withers before you?

**Remedy (3). The third remedy against this device of Satan is, to dwell much upon the uncertainty, the mutability, and inconstancy of all things under the sun.** Man himself is but the dream of a dream—but the generation of imagination—but an empty vanity—but the curious picture of nothing—a poor, feeble, dying shadow. All temporals are as transitory as a rushing current, a shadow, a ship, a bird, an arrow, a runner who passes by. 'Why should you set your eyes upon that which is not?' says Solomon (Prov. 23:5). And says the apostle, 'The fashion of this world passes away' (1 Cor. 7:31). This intimates, that there is nothing of any firmness, or solid consistency, in the creature. Heaven alone, has a foundation—earth has none, 'but is hung upon nothing,' as Job speaks (26:7). The apostle commanded Timothy to 'charge rich men that they be not high-minded, nor put their trust in uncertain riches' (1 Tim. 6:17). Riches were never true to any who trusted to them; they have deceived men, as Job's brook did the poor travelers in the summer season (Job. 6:15). They are like bad servants, who ramble about and will never tarry long with one master.

**As a bird hops from tree to tree, so do the honors and riches of this world from man to man.** Let Job and Nebuchadnezzar testify this truth, who fell from great wealth to great want. No man can promise himself to be wealthy until the end of the day; one storm at sea, one coal of fire, one false friend, one unadvised word, one false witness—may make you a beggar and a prisoner all at once! All the riches and glory of this world is but as smoke and chaff that vanishes; 'As a dream and vision in the night, that tarries not' (Job 20:8). 'Like a hungry one who dreams he is eating, then wakes and is still hungry; and like a thirsty one who dreams he is drinking, then wakes and is still thirsty, longing for water,' as the prophet Isaiah says (Chap. 29:8). Where is the glory of Solomon? the sumptuous buildings of Nebuchadnezzar? the nine hundred chariots of Sisera? the power of Alexander? the authority of Augustus, who commanded the whole world to be taxed? Those that have been the most glorious, in what men generally account glorious and excellent, have had

inglorious ends; as Samson for strength, Absalom for favor, Ahithophel for policy, Haman for favor, Asahel for swiftness, Alexander for great conquest and yet poisoned. The same you may see in the four mighty kingdoms, the Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, and Roman: how soon were they gone and forgotten! The most renowned Frederick lost all, and sued to be made but sexton of the church that himself had built. I have read of a poor fisherman, who, while his nets were a-drying, slept upon the rock, and dreamed that he was made a king, on a sudden starts up, and leaping for joy, fell down from the rock, and in the place of his imaginary felicities loses his little portion of pleasures.

Now rich—now poor; now full—now empty; now in favor—anon out of favor; now honorable—now despised; now health—now sickness; now strength—now weakness. The pomp of this world John compares to the moon, which increases and decreases (Rev. 12:1).

**Remedy (4). The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, that the great things of this world are very hurtful and dangerous to the outward and inward man, through the corruptions that are in the hearts of men.** Oh, the rest, the peace, the comfort, the contentment—that the things of this world strip many men of! Oh, the fears, the cares, the envy, the malice, the dangers, the mischiefs, that they subject men to! They oftentimes make men carnally confident. The rich man's riches are a strong tower in his imagination. 'I said in my prosperity I should never be moved' (Psalm 30:6). They often swell the heart with pride, and make men forget God, and neglect God, and despise the rock of their salvation. When Jeshurun 'waxed fat, and was grown thick, and covered with fatness, then he forgot God, and forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation,' as Moses spoke (Deut. 32:15).

Ah, the time, the thoughts, the energy—which the things of the world consume and spend! Oh, how do they hinder the actings of faith upon God! how do they interrupt our sweet communion with God! how do they abate our love to the people of God! and cool our love to the things of God! and work us to act like those who are most unlike God! Oh, the deadness, the barrenness, which usually attend men under great outward mercies! Oh, the riches of the world chokes the word; that men live under

the most soul-searching, and soul-enriching means with lean souls! Though they have full purses, though their chests are full of silver, yet their hearts are empty of grace. In Genesis 13:2, it is said, that 'Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold.' According to the Hebrew, it is 'Abram was very weary;' to show that riches are a heavy burden, and a hindrance many times to heaven, and happiness.

Four good mothers beget four bad daughters: great familiarity begets contempt; truth begets hatred; virtue begets envy; riches begets ignorance (a French proverb).

Polycrates gave a large sum of money to Anacreon, who for two nights afterwards, was so troubled with worry how to keep it, and how to spend it; that he carried the money back to Polycrates, saying that it was not worth the pains which he had already taken for it.

King Henry the Fourth asked the Duke of Alva if he had observed the great eclipse of the sun, which had lately happened. No, said the duke, I have so much to do on earth, that I have no leisure to look up to heaven. Ah, that this were not true of most professors in these days! It is very sad to think, how their hearts and time are so much taken up with earthly things, that they have scarcely any leisure to look up to heaven, or to look after Christ, and the things that belong to their everlasting peace!

Riches, though justly acquired, yet are but like manna; those who gathered less had no lack, and those who gathered more, it was but a trouble and annoyance to them. **The world is troublesome, and yet it is loved;** what would it be, if it brought true peace? You embrace it, though it be filthy; what would you do if it were beautiful? You cannot keep your hands from the thorns; how earnest would you be then in gathering the flowers? The world may be fitly likened to the serpent Scytale, whereof it is reported, that when she cannot overtake those passing by, she does with her beautiful colors so astonish and amaze them, that they have no power to leave, until she has stung them! Ah, how many thousands are there now on earth, who have found this true by experience, who have spun a lovely rope to strangle themselves, both temporally and eternally, by being bewitched by the beauty and finery of this world!

Sicily is so full of sweet flowers that dogs cannot hunt there. And what do all the sweet contents of this world—but make us lose the scent of heaven!

**Remedy (5). The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, that all the felicity of this world is MIXED.** Our light is mixed with darkness, our joy with sorrow, our pleasures with pain, our honor with dishonor, our riches with wants. If our minds are spiritual, clear and quick, we may see in the felicity of this world—our wine mixed with water, our honey with gall, our sugar with wormwood, and our roses with prickles. **Surely all the things of this world are but bitter sweets.** Sorrow attends worldly joy, danger attends worldly safety, loss attends worldly labors, tears attend worldly purposes. As to these things, men's hopes are vain, their sorrow certain, and joy feigned. The apostle calls this world 'a sea of glass,' a sea for the trouble of it, and glass for the brittleness and bitterness of it. (Rev. 4:6, 15:2, 21:18). The honors, profits, pleasures and delights of the world are like the gardens of Adonis, where we can gather nothing but trivial flowers, surrounded with many briars.

**Remedy (6). The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, to get better acquaintance and better assurance of more blessed and glorious things.** That which raised up their spirits (Heb. 10 and 11) to trample upon all the beauty, finery and glory of the world, was the acquaintance with, 'and assurance of better and more durable things.' You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.' 'They looked for a house which had foundations, whose builder and maker was God.' 'And they looked for another country, even a heavenly one.' 'They saw him who was invisible, and had an eye to the recompense of reward.' And this made them count all the glory and finery of this world, to be too poor and contemptible for them to set their hearts upon! (Heb. 10:34; 11:10, 16 26).

The main reason why men dote upon the world, and damn their souls to get the world, is, because they are not acquainted with a greater glory! Men ate acorns, until they were acquainted with the use of wheat. Ah, were men more acquainted with what union and communion with God means, what it is to have 'a new name, and a new stone, that none knows but he who has it' (Rev. 2:17); did they but taste more of heaven, and live more in heaven, and had more glorious hopes of going to heaven, ah, how

easily would they have the world under their feet!

Let heaven be a man's object, and earth will soon be his abject.

It was an excellent saying of Lewis of Bavaria, emperor of Germany, 'Such goods are worth getting and owning—which will not sink or wash away if a shipwreck happens—but will wade and swim out with us.' It is recorded of Lazarus, that after his resurrection from the dead, he was never seen to laugh, his thoughts and affections were so fixed in heaven, though his body was on earth, and therefore he could not but slight temporal things, his heart being so bent and set upon eternals. There are goods for the **throne** of grace—as God, Christ, the Spirit, adoption, justification, remission of sin, peace with God, and peace with conscience. And there are goods of the **footstool**—as honors, riches, the favor of creatures, and other comforts and accommodation of this life. Now he who has acquaintance with, and assurance of the goods of the throne, will easily trample upon the goods of the footstool.

Ah that you would make it your business, your work, to mind more, and make sure more to your own souls—the great things of eternity—that will yield you joy in life and peace in death, and a crown of righteousness in the day of Christ's appearing, and that will lift up your souls above all the beauty and finery of this bewitching world, that will raise your feet above other men's heads! When a man comes to be assured of a crown, a scepter and the royal robes, he then begins to have low and contemptible thoughts of those base things which before he highly prized. So will assurance of more great and glorious things, breed in the soul a holy scorn and contempt of all these poor, base things, which the soul before valued above God, Christ and heaven.

When Basil was tempted with money and preferment, said he, 'Give me money that may last forever, and glory that may eternally flourish; for the fashion of this world passes away, as the waters of a river that runs by a city.

**Remedy (7). The seventh remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, that true happiness and satisfaction is not to be had in the enjoyment of worldly good.** True happiness is

too big and too glorious a thing to be found in anything below that glorious God—who is a Christian's *summum bonum*—his chief good. True happiness lies only in our enjoyment of a **suitable** good, a **pure** good, a **total** good and an **eternal** good! God alone is such a good—and such a good can only satisfy the soul of man. Philosophers could say, that he was never a truly happy man—who might afterwards become miserable.

The blessed angels, those glittering courtiers, have all felicities and blessedness, and yet have they neither gold, nor silver, nor jewels, nor none of the beauty and finery of this world. Certainly if happiness was to be found in these earthly things, the Lord Jesus, who is the right and royal heir of all things, would have exchanged his cradle for a crown; his birth chamber, a stable, for a royal palace; his poverty for plenty; his despised followers for shining courtiers; and his poor provisions for the choicest delicacies. Certainly happiness lies not in those things which a man may enjoy—and yet be miserable forever. Now a man may be great and graceless with Pharaoh; honorable and damnable with king Saul; rich and miserable with Dives; therefore happiness lies not in these things.

Certainly happiness lies not in those things which cannot comfort a man upon a dying bed. Is it honors, riches or friends—which can comfort you when you come to die? Or is it not rather faith in the blood of Christ, the witness of the Spirit of Christ, the sense and feeling of the love and favor of Christ, and the hopes of eternally reigning with Christ? Can happiness lie in those things which cannot give us health, or strength, or ease, or a good night's rest, or an hour's sleep, or a good stomach? Why, all the honors, riches and delights of this world cannot give these poor things to us, therefore certainly happiness lies not in the enjoyment of them. Gregory the Great used to say, He is poor whose soul is void of grace—not whose coffers are empty of money. The reasonable soul may be busied about other things—but it cannot be filled with them. And surely happiness is not to be found in those things that cannot satisfy the souls of men.

Now none of these things can satisfy the soul of man. 'He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he who loves abundance with increase; this is also vanity,' said the wise man (Eccles. 5:10). The barren womb, the horseleech's daughter, the grave and hell, will as soon be

satisfied—as the soul of man will by the enjoyment of any worldly good. **Some one thing or another will be forever lacking to that soul, who has nothing but outward good to live upon.** You may as soon fill a bag with wisdom, a chest with virtue—as the heart of man with anything here below. A man may have enough of the world to sink him—but he can never have enough to satisfy him!

**Remedy (8). The eighth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider the dignity of the soul.** Oh, the soul of man is more worth than a thousand worlds! It is the greatest abasing of it that can be—to let it dote upon a little shining earth, upon a little painted beauty and fading glory—when it is capable of union with Christ, of communion with God, and of enjoying the eternal vision of God.

Seneca could say, 'I am too great, and born to greater things, than that I should be a slave to my body.' Oh! do you say my soul is too great, and born to greater things, than that I should confine it to a heap of perishing earth.

Plutarch tells of Themistocles, that he accounted it not to stand with his state to stoop down to take up the spoils the enemies had scattered in flight; but says to one of his followers, 'You may have these things—for you are not Themistocles'. Oh what a sad thing it is that a heathen should set his feet upon those very things upon which most professors set their hearts, and for the gain of which, with Balaam, many run the hazard of losing their immortal souls forever!

I have been the longer upon the remedies that may help us against this dangerous device of Satan, because he does usually more hurt to the souls of men by this device than he does by all other devices. For a close, I wish, as once Chrysostom did, that that sentence (Eccles. 2:11), 'Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do, and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun,' were engraved on the door-posts into which you enter, on the tables where you sit, on the dishes out of which you eat, on the cups out of which you drink, on the bed-steads where you lie, on the walls of the house where you dwell, on the garments which you wear, on the heads of the horses on which you ride, and on the foreheads of all

whom you meet—that your souls may not, by the beauty and finery of the world, be kept off from those holy and heavenly services that may render you blessed while you live, and happy when you die; that you may breathe out your last into his bosom who lives forever, and who will make them happy forever—who prefer Christ's spirituals and eternal things above all temporal transitory things.

**DEVICE 2.** The second device that Satan has to draw the soul from holy duties, and to keep them off from religious services, is, **By presenting to them the danger, the losses, and the sufferings which attend the performance of such and such religious services.**

By this device Satan kept those who believed on Christ from confessing of Christ: in John 12:42, 'Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.' I would walk in all the ways of God, I would give up myself to the strictest way of holiness—but I am afraid dangers will attend me on the one hand, and losses, and such and such sufferings on the other hand, says many a man. Oh, how should we help ourselves against this temptation and device of Satan!

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is to consider, **That all the troubles and afflictions that you meet with in a way of righteousness shall never hurt you, they shall never harm you.** 'And who is he who shall harm you, if you be followers of that which is good?' says the apostle, that is, none shall harm you (1 Pet. 3:13). Nobody is properly hurt but by himself, and by his own fault.

Natural conscience cannot but do homage to the image of God stamped upon the natures, words, works, and life of the godly; as we may see in the carriage of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius towards Daniel. All afflictions and troubles which attend men in a way of righteousness can never rob them of their treasure, of their jewels. They may rob them of some light slight things, as the flowers or ribbons that be in their hats. Gordius, that blessed martyr, accounted it a loss to him not to suffer many kinds of

tortures. He says tortures are but tradings with God for glory. The greater the combat is, the greater is the following reward.

The treasures of a saint are the presence of God, the favor of God, union and communion with God, the pardon of sin, the joy of the Spirit, and the peace of conscience. These are jewels which none can give but Christ, nor none can take away but Christ. Now why should a gracious soul keep off from a way of holiness because of afflictions, when no afflictions can strip a man of his heavenly jewels, which are his ornaments and his safety here—and will be his happiness and glory hereafter? Why should that man be afraid, or troubled for storms at sea, whose treasures are sure in a friend's hand upon land? Why, a believer's treasure is always safe in the hands of Christ; his life is safe, his soul is safe, his grace is safe, his comfort is safe, and his crown is safe in the hand of Christ. 'I know him in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until that day,' says the apostle (2 Tim. 1:12). The child's most precious things are most secure in his father's hands; so are our souls, our graces, and our comforts in the hand of Christ. That was a notable speech of Luther—Let him who died for my soul see to the salvation of it.

**Remedy (2). The second remedy against this device of Satan is to consider, That other precious saints who were shining lights on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven, have held on in religious services, notwithstanding all the troubles and dangers that have surrounded them.** Nehemiah and Ezra were surrounded with dangers on the left hand and on the right, and yet, in the face of all, they held on building the temple and the wall of Jerusalem. So Daniel, and those precious worthies (Ps 44:19, 20), under the lack of outward encouragements, and in the face of a world of very great discouragements, their souls cleaved to God and his ways. 'Though they were sore broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death, yes, though they were all the day long counted as sheep for the slaughter, yet their hearts were not turned back, neither did their steps decline from his ways.' Though bonds and imprisonments did attend Paul and the rest of the apostles in every place, yet they held on in the work and service of the Lord; and why, then, should you degenerate from their

worthy examples, which is your duty and your glory to follow? (2 Cor. 6:5, Heb. 11:36).

William Fowler, the martyr said: "Heaven will as soon fail as I will forsake my profession or budge in the least degree from it." So Sanctus, being under great torments, cries out, "I am a Christian!" No torments could work him to decline the service of God. I might produce a cloud of witnesses; but if these do not assist you to be noble and brave, I am afraid more will not.

**Remedy (3). The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, That all the troubles and dangers which attend the performance of all holy duties and heavenly services are but temporal and momentary—but the neglect of them may lay you open to all temporal, spiritual, and eternal dangers.** 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' (Heb. 2:3). He says not, if we reject or renounce so great salvation. No! but if we neglect, or shift off so great salvation, how shall we escape? That is, we cannot by any way, or means, or device in the world, escape. Divine justice will be above us, in spite of our very souls. The doing of such and such heavenly services may lay you open to the frowns of men—but the neglect of them will lay you open to the frowns of God; the doing of them may render you contemptible in the eyes of men—but the neglect of them may render you contemptible in the eyes of God; the doing of them may be the loss of your estate—but the neglect of them may be the loss of God, Christ, heaven, and your soul forever; the doing of them may shut you out from some outward temporal contents, the neglect of them may shut you out from that excellent matchless glory 'which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of men' (Is. 64:4). Remember this, there is no man who breathes, but shall suffer more by neglecting those holy and heavenly services that God commands, commends, and rewards, than he can possibly suffer by doing of them. Francis Xavier counseled John the Third, king of Portugal, to meditate every day a quarter of an hour upon that text, 'What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul!'

**Remedy (4). The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, That God knows how to deliver from troubles by**

**troubles, from afflictions by afflictions, from dangers by dangers.** God, by lesser troubles and afflictions, does oftentimes deliver his people from greater, so that they shall say, We would have perished—if we had not perished; we would have been undone—if we had not been undone; we would have been in danger—if we had not been in danger. God will so order the afflictions that befall you in the way of righteousness, that your souls shall say—We would not for all the world, foregone with such and such troubles and afflictions; for surely, had not these befallen us, it would have been worse and worse with us. Oh the carnal security, pride, formality, dead-heartedness, lukewarmness, censoriousness, and earthliness, which God has cured us of, by the trouble and dangers that we have met with in the ways and services of the Lord!

I remember a story of a godly man, that, as he was going to take a ship for France, he broke his leg; and it pleased Providence so to order it, that the ship that he would have gone in, was sunk at sea, and not a man saved; so by breaking a bone, his life was saved. So the Lord many times breaks our bones—but it is in order to the saving of our lives and our souls forever. He gives us a portion that makes us heart-sick—but it is in order to the making us perfectly well, and to the purging of us from those ill humors that have made our heads ache, and God's heart ache, and our souls sick, and heavy to the death. Oh therefore let no danger or misery hinder you from your duty. 'Had saw not these things perished, I would not have been safe', said a philosopher when he saw what great possessions he had lost.

**Remedy (5). The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, That you shall gain more in the service of God, and by walking in righteous and holy ways, though troubles and afflictions should attend you—than you can possibly suffer, or lose, by your being found in the service of God.** 'Godliness is great gain' (1 Tim. 6:6). Oh, the joy, the peace, the comfort, the rest—which saints meet with in the ways and service of God! They find that religious services are not empty things—but things in which God is pleased to discover his beauty and glory to their souls. 'My soul thirsts for God,' says David, 'that I might see your beauty and your

glory, as I have seen you in your sanctuary' (Psalm 63:2). Oh, the sweet looks, the sweet words, the sweet hints, the sweet joggings, the sweet influences, the sweet love-letters, which gracious souls have from heaven, when they wait upon God in holy and heavenly services, the least of which will darken and outweigh all the finery and glory of this world, and richly recompense the soul for all the troubles, afflictions, and dangers that have attended it in the service of God. Tertullian, in his book to the martyrs, had an apt saying. 'That is right and good merchandise, when something is parted with to gain more.' He applies it to their sufferings, wherein, though the flesh lost something, yet their soul got much more.

Oh, the saints can say under all their troubles and afflictions, that they have food to eat, and drink to drink, that the world knows not of; that they have such incomes, such refreshments, such warmings, that they would not exchange for all the honors, riches, and dainties of this world. Ah, let but a Christian compare his external losses with his spiritual, internal, and eternal gain—and he shall find, that for every penny that he loses in the service of God, he gains a pound; and for every pound that he loses, he gains a hundred; for every hundred lost, he gains a thousand. We lose *pins* in his service, and find *pearls*! We lose the favor of the creature, and peace with the creature, and perhaps the comforts and contentments of the creature—and we gain the favor of God, peace of conscience, and the comforts and contentments of a better life. Ah, did the men of this world know the sweet that saints enjoy in afflictions, they would rather choose Manasseh's iron chain—than his golden crown! They would rather be Paul a prisoner, than Paul enrapt up in the third heaven. For 'light afflictions,' they shall have 'a weight of glory!' For a few afflictions, they shall have these joys, pleasures, and contentments, that are as numerous as the stars of heaven, or as the sands of the sea! For momentary afflictions, they shall have an eternal crown of glory. 'It is but winking, and you shall be in heaven presently,' said the martyr. Oh, therefore, let not afflictions or troubles cause you to shun the ways of God, or to leave that service that should be dearer to you than a world, yes, than your very life.

When the noble General Zedislaus had lost his hand in the war, the king sent him a golden hand for it. What we lose in Christ's service he will

make up, by giving us some golden mercies. Though the cross be bitter, yet it is but short; a little storm, as one said of Julian's persecution, and an eternal calm follows!

**DEVICE 3 By presenting to the soul the difficulty of performing them.**

Says Satan, it is so hard and difficult a thing to pray as you should, and to wait on God as you should, and to walk with God as you should, and to be lively, warm, and active in the communion of saints as you should, that you were better ten thousand times to neglect them, than to meddle with them. Doubtless by this device Satan has and does keep off thousands from waiting on God and from giving to him that service that is due to his name.

**Remedy (1). The first remedy against this device of Satan is, To dwell more upon the necessity of the service and duty, than on the difficulty that attends the duty.** You should reason thus with your souls: O our souls, though such and such services be hard and difficult, yet are they exceeding necessary for the honor of God, and the keeping up his name in the world, and the keeping under of sin, and the strengthening of weak graces, and so the reviving of languishing comforts, and for the keeping clear and bright your blessed evidences, and for the scattering of your fears, and for the raising of your hopes, and for the gladdening the hearts of the righteous, and stopping the mouths of the ungodly, who are ready to take all advantages to blaspheme the name of God, and throw dirt and contempt upon his people and ways. Oh, never leave thinking on the necessity of this and that duty, until your souls be lifted up far above all the difficulties which attend religious duties.

The necessity of doing your duty appears by this, that you are his servants by a threefold right; you are his servants by right of creation, and by right of sustenance, and by right of redemption.

**Remedy (2). The second remedy against this device of Satan is,**

**solemnly to consider, That the Lord Jesus will make his services easy to you, by the sweet discovery of himself to your souls, while you are in his service.** 'You meet him who rejoices and works righteousness,' as the prophet Isaiah says (Is. 64:5). The word in the Hebrew is diversely taken; but most take the word here to signify 'to meet a soul with those affections of love and tenderness as the father of the prodigal met the prodigal with.' God is *Pater miserationum*, he is all affections; he is swift to show mercy, as he is slow to anger. If meeting with God, who is goodness itself, beauty itself, strength itself, glory itself —will not sweeten his service to your soul, nothing in heaven or earth will.

Jacob's meeting with Rachel, and enjoying of Rachel, made his hard service to be easy and delightful to him; and will not the soul's enjoying of God, and meeting with God, render his service to be much more easy and delightful? Doubtless it will. The Lord will give that sweet assistance by his Spirit and grace, as shall make his service joyous and not grievous, a delight and not a burden, a heaven and not a hell, to believing souls.

The confidence of this divine assistance raised up Nehemiah's spirit far above all those difficulties and discouragements that did attend him in the work and service of the Lord, as you may see in Nehemiah 2:19, 20: 'But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, 'What is this thing that you do? will you rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but you have no right, nor portion, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.' Ah, souls, while you are in the very service of the Lord, you shall find by experience, that the God of heaven will prosper you, and support you, and encourage and strengthen you, and carry you through the hardest service, with the greatest sweetness and cheerfulness which can be. Remember this, that God will suit your strength to your work, and in the hardest service you shall have the choicest assistance.

Luther speaks excellently to Melancthon, who was apt to be discouraged with doubts and difficulties, and fear from foes, and to cease the service they had undertaken. 'If the work is not good, why did we ever own it? If

it is good, why should we ever give it up?' Why, should we, who have Christ the conqueror on our side—fear the conquered world?

**Remedy (3). The third remedy against this device of Satan is, To dwell upon the hard and difficult things that the Lord Jesus has passed through for your temporal, spiritual, and eternal good.** Ah, what a sea of blood, of wrath, of sin, of sorrow and misery, did the Lord Jesus wade through for your internal and eternal good! Christ did not plead, 'This cross is too heavy for me to bear; this wrath is too great for me to lie under; this cup of suffering, which has in it all the ingredients of divine wrath, is too bitter for me to sip of—how much more to drink the very dregs of it? No! Christ pleads not the difficulty of the service—but resolutely and bravely wades through all, as the prophet Isaiah shows: 'I gave My back to those who beat Me, and My cheeks to those who tore out My beard. I did not hide My face from scorn and spitting.' (Chap. 50:6).

Christ bears his Father's wrath, the burden of your sins, the malice of Satan, and the rage of the world—and sweetly and triumphantly passes through all. Ah, souls! if this consideration will not raise up your spirits above all the discouragements that you meet with, to own Christ and his service, and to stick and cleave to Christ and his service, I am afraid nothing will. A soul not stirred by this, not raised and lifted up by this, to be resolute and brave in the service of God, notwithstanding all dangers and difficulties—is a soul left by God to much blindness and hardness.

'It is not fit, since the Head was crowned with thorns, that he members should be crowned with rosebuds' says Zanchius.

Godfrey Bouillon, Crusader King of Jerusalem (1099), refused to be crowned with a crown of gold, saying, 'it was not fitting for a Christian to wear a crown of gold, where Christ for our salvation had once worn a crown of thorns!'

**Remedy (4). The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is to consider, That religious duties, holy and heavenly exercises, are only difficult to the worse, to the ignoble, part of a saint.** They are not to the noble and better part of a saint—the soul, and the

renewed affections of a saint. Holy exercises are a heavenly pleasure and recreation, as the apostle speaks: 'I delight in the law of God, after the inward man' (Rom. 7:22). To the noble part of a saint, Christ's 'yoke is easy, and his burden is light' (Matt. 11:30). The Greek signifies that Christ's yoke is a kind, a gracious, a pleasant, a good, and a gainful yoke—as opposed to that which is painful and tedious.

All the commands and ways of Christ (even those who tend to the pulling out of right eyes and cutting off of right hands) are joyous, and not grievous, to the noble part of a saint. All the ways and services of Christ are pleasantness, in the abstract, to the better part of a saint. A saint, so far as he is renewed, is always best when he sees most of God, when he tastes most of God, when he is highest in his enjoyments of God, and most warm and lively in the service of God. Oh, says the noble part of a saint, that it might be always thus! Oh that my strength were the strength of stones, and my flesh as brass, that my worse part might be more serviceable to my noble part, that I might act by an untired power in that service, which is a pleasure, a paradise, to me. As every flower has its sweet savor, so every good duty carries sweet and comfort in the performance of it.

**Remedy (5). The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, That great reward and glorious recompense that attends those who cleave to the service of the Lord in the face of all difficulties and discouragements.** Though the work is hard—yet the wages are great. **Heaven will make amends for all!** Yes, one hour's being in heaven will abundantly recompense you for cleaving to the Lord and his ways in the face of all difficulties. This carried the apostle through the greatest difficulties. He had an eye 'to the recompense of reward.' He looked for 'a house that had foundations, whose builder and maker was God,' and for 'a heavenly country.' Yes, this bore up the spirit of Christ in the face of all difficulties and discouragements: 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb. 12:2).

Basil speaks of some martyrs who were cast out all night naked in the

frigid weather, and were to be burned the next day, how they comforted themselves in this manner: The winter is sharp—but paradise is sweet; here we shiver for cold—but the bosom of Abraham will make amends for all.

Christians who would hold on in the service of the Lord, must look more upon the future crown than upon the present cross; more upon their future glory than their present misery; more upon their encouragements than upon their discouragements. God's very service is wages; his ways are strewn with roses, and paved 'with joy which is unspeakable and full of glory,' and with 'peace which passes understanding.' Some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, as beams and warmth issue from the sun: 'Moreover, by them is your servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward,' Psalm 19:2. Not only for keeping—but in keeping of them, there is great reward. This is a reward before the reward, a sure reward of well doing; *in* doing thereof, not only *for* doing thereof, there is great reward (Psalm 19:11).

The joy, the rest, the refreshing, the comforts, the contents, the smiles—which saints now enjoy in the ways of God, are so precious and glorious in their eyes, that they would not exchange them for ten thousand worlds! Ah! if the gratuities be thus sweet and glorious before pay-day comes, what will be that glory that Christ will crown his saints with, for cleaving to his service in the face of all difficulties; when he shall say to his Father, 'Lo, here am I, and the children whom you have given me' (Is. 8:18). If there be so much to be had in a wilderness, what then shall be had in paradise?

**DEVICE 4. By working them to make false inferences from those blessed and glorious things that Christ has done.**

As that Jesus Christ has done all for us, therefore there is nothing for us to do but to joy and rejoice. He has perfectly justified us, and fulfilled the law, and satisfied divine justice, and pacified his Father's wrath, and has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us, and in the mean time to intercede for us; and therefore away with praying, and mourning, and

hearing. Ah! what a world of professors has Satan drawn in these days from religious services, by working them to make such sad, wild, and strange inferences from the sweet and excellent things that the Lord Jesus has done for his beloved ones.

**Remedy (1). The first remedy against this device of Satan is, To dwell as much on those scriptures that show you the duties and services that Christ requires of you, as upon those scriptures that declare to you the precious and glorious things that Christ has done for you.**

Tertullian has this expression of the Scriptures: 'I adore the fullness of the Scripture.' Gregory calls the Scripture 'the heart and soul of God'—who would not then dwell in it?

It is a sad and dangerous thing to have two eyes to behold our dignity and privileges, and not one to see our duties and services. I should look with one eye upon the choice and excellent things that Christ has done for me, to raise up my heart to love Christ with the purest love, and to rejoice in Christ with the strongest joy, and to lift up Christ above all, who has made himself to be my all. And I should look with the other eye upon those services and duties that the Scriptures require of those for whom Christ has done such blessed things, as upon that of the apostle: "Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). "And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Gal 6:9). And that of the apostle "Rejoice always" (1 Thess. 5:16), and "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). And that in the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12); and that, "This do until I come" (1 Tim. 4:13); and that, "Let us consider one another, to provoke one another to love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is—but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24, 25).

Now, a soul that would not be drawn away by this device of Satan, he must not look with a squint eye upon these blessed scriptures, and abundance more of like import—but he must dwell upon them; he must make these scriptures to be his chief and his choicest companions, and this will be a happy means to keep him close to Christ and his service in these times, wherein many turn their backs upon Christ, under pretense of being interested in the great glorious things that have been accomplished by Christ. The Jews were much in turning over the leaves of the Scripture—but they did not weigh the matter of them (John 5:39): 'You search the Scriptures.'

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, That the great and glorious things that Jesus Christ has done, and is doing for us, should be so far from taking us off from religious services and pious performances, that they should be the greatest motives and encouragements to the performance of them that may be, as the Scriptures do abundantly evidence. I will only instance in some, as that, 'That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life' (1 Peter 2:9, Luke 1:74, 75). **Christ has freed you from all your enemies, from the curse of the law, the predominant damnatory power of sin, the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the torments of hell.** But what is the end and design of Christ in doing these great and marvelous things for his people? It is not that we should throw off duties of righteousness and holiness—but that their hearts may be the more free and sweet in all holy duties and heavenly services. This I am sure of, that all man's happiness here is his holiness, and his holiness shall hereafter be his happiness. Christ has therefore broke the devil's yoke from off our necks, that his Father might have better service from our hearts.

So the apostle says, 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' 'And I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' Mark what follows: 'Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.' (2 Cor.

6:17-7:1). And again: 'The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works' (Titus 2:12-14). Ah, souls! I know no such arguments to work you to a lively and constant performance of all heavenly services, like those who are drawn from the consideration of the great and glorious things that Christ has done for you; and if such arguments will not take you and win upon you, I do think the throwing of hell fire in your faces will never do it!

Talk not of a godly life—but let your life speak. Your actions in passing pass not away; for every good work is a grain of seed for eternal life.

**Remedy (3). The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, That those precious souls which Jesus Christ has done and suffered as much for as he has for you—have been exceedingly active and lively in all religious services and heavenly performances.** He did as much and suffered as much for David as for you, and yet who more in praying and praising God than David? 'Seven times a day will I praise the Lord' (Psalm 119:164). Who more in the studying and meditating on the word than David? 'Your law is my meditation all the day' (Psalm 119:97). The same truth you may run and read in Jacob, Moses, Job, Daniel, and in the rest of the holy prophets and apostles, whom Christ has done as much for as for you. Ah, how have all those worthies abounded in works of righteousness and holiness, to the praise of free grace!

Certainly Satan has got the upper hand of those souls which argue thus—Christ has done such and such glorious things for us, therefore we need not make any care and conscience of doing such and such religious services as men say the Word calls for. If this logic be not from hell, what is? Ah, were the holy prophets and apostles alive to hear such logic come out of the mouths of such as profess themselves to be interested in the great and glorious things that Jesus Christ has done for his chosen ones, how would they blush to look upon such souls! and how would their

hearts grieve and break within them to hear the language and to observe the actings of such souls!

The saints' motto in all ages has been '*Laboremus*'—let us be doing.

'God loves the runner, not the questioner or disputer', says Luther.

He who talks of heaven—but does not the will of God, is like him who gazed upon the moon—but fell into the pit.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider this, That those who do not walk in the ways of righteousness and holiness, who not wait upon God in the several duties and services that are commanded by him; cannot have that evidence to their own souls of their righteousness before God, of their fellowship and communion with God, of their blessedness here, and their happiness hereafter, as those souls have, who love and delight in the ways of the Lord, that are always best when they are most in the works and service of the Lord. Certainly it is one thing to judge by our graces, another thing to rest or put our trust in them. There is a great deal of difference between declaring and deserving. As David's daughters were known by their garments of diverse colors, so are God's children by their piety and sanctity. A Christian's emblem should be a house walking towards heaven. High words surely make a man neither holy nor just; but a virtuous life, a circumspect walking, makes him dear to God. A tree that is not fruitful is fit only for the fire. **Christianity is not a talking—but a walking with God**, who will not be put off with words. If he sees no fruit, he will take up his axe, and then the soul is cut off forever.

'Little children,' says the apostle, 'let no man deceive you: he who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous' (1 John 3:7). 'In this,' says the same apostle, 'the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he who loves not his brother' (ver. 10). 'If you know that he is righteous,' says the same apostle, 'you know that everyone who practices righteousness, is born of him.' "This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,'

without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: the one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked." 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin,' says the same apostle (1 John 2:3-6, and 1:6, 7).

So (James 2:14, 20): 'What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have no works; can faith save him?' *that is*, it cannot. 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' To look after holy and heavenly works, is the best way to preserve the soul from being deceived and deluded by Satan's delusions, and by sudden flashes of joy and comfort; holy works being a more conscious and constant pledge of the precious Spirit, begetting and maintaining in the soul more solid, pure, clear, strong, and lasting joy. Ah souls! As you would have in yourselves a constant and a blessed evidence of your fellowship with the Father and the Son, and of the truth of grace, and of your future happiness, look that you cleave close to holy services; and that you turn not your backs upon religious duties.

**Remedy (5). The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, That there are other choice and glorious ends for the saint's performance of religious duties, than for the justifying of their persons before God, or for their satisfying of the law or justice of God, or for the purchasing of the pardon of sin; that is, to testify their justification.** 'A good tree cannot but bring forth good fruits' (Matt. 7:17), to testify their love to God, and their sincere obedience to the commands of God; to testify their deliverance from spiritual bondage, to evidence the indwelling of the Spirit, to stop the mouths of the worst of men, and to gladden those righteous souls, whom God would not have saddened. These, and abundance of other choice ends there are, why those who have a saving interest in the glorious doings of Christ, should, notwithstanding that, keep close to the holy duties and religious services that are commanded by Christ. And if these considerations will not prevail with you, to wait

upon God in holy and heavenly duties, I am afraid if one should rise from the dead, his arguments would not win upon you—but you would hold on in your sins, and neglect his service, though you lost your souls forever.

The end in view moves to action. Keep yourself within compass, and have an eye always to the end of your life and actions.

**DEVICE 5. By presenting to them the fewness and poverty of those who walk in the ways of God—who continue in religious practices.**

Says Satan, Do not you see that those who walk in such and such religious ways are the poorest, the lowest, and the most despicable people in the world? This took with them in John 7:47-49: 'Then answered the pharisees, Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees, believed on him? But these ignorant crowds do, but what do they know about it? A curse is on them anyway!'

**Remedy (1). The first remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, That though they are outwardly poor, yet they are inwardly rich.** Though they are poor in temporals, yet they are rich in spirituals. The worth and riches of the saints is inward. 'The King's daughter is all glorious within' (Psalm 45:13). 'Hearken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him?' says James 2:5. 'I know your poverty—but you are rich,' says John to the church of Smyrna (Rev. 2:9). What though they have little in possession, yet they have a glorious kingdom in future promise. 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom' (Luke 12:32). Though saints have little in hand, yet they have much in hope. You count those happy, in a worldly sense, that have much in future promise, though they have little in possession: and will you count the saints miserable because they have little in hand, little in possession, though they have a glorious kingdom in future promise? I am sure the poorest saint who breathes, will not exchange, were it in his power, that which he has in hope and in future promise, for the possession of as many worlds as there be stars in

heaven, or sands in the sea.

'Do not you see,' says Chrysostom, 'the places where treasures are hid are rough and overgrown with thorns? Do not the naturalists tell you, that the mountains that are big with gold within, are bare of grass without? Saints have, as scholars, poor daily fare here, because they must study hard to go to heaven.'

**Remedy (2). The second remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, That in all ages God has had some who have been great, rich, wise, and honorable—who have chosen his ways, and cleaved to his service in the face of all difficulties.** Though not many wise men, yet some wise men; and though not many mighty, yet some mighty have; and though not many noble, yet some noble have. Witness Abraham, and Jacob, and Job, and several kings, and others that the Scriptures speak of. And ah! how many have we among ourselves, whose souls have cleaved to the Lord, and who have swum to his service through the blood of the slain, and who have not counted their lives dear unto them, that they and others might enjoy the holy things of Christ, according to the mind and heart of Christ.

**Remedy (3). The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, That the spiritual riches of the poorest saints infinitely transcend the temporal riches of all the wicked men in the world; their spiritual riches satisfy them; they can sit down satisfied with the riches of grace that are in Christ, without earthly honors or riches.** 'He who drinks of that water that I shall give him, shall thirst no more' (John 4:13). Alexander's vast mind inquired if there were any more worlds to conquer.

The riches of poor saints are durable; they will bed and board with them; they will go to the prison, to a sickbed, to a grave, yes, to heaven with them. The spiritual riches of poor saints are as wine to cheer them, and as bread to strengthen them, and as clothes to warm them, and as armor to protect them. Now, we all know that the riches of this world cannot satisfy the souls of men—for they are as fading as a flower, or as the owners of them are.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device, is seriously to consider, That though the saints, considered comparatively, are few; though they be 'a little, little flock,' 'a remnant,' 'a garden enclosed,' 'a spring shut up, a fountain sealed'; though they are as 'the summer gleanings'; though they are 'one from a city, and two from a tribe'; though they are but a handful to a houseful, a spark to a flame, a drop to the ocean—yet considered altogether, are an innumerable number that cannot be numbered. As John speaks: 'After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white and held palm branches in their hands.' (Rev. 7:9). So Matthew speaks: 'And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 8:11). So Paul: 'But you have come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect' (Heb. 12:22).

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, That it will be only a short time, before these poor despised saints shall shine brighter than the sun in his glory. It will not be long before you will wish, Oh! that we were now among the poor, mean despised ones, in the day that God comes to make up his jewels! It will not be long before these poor few saints shall be lifted up upon their thrones to judge the multitude, the world, as the apostle speaks: 'Don't you know, that the saints shall judge the world?' (1 Cor. 6:2). And in that day, oh! how will the great and the rich, the learned and the noble, wish that they had lived and spent their days with these few poor contemptible creatures in the service of the Lord! Oh! how will this wicked world curse the day that ever they had such base thoughts of the poor despised saints, and that their poverty became a stumbling-block to keep them off from the ways of sanctity.

John Foxe being once asked whether he knew a certain poor man answered, I remember him well. I tell you I forget lords and ladies to

remember such. So will God deal by his poor saints. He will forget the great and mighty ones of the world to remember his few poor despised ones. Though John the Baptist was poor in the world, yet the Holy Spirit calls him the greatest that was born of woman. Ah, poor saints, men that know not your worth, have such low thoughts of you. "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9

I have read of Ingo, an ancient king of the Draves, who, making a stately feast, appointed his nobles, at that time pagans, to sit in the hall below, and commanded certain poor Christians to be brought up into his presence-chamber, to sit with him at his table, to eat and drink of his kingly cheer; at which many wondering, he said, 'He accounted Christians, though ever so poor, a greater ornament to his table, and more worthy of his company, than the greatest unconverted nobles; for when these might be thrust down to hell, those might be his consorts and fellow-princes in heaven.' You know how to apply it.

Although you see the stars sometimes by their reflections in a puddle, or in the bottom of a well, yes, in a stinking ditch; yet the stars have their situation in heaven. So, though you see a godly man in a poor, miserable, low, despised condition for the things of this world, yet he is fixed in heaven, in the region of heaven: 'Who has raised us up,' says the apostle, 'and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Oh! therefore, say to your own souls, when they begin to decline in the ways of Zion, because of the poverty and fewness of those who walk in them, The day is at hand when those few, poor, despised saints shall shine in glory, when they shall judge this world, and when all the wicked of this world will wish that they were in their condition, and would give ten thousand worlds, were it in their power, that they might but have the honor and happiness to wait upon those whom, for their poverty and fewness, they have neglected and despised in this world.

**Remedy (6). The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, That there will come a time, even in this life, in this world—when the reproach and contempt that is**

**now cast upon the ways of God, by reason of the poverty and fewness of those who walk in those ways, shall be quite taken away, by his making them the head—who have days without number been the tail; and by his raising them up to much outward riches, prosperity, and glory—who have been as the outcast because of their poverty and fewness.** John, speaking of the glory of the church, the new Jerusalem that came down from heaven (Rev. 21:24), tells us, 'The nations of the earth will walk in its light, and the rulers of the world will come and bring their glory to it.' So the prophet Isaiah: 'I will exchange your bronze for gold, your iron for silver, your wood for bronze, and your stones for iron.' (chap. 60:17). And so the prophet Zechariah speaks (chap. 14:14): 'And the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.' The Lord has promised that 'the meek shall inherit the earth' (Matt. 5:5); and 'heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot or one tittle of his word shall pass unfulfilled' (ver. 18). Ah, poor saints! now some thrust sore at you, others look a-squint upon you, others shut the door against you, others turn their backs upon you, and most of men (except it be a few who live much in God, and are filled with the riches of Christ) do either neglect you or despise you because of your poverty; but the day is coming when you shall be lifted up above the ash-heap, when you shall change poverty for riches, your rags for robes, your reproach for a crown of honor, your infamy for glory, even in this world.

These following scriptures do abundantly confirm this truth: Jer. 31:12; Is. 30:23; 62:8, 9; Joel 2:23, 24; Micah 4:6; Amos 9:13, 14; Zech 8:12; Isa. 41:18, 19; 55:13; 66:6, 7; 65:21, 22; 61:4; 60:10 Ezek. 36:10. Only take these two cautions: 1. That in these times the saints' chief comforts, delights, and contents with consist in their more clear, full, and constant enjoyment of God. 2. That they shall have such abundant measure of the Spirit poured out upon them, that their riches and outward glory shall not be snares unto them—but golden steps to a richer living in God.

And this is not all—but God will also mightily increase the number of his chosen ones, multitudes shall be converted to him: 'Who has ever seen or heard of anything as strange as this? Has a nation ever been born in a single day? Has a country ever come forth in a mere moment? But by the

time Jerusalems' birth pains begin, the baby will be born; the nation will come forth. They will bring the remnant of your people back from every nation. They will bring them to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord. They will ride on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels' (Isa. 66:8, 20). Does not the Scripture say, that 'the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord'? (Rev. 11:15). Has not God given to Christ 'the heathen, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession'? (Psalm 2:8). Has not the Lord said, that in 'the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be lifted up above the hills, and shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it,' (Isa. 2:2 and 54:14 and 61:9).

Pray, read, and meditate upon Isaiah 60 and 66 and 2:1-5, and there you shall find the multitudes that shall be converted to Christ. And oh! that you would be mighty in believing and in wrestling with God, that he would hasten the day of his glory, that the reproach that is now upon his people and ways may cease!

**DEVICE 6. By presenting before them the examples of the greatest part of the world—who walk in the ways of their own hearts, and that make light and slight of the ways of the Lord.**

Why, says Satan, do not you see that the great and the rich, the noble and the honorable, the learned and the wise, even the greatest number of men, never trouble themselves about such and such ways—and why then should you be singular and odd? You had better do as the most do. (John 7:48, 49; 1 Cor. 1:26, 28; Micah 7:2-4.)

**Remedy (1). The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, Of those scriptures which are directly opposed to following the sinful examples of men.** As that in Exodus, 'You shall not follow a multitude to do evil' (chap. 23:2). The multitude generally are ignorant, and know not the way of the Lord, therefore they speak evil of that they know not. They are envious and maliciously bent against the service and way of God, and therefore they cannot speak well of the ways of God: 'This way is everywhere spoken

against,' say they (Acts 28:22). So in Num. 16:21, 'Separate from them, and come out from among them.' So the apostle: 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness' (Eph. 5:11). So Solomon: 'Enter not into the way of the wicked; forsake the foolish, and live' (Prov. 4:14 and 9:6). Those who walk with the many—shall perish with the many. Those who do as the most, shall before long suffer with the most. Those who live as the many, must die with the many, and go to hell with the many. The way to hell is broad and well beaten. The way to be undone forever is to do as the most do. 'The multitude' is the weakest and worst argument. "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Matthew 7:13-14

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, That if you will sin with the multitude, all the angels in heaven and men on earth cannot keep you from suffering with the multitude. If you will be wicked with them, you must unavoidably be miserable with them. Say to your soul, O my soul! if you will sin with the multitude, you must be shut out of heaven with the multitude, you must be cast down to hell with the multitude: 'And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues' (Rev. 18:4). Come out in affection, in action, and in habitation, or else the infection of sin will bring upon you the infliction of punishment. So says the wise man, 'He who walks with wise men shall be wise—but a companion of fools shall be destroyed,' (Prov. 13:20). Multitudes may help you into sin, yes, one may draw you into sin—but it is not multitudes who can help you to escape punishments; as you may see in Moses and Aaron, that were provoked to sin by the multitude—but were shut out of the pleasant land, and fell by a hand of justice as well as others.

Sin and punishment are linked together with chains of adamant. Of sin we may say, as Isidore does of the serpent, 'So many colors, so many dolours.'

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, The worth and excellency of your

**immortal soul.** Your soul is a jewel more worth than heaven and earth. The loss of your soul is incomparable, irreparable, and irrecoverable. If your soul is lost—all is lost, and you are undone forever. Is it madness and folly in a man to kill himself for company, and is it not greater madness or folly to break the neck of your soul, and to damn it for company? Be suspect of that way wherein you see multitudes to walk; the multitude being a stream that you must row hard against, or you will be carried into that gulf out of which angels cannot deliver you. Is it not better to walk in a straight way alone, than to wander into crooked ways with company? Surely, **it is better to go to heaven alone—than to hell with company!**

I might add other things—but these may suffice for the present; and I am afraid, if these arguments do not stir you, other arguments will work but little upon you. What wise man would fetch gold out of a fiery crucible; that is, hazard his immortal soul, to gain the world, by following a multitude in those steps that led to the chambers of death and darkness?

**DEVICE 7. By casting in a multitude of vain thoughts, while the soul is in seeking of God, or in waiting on God;**and by this device he has cooled some men's spirits in heavenly services, and taken off, at least for a time, many precious souls from religious performances.

"I have no heart to hear, nor no heart to pray, nor no delight in reading, nor in the society of the saints. Satan does so dog and follow my soul, and is still a-casting in such a multitude of vain thoughts concerning God, the world, and my own soul, that I even tremble to think of waiting upon God in any religious service. Oh! the vain thoughts that Satan casts in, do so distaste my soul, and so grieve, vex, perplex, and distract my soul, that they even make me weary of holy duties, yes, of my very life. Oh! I cannot be so raised and ravished, so heated and melted, so quickened and enlarged, so comforted and refreshed—as I should be, as I might be, and as I would be in religious services—by reason of that multitude of vain thoughts, which Satan is injecting or casting into my soul. Lord, now how gladly would I serve you, and vain thoughts will not allow me!"

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, **To have your hearts strongly affected with the greatness, holiness, majesty, and glory of that God before whom you stand, and with whom your souls converse in religious services.** Oh! let your souls be greatly affected with the presence, purity, and majesty of that God before whom you stand. A man would be afraid of playing with a feather, when he is speaking with a king. Ah! when men have poor, low, light, slight thoughts of God, in their drawing near to God, they tempt the devil to bestir himself, and to cast in a multitude of vain thoughts to disturb and distract the soul in its waiting on God. There is nothing that will contribute so much to the keeping out of vain thoughts, as to look upon God as an omniscient God, an omnipresent God, an omnipotent God, a God full of all glorious perfections, a God whose majesty, purity, and glory will not allow him to behold the least iniquity. The reason why the blessed saints and glorious angels in heaven have not so much as one vain thought is, because they are greatly affected with the greatness, holiness, majesty, purity, and glory of God.

When Pompey could not keep his soldiers in the camp by persuasion he cast himself down along in the narrow passage which led out of it, and bade them go if they would—but they must first trample upon their general; and the thoughts of this overcame them. You are wise, and know how to apply it to the point in hand.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, **To be faithful in religious services, notwithstanding all those wandering thoughts the soul is troubled with.** This will be a sweet help against them: for the soul to be resolute in waiting on God, whether it be troubled with vain thoughts or not; to say, 'Well I will pray still, and hear still, and meditate still, and keep fellowship with the saints still.' Many precious souls can say from experience, that when their souls have been steadfast in their waiting on God, that Satan has left them, and has not been so busy in vexing their souls with vain thoughts. When Satan perceives that all those trifling vain thoughts that he casts into the soul do but vex the soul into greater diligence, carefulness, watchfulness, and steadfastness in holy and heavenly services, and that the soul loses nothing of his zeal, piety, and devotion—but doubles his care, diligence,

and earnestness, he often ceases to interpose his trifles and vain thoughts, as he ceased to tempt Christ, when Christ was steadfast in resisting his temptations.

It is a rule in the civil law that nothing seems to be done, if there remains anything to be done. If once you say, 'it is enough', you are undone.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider this, **That those vain and trifling thoughts that are cast into our souls, when we are waiting upon God in this or that religious service, if they be not cherished and indulged—but abhorred, resisted, and disclaimed; they are not sins upon our souls, though they may be troubles to our minds; they shall not be put upon our accounts, nor keep mercies and blessings from being enjoyed by us.** When a soul in uprightness can look God in the face, and say, Lord, when I approach near unto you, there are a world of vain thoughts crowd in upon me, which disturb my soul, and weaken my faith, and lessen my comfort and spiritual strength. Oh, these are my clog, my burden, my torment, my hell! Oh, do justice upon these, free me from these, that I may serve you with more freeness, singleness, spiritualness, and sweetness of spirit. These thoughts may vex that soul—but they shall not harm that soul. nor keep a blessing from that soul. If vain thoughts resisted and lamented could stop the current of mercy, and render a soul unhappy, there would be none on earth that should ever taste of mercy, or be everlastingly happy.

It is not Satan casting in of vain thoughts that can keep mercy from the soul, or undo the soul—but the lodging and cherishing of vain thoughts: 'O Jerusalem, how long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?' (Jer.4:14) **Vain thoughts pass through the best hearts; they are lodged and cherished only in the worst hearts.**

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That watching against sinful thoughts, resisting of sinful thoughts, lamenting and weeping over sinful thoughts, carries with it the sweetest and strongest evidence of the truth and power of grace, and of the sincerity of your hearts, and is the readiest and the surest way to be rid of them**

(Psalm 139:23). Many low and carnal considerations may cause men to watch their words, their lives, their actions; as hope of gain, or to please friends, or to get a name in the world, and many other such like considerations. Oh! but to watch our thoughts, to weep and lament over them—this must needs be from some noble, spiritual, and internal principle—such as love to God, a holy fear of God, a holy care and delight to please the Lord. Thoughts are the first-born, the blossoms of the soul, the beginning of our strength—whether for good or evil; and they are the greatest evidences for or against a man, that can be.

The schools do well observe, that outward sins are of greater infamy—but inward heart sins are of greater guilt, as we see in the devil's. There is nothing that so speaks out a man to be thoroughly and kindly wrought upon, as his having his thoughts to be 'brought into obedience,' as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 10:4, 5. Grace is grown up to a very great height in that soul where it prevails, to the subduing of those vain thoughts that walk up and down in the soul. (Psalm 139:23; Is. 59:7; 66:18; Matt. 9:4; 12:25.)

Well! though you cannot be rid of them, yet make resistance and opposition against the first risings of them. When sinful thoughts arise, then think thus, The Lord takes notice of these thoughts; 'he knows them afar off,' as the Psalmist speaks (Psalm 138:6). He knew Herod's bloody thoughts, and Judas's betraying thoughts, and the Pharisees' cruel and blasphemous thoughts afar off. (Matt. 15:15-18).

Oh! think thus: All these sinful thoughts, they defile and pollute the soul, they deface and spoil much of the inward beauty and glory of the soul. If I commit this or that sin, to which my thoughts incline me, then either I must repent or not repent; if I repent, it will cost me more grief, sorrow, shame, heart-breaking, and soul-bleeding, before my conscience will be quieted, divine justice pacified, my comfort and joy restored, my evidences cleared, and my pardon in the court of conscience sealed—than the imagined profit or seeming sensual pleasure can be worth. 'What fruit had you in those things whereof you are now ashamed' (Rom. 6:21).

Tears, instead of gems, were the ornaments of David's bed when he had sinned; and so they must be yours, or else you must lie down in the bed of

sorrow forever.

If I never repent, oh! then my sinful thoughts will be scorpions that will eternally vex me, the rods that will eternally lash me, the thorns that will everlastingly pierce me, the dagger that will be eternally a-stabbing me, the worm that will be forever a-gnawing me! Oh! therefore, watch against them, be constant in resisting them, and in lamenting and weeping over them, and then they shall not hurt you, though they may for a time trouble you. And remember this—he who does this, does more than the most glistening and blustering hypocrite in the world does.

Inward bleeding kills many a man; so will sinful thoughts, if not repented of.

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, **To labor more and more to be filled with the fullness of God, and to be enriched with all spiritual and heavenly things.** What is the reason that the angels in heaven have not so much as an idle thought? It is because they are filled with the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19). Take it for an experienced truth, **the more the soul is filled with the fullness of God and enriched with spiritual and heavenly things—the less room there is in that soul for vain thoughts.** The fuller the vessel is of wine—the less room there is for water. Oh, then, lay up much of God, of Christ, of precious promises, and choice experiences in your hearts—and then you will be less troubled with vain thoughts. 'A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good things' (Matt. 12:35).

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, **To keep up holy and spiritual affections; for such as your affections are, such will be your thoughts.** 'Oh how I love your law! it is my meditation all the day' (Psalm 119:97). What we love most, we most muse upon. 'When I awake, I am still with you' (Psalm 139:18). That which we much like—we shall much mind. Those who are frequent in their love to God and his law, will be frequent in thinking of God and his law—a child will not forget his mother.

**Remedy (7).** The seventh remedy against this device of Satan is, **To avoid multiplicity of worldly business.** Oh, let not the world take up your hearts and thoughts. Souls which are torn in pieces with the cares of the world will be always vexed and tormented with vain thoughts in all their approaches to God. Vain thoughts will be still crowding in upon him that lives in a crowd of business. The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole; and men that are least perplexed with business are commonly nearest to God.

2 Tim. 2:4, 'No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer.' This is a comparison which Paul borrows from the custom of the Roman empire, wherein soldiers were forbidden to take up private businesses.

**DEVICE 8. By working them to rest in their performances; to rest in prayer, and to rest in hearing, reading, and the communion of saints.**

And when Satan has drawn the soul to rest upon the service done, then he will help the soul to reason thus: Why, you had better never pray, as to pray and rest in prayer; you had better never hear, as to hear and rest in hearing; you had better never be in the communion of saints, as to rest in the communion of saints. And by this device he stops many souls in their heavenly race, and takes off poor souls from those services that should be their joy and crown (Is. 58:1-2, Zech. 7:4-6, Matt. 6:2, Rom. 1:7).

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, **To dwell much upon the imperfections and weaknesses which attend your choicest services.** Oh the spots, the blots, the blemishes that are to be seen on the face of our best duties! When you have done all you can, you have need to close up all with this, 'Oh enter not into judgment with your servant, O Lord' (Psalm 143:2), for the weaknesses that cleave to my best services. We may all say with the church, 'All our righteousnesses are as a menstruous cloth' (Is. 64:6). If God should be strict to mark what is done amiss in our best actions, we are undone! Oh the water that is mingled with our wine; the dross that cleaves unto our gold! Pride and

high confidence is most apt to creep in upon 'duties well done'.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider **The impotence and inability of any of your best services, divinely to comfort, refresh, and bear your souls up from fainting, and sinking in the days of trouble, when darkness is round about you, when God shall say to you, as he did once to the Israelites, 'Go and cry unto the gods that you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your tribulation' (Judges 10:14).** So, when God shall say in the day of your troubles, Go to your prayers, to your hearing, and to your fasting, and see if they can help you, if they can support you, if they can deliver you.

If God in that day does but withhold the influence of his grace, your former services will be but poor cordials to comfort you; and then you must and will cry out, Oh, 'none but Christ, none but Christ!' Oh my prayers are not Christ, my hearing is not Christ, my fasting is not Christ. Oh! one smile of Christ, one glimpse of Christ, one good word from Christ, one nod of love from Christ in the day of trouble and darkness—will more revive and refresh the soul than all your former services, in which your souls rested, as if they were the bosom of Christ, which should be the only center of our souls. **Christ is the crown of crowns, the glory of glories, and the heaven of heavens.**

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That good things rested upon will as certainly undo us, and everlastingly destroy us—as the foulest enormities which can be committed by us.** Those souls that after they have done all, do not look up so high as Christ—and rest, and center alone in Christ, laying down their services at the footstool of Christ—must lie down in sorrow; their bread is prepared for them in hell. 'But watch out, you who live in your own light and warm yourselves by your own fires. This is the reward you will receive from me: You will soon lie down in great torment' (Is. 50:11). Is it good to dwell with everlasting burnings, with a devouring fire? Why then, rest in your duties still? See that you center only in the bosom of Christ.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, **To**

**dwell much upon the necessity and excellency of that resting-place which God has provided for you.** Above all other resting-places—he himself is your resting-place; his free mercy and love is your resting-place; the pure, glorious, matchless, and spotless righteousness of Christ is your resting-place. Ah! it is sad to think, that most men have forgotten their resting-place, as the Lord complains: 'My people have been as lost sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray, and have turned them away to the mountains: they are gone from mountain to hill, and forgotten their resting-place' (Jer. 50:6). So poor souls who do not see the excellency of that resting-place that God has appointed for their souls to lie down in—they wander from mountain to hill, from one duty to another, and here they will rest and there they will rest. But those who see the excellency of that resting-place that God has provided for them, they will say, 'Farewell prayer, farewell hearing, farewell fasting. I will rest no more in you—but now I will rest only in the bosom of Christ, the love of Christ, the righteousness of Christ!'

### **SATAN'S DEVICES TO KEEP SAINTS IN A SAD, DOUBTING, QUESTIONING & UNCOMFORTABLE CONDITION**

Though Satan can never rob a believer of his crown, yet such is his malice and envy, that he will leave no stone unturned, no means unattempted, to rob them of their comfort and peace—to make their life a burden and a hell unto them, to cause them to spend their days in sorrow and mourning, in sighing and complaining, in doubting and questioning. 'Surely,' he says, 'we have no interest in Christ; our graces are not true, our hopes are the hopes of hypocrites; our confidence is our presumption, our enjoyments are our delusions.'

Blessed John Bradford (the martyr) in one of his epistles, says thus, 'O Lord, sometime methinks I feel it so with me—as if there were no difference between my heart and the wicked. I have a blind mind as they, a stout, stubborn, rebellious hard heart as they,' and so he goes on.

I shall show you this in some particulars:

**DEVICE 1.** The first device that Satan has to keep souls in a sad, doubting, and questioning condition, and so making their life a hell, is, **By causing them to be still poring and musing upon sin, to mind their sins more than their Savior; yes, so to mind their sins as to forget, yes, to neglect their Savior;** that, as the Psalmist speaks, 'The Lord is not in all their thoughts' (Psalm 10:4). Their eyes are so fixed upon their disease, that they cannot see the remedy, though it be near; and they do so muse upon their debts, that they have neither mind nor heart to think of their Surety. A Christian should wear Christ in his bosom as a flower of delight, for he is a whole paradise of delight. He who minds not Christ more than his sin, can never be thankful and fruitful as he should.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy is for weak believers to consider, **That though Jesus Christ has not freed them from the presence of sin, yet he has freed them from the damnatory power of sin.** It is most true that sin and grace were never born together, neither shall sin and grace die together; yet while a believer breathes in this world, they must live together, they must keep house together. Christ in this life will not free any believer from the presence of any one sin, though he does free every believer from the damning power of every sin. 'There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh—but after the Spirit' (Rom. 8:1). The law cannot condemn a believer, for Christ has fulfilled it for him; divine justice cannot condemn him, for that Christ has satisfied; his sins cannot condemn him, for they in the blood of Christ are pardoned; and his own conscience, upon righteous grounds, cannot condemn him, because Christ, that is greater than his conscience, has acquitted him.

My sins hurt me not, if they like me not. Sin is like that wild fig-tree, or ivy in the wall; cut off stump, body, bough, and branches, yet some strings or other will sprout out again, until the wall be plucked down.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, **That though Jesus Christ has not freed you from the molesting and vexing power of sin, yet he has freed you from**

**the reign and dominion of sin.** You say that sin does so molest and vex you, that you can not think of God, nor go to God, nor speak with God.\* Oh! but remember it is one thing for sin to molest and vex you, and another thing for sin to reign and have dominion over you. 'For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law—but under grace' (Rom. 6:14). Sin may rebel—but it shall never reign in a saint. It fares with sin in the regenerate as with those beasts that Daniel speaks of, 'that had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season' (Dan. 7:12). The primitive Christians chose rather to be thrown to lions without, than left to lusts within.

Now sin **reigns** in the soul, when the soul willingly and readily obeys it, and submits to its commands, as subjects do actively obey and embrace the commands of their prince. The commands of a king are readily embraced and obeyed by his subjects—but the commands of a tyrant are embraced and obeyed unwillingly. All the service that is done to a tyrant, is out of violence, and not out of loving obedience. A free and willing subjection to the commands of sin speaks out the soul to be under the reign and dominion of sin; but from this plague, this hell, Christ frees all believers. It is a sign that sin has not gained your consent—but committed a rape upon your souls, when you cry out to God. If the ravished virgin under the law cried out—she was guiltless (Deut. 22:27); so when sin plays the tyrant over the soul, and the soul cries out, it is guiltless; those sins shall not be charged upon the soul.

Sin cannot say of a believer as the centurion said of his servants, 'I bid one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to another, Do this, and he does it' (Matt. 8:9). No! the heart of a saint rises against the commands of sin; and when sin would carry his soul to the devil, he hates his sin, and cries out for justice. Lord! says the believing soul, sin plays the tyrant, the devil in me; it would have me to do that which wars against your holiness as well as against my happiness; against your honor and glory, as my comfort and peace; therefore do me justice, O righteous judge of heaven and earth, and let this *tyrant sin* die for it! "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is,

**Constantly to keep one eye upon the promises of remission of sin, as well as the other eye upon the inward operations of sin.**

This is the most certain truth, that God graciously pardons those sins to his people—that he will not in this life fully subdue in his people. Paul prays thrice (*that is*, often), to be delivered from the thorn in the flesh. All he can get is 'My grace is sufficient for you' (2 Cor. 12:9); I will graciously pardon that to you—which I will not conquer in you, says God. 'And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me, and whereby they have transgressed against me. I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember your sins (Jer. 33:8, Is. 43:25).

Ah! you lamenting souls, who spend your days in sighing and groaning under the sense and burden of your sins, why do you deal so unkindly with God, and so injuriously with your own souls, as not to cast an eye upon those precious promises of remission of sin which may bear up and refresh your spirits in the darkest night, and under the heaviest burden of sin?

Is. 44:2; Micah 7:18, 19; Col. 2:13, 14. The promises of God are a precious book; every leaf drops myrrh and mercy. Though the weak Christian cannot open, read, and apply them, Christ can and will apply them to their souls. 'I, I am he, blotting out your transgressions' today and tomorrow (the Hebrew denotes a continued act of God).

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, **To look upon all your sins as charged upon the account of Christ, as debts which the Lord Jesus has fully satisfied;** and indeed, were there but one farthing of that debt unpaid that Christ was engaged to satisfy, it would not have stood with the unspotted justice of God to have let him come into heaven and sit down at his own right hand. But all our debts, by his death, being discharged, we are freed, and he is exalted to sit down at the right hand of his Father, which is the top of his glory, and the greatest pledge of our felicity: 'For he has made him to be sin for us that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' said the apostle (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ was the greatest of sinners by imputation and reputation.

All our sins were made to meet upon Christ, as that evangelical prophet has it: 'He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:3-6).

In law, we know that all the debts of the wife are charged upon the husband. Says the wife to one and to another, If I owe you anything, go to my husband. So may a believer say to the law, and to the justice of God, If I owe you anything, go to my Christ, who has undertaken for me. I must not sit down discouraged, under the apprehension of those debts, which Christ, to the utmost farthing, has fully satisfied. Would it not argue much weakness, I had almost said much madness, for a debtor to sit down discouraged upon his looking over those debts that his surety has readily, freely, and fully satisfied? The sense of his great love should engage a man forever to love and honor his surety, and to bless that hand that has paid the debt, and cancelled the books. But to sit down discouraged when the debt is satisfied, is a sin which bespeaks repentance.

Christ has the greatest worth and wealth in him. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is in one piece of gold, so all the excellencies scattered abroad in the creatures are united in Christ. All the whole volume of perfections which are spread through heaven and earth are epitomized in him.

Christ has cleared all reckoning between God and us. You remember the scapegoat. Upon his head all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, were confessed and put, and the goat did bear upon him all their iniquities (Lev. 16:21). Why! the Lord Jesus is that blessed scapegoat, upon whom all our sins were laid, and who alone has carried 'our sins away into the land of forgetfulness, where they shall never be remembered more.'

Christ is the channel of grace from God. A believer, under the guilt of his sin, may look the Lord in the face, and sweetly plead thus with him: It is true, Lord, I owed you much—but your Son was my ransom, my redemption. His blood was the price; he was my surety and undertook to answer for my sins; I know you must be satisfied, and Christ has satisfied you to the utmost farthing: not for himself, for what sins had he of his own? but for me; they were my debts that he satisfied for; be pleased to look over the book, and you shall find that it is crossed by your own hand upon this very account, that Christ has suffered and satisfied for them.

The bloods of Abel, for so the Hebrew has it, as if the blood of one Abel had so many tongues as drops, cried for vengeance against sin; but the blood of Christ cries louder for the pardon of sin!

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **Of the reasons why the Lord is pleased to have his people exercised, troubled, and vexed with the operations of sinful corruption;** and they are these: partly to keep them humble and low in their own eyes; and partly to put them upon the use of all divine helps, whereby sin may be subdued and mortified; and partly, that they may live upon Christ for the perfecting the work of sanctification; and partly, to wean them from things below, and to make them heart-sick of their absence from Christ, and to maintain in them affections of compassion towards others who are subject to the same infirmities with them; and that they may distinguish between a state of grace and a state of glory, and that heaven may be more sweet to them when finally arrived there.

Now does the Lord upon these weighty reasons allow his people to be exercised and molested with the operations of sinful corruptions? Oh then, let no believer speak, write, or conclude bitter things against his own soul and comforts, because sin so troubles and vexes his righteous soul. But he should lay his hand upon his mouth and be silent, because the Lord will have it so, upon such weighty grounds as the soul is not able to withstand.

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly

to consider, **That believers must repent for their being discouraged by their sins.** Their being discouraged by their sins will cost them many a prayer, many a tear, and many a groan; and that because their discouragements under sin flow from ignorance and unbelief. It springs from their ignorance of the richness, freeness, fullness, and everlastingness of God's love; and from their ignorance of the power, glory, sufficiency, and efficacy of the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ; and from their ignorance of the worth, glory, fullness, largeness, and completeness of the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and from their ignorance of that real, close, spiritual, glorious, and inseparable union which exists between Christ and their precious souls. Ah! did precious souls know and believe the truth of these things as they should, they would not sit down dejected and overwhelmed under the sense and operation of sin.

God never gave a believer a new heart that it should always lie a-bleeding, and that it should always be rent and torn in pieces with discouragements.

**DEVICE 2. By working them to make false definitions of their graces.**

Satan knows, that as false definitions of sin wrong the soul one way, so false definitions of grace wrong the soul another way.

Oh how does Satan labor with might and main to work men to make false definitions of FAITH! Some he works to define faith too high, as that it is a full assurance of the love of God to a man's soul in particular, or a full persuasion of the pardon and remission of a man's own sins in particular. Says Satan, What do you talk of faith? Faith is an assurance of the love of God, and of the pardon of sin; and this you have not; you know you are far off from this; therefore you have no faith. And by drawing men to make such a false definition of faith, he keeps them in a sad, doubting, and questioning condition, and makes them spend their days in sorrow and sighing, so that tears are their drink, and sorrow is their food, and sighing is their work all the day long.

The philosophers say there are eight degrees of. Now, if a man should define heat only by the highest degree, then all other degrees will be ruled out from being heat. So if men shall define faith only by the highest degrees, by assurance of the love of God, and of the pardon of his sins in particular, what will become of lesser degrees of faith?

If a man should define a man to be a living man, only by the highest and strongest demonstrations of life, as laughing, leaping, running, working, and walking; would not many thousands who groan under internal and external weaknesses, and who cannot laugh, nor leap, nor run, nor work, nor walk—be found dead men by such a definition, that yet we know to be alive? It is so here, and you know how to apply it.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That there may be true faith, yes, great measures of faith, where there is no assurance.** The Canaanite woman in the Gospel had strong faith, yet no assurance that we read of. 'These things have I written unto you,' says John, 'who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life' (1 John 5:13). In these words you see that they did believe, and had eternal life, in respect of the purpose and promise of God, and in respect of the seeds and beginnings of it in their souls, and in respect of Christ their head, who sits in heaven as a public person, representing all his chosen ones, 'Who has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:6); and yet they did not know that they had eternal life.

It is one thing to have a right to heaven, and another thing to know it; it is one thing to be beloved, and another thing for a man to know that he is beloved. It is one thing for God to write a man's name in the book of life, and another thing for God to tell a man that his name is written in the book of life; and to say to him (Luke 10:20), 'Rejoice, because your name is written in heaven.' So Paul: 'In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise' (Eph. 1:13). So Micah: 'Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: for when I shall fall, I shall rise; when I shall sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned' (Micah 7:8, 9).

This soul had no assurance, for he sits in darkness, and was under the sad countenance of God; and yet had strong faith, as appears in those words, 'When I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.' He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. So also those in Is. 50:10 had faith, though they had no assurance. And let this suffice for the first answer.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That God in the Scripture defines faith otherwise.** God defines faith to be a receiving of Christ—'As many as received him, to them he gave this privilege, to be the sons of God' (John 1:12). 'To as many as believed on his name'—to be a cleaving of the soul unto God, though no joy—but afflictions, attend the soul (Act. 11:23). Yes, the Lord defines faith to be a coming to God in Christ, and often to a resting and staying, rolling of the soul upon Christ. It is safest and sweetest to define as God defines, both vices and graces. This is the only way to settle the soul, and to secure it against the wiles of men and devils, who labor, by false definitions of grace, to keep precious souls in a doubting, staggering, and languishing condition, and so make their lives a burden, a hell, unto them. Matt. 11:23; John 6:37; Heb. 7:25, 26.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider this, **That there may be true faith where there is much doubtings.** Witness those frequent sayings of Christ to his disciples, 'Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?' (Matt. 6:30, 14:31, 16:8; Luke 12:28). People may be truly believing who nevertheless are sometimes doubting. In the same people that the fore-mentioned scriptures speak of, you may see their faith commended and their doubts condemned, which does necessarily suppose a presence of both.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That assurance is an effect of faith; therefore it cannot be faith.** The cause cannot be the effect, nor the root the fruit. As the effect flows from the cause, the fruit from the root, the stream from the fountain, so does assurance flow from faith. This truth I shall make good thus: The assurance of our salvation and pardon of sin does primarily arise from the witness of the Spirit of God that we are the children of God (Eph. 1:13); and the Spirit never witnesses this

until we are believers: 'For we are sons by faith in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 4:6). Therefore assurance is not faith—but follows it, as the effect follows the cause.

Again, no man can be assured and persuaded of his salvation until he be united to Christ, until he be ingrafted into Christ; and a man cannot be ingrafted into Christ until he has faith. He must first be ingrafted into Christ by faith before he can have assurance of his salvation; which does clearly evidence, that assurance is not faith—but an effect and fruit of faith.

Again, faith cannot be lost—but assurance may; therefore assurance is not faith. Though assurance is a precious flower in the garden of a saint, and is more infinitely sweet and delightful to the soul than all outward comforts and contentments; yet it is but a flower which is subject to fade, and to lose its freshness and beauty, as saints by sad experience find. Psalm 51:12, 30:6, 7; Cant. 5:6; Is. 8:17.

Again, a man must first have faith before he can have assurance, therefore assurance is not faith. And that a man must first have faith before he can have assurance, is clear by this, a man must first be saved before he can be assured of his salvation; for he cannot be assured of that which is not. And a man must first have a saving faith before he can be saved by faith, for he cannot be saved by that which he has not; therefore a man must first have faith before he can have assurance, and so it soundly follows that assurance is not faith.

There are many thousand precious souls, of whom this world is not worthy, that have the faith of reliance, and yet lack assurance and the effects of it; as high joy, glorious peace, and vehement longings after the coming of Christ.

**DEVICE 3. By working the soul to make false inferences from the cross actings of Providence.**

Says Satan—Do you not see how Providence crosses your prayers, and crosses your desires, your tears, your hopes, your endeavors? Surely if his

love were towards you, if his soul did delight and take pleasure in you—he would not deal thus with you. (Psalm 77:7, *et seq.*; 31:1; 73:2, 23).

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That many things may be cross to our desires, which are not cross to our spiritual and eternal good.** Abraham, Jacob, David, Job, Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah, and Paul, met with many things that were contrary to their desires and endeavors, that were not contrary to their good; as all know that have wisely compared their desires and endeavors and God's actings together. Medicine and surgery often works contrary to the patients' desires, when it does not work contrary to their good.

I remember a story of a godly man, who had a great desire to go to France, and as he was going to board the ship, he broke his leg; and it pleased Providence so to order it, that the ship that he should have gone in, was sunk, and not a man saved; and so by breaking a bone his life was saved. Though Providence did work cross to his desire, yet it did not work cross to his good.

Some heretics, not being able to repudiate the preaching and writing of Augustine, sought his destruction, waiting to trap him on the way he was to go. But by God's providence Augustine, missing his way, escaped the danger.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That the hand of God may be against a man, when the love and heart of God is much set upon a man.** No man can conclude how the heart of God stands—by his hand in providential dealings. The hand of God was against Ephraim, and yet his love, his heart, was dearly set upon Ephraim: "I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the Lord my God. After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.' Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the Lord."

Jeremiah 31:18-20 ' (Jer. 31:18-20).\*

God's providential hand may be with people, when his heart is set against them. God's providential hand was for a time with Saul, Haman, Asshur, and Jehu—and yet his heart was set against them. 'No man knows love or hatred by all that is before him' (Eccles. 9:1, 2).

God can look sourly, and chide bitterly, and strike heavily—even where and when he loves dearly. The hand of God was very much against Job—and yet his love, his heart, was very much set upon Job, as you may see by comparing chaps. 1 and 2, with 41 and 42. The hand of God was sore against David and Jonah—when his heart was much set upon them. He who shall conclude that the heart of God is against those who his hand is against, will condemn the generation of the just, whom God unjustly would not have condemned.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan, is, to consider, **That all the cross providences which befall the saints are for some noble good that God intends to confer upon them.** Providence wrought cross to David's desire in taking away the child sinfully begotten—but yet not cross to more noble good; for was it not far better for David to have such a legitimate heir as Solomon was, than that a illegitimate child should wear the crown, and sway the scepter?

**Joseph**, you know, was sold into a far country by the envy and malice of his brethren, and afterwards imprisoned because he would not be a prisoner to his mistress's lusts; yet all these providences did wonderfully conduce to his advancement, and the preservation of his father's family, which was then the visible church of Christ. It was so handled by a noble hand of providence, that what they sought to injure, they did promote. Joseph was therefore sold by his brethren that he might not be worshiped, and yet he was therefore worshiped because he was sold. Cf. Genesis 37:7, etc.

**David** was designed to a kingdom—but oh! the straits, troubles, and deaths that he runs through before he feels the weight of his crown! And all this was but in order to the sweetening of his crown, and to the settling of it more firmly and gloriously upon his head.

God did so contrive it that **Jonah's** offence, and those cross actings of his which attended it, should advantage that end which they seemed most directly to oppose. Jonah he flies to Tarshish, then cast into the sea, then saved by a miracle. Then the mariners, as it is very probable, who cast Jonah into the sea, declared to the Ninevites what had happened; therefore he must be a man sent of God, and that his threatenings must be believed and hearkened to, and therefore they must repent and humble themselves, that the wrath threatened might not be executed.

**The motions of divine providence are so dark, so deep, so changeable, that the wisest and noblest believers cannot tell what conclusions to make.**

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That all the strange, dark, deep, and changeable providences that believers meet with, shall further them in their way to heaven—in their journey to happiness.** Divine wisdom and love will so order all things here below, that they shall work for the real, spiritual, and eternal good—of those who love him. All the rugged providences that David met with did contribute to the bringing of him to the throne; and all the rugged providences that Daniel and the 'three children' met with did contribute to their great advancement. So all the rugged providences that believers meet with, they shall all contribute to the lifting up of their souls above all things, below God. As the waters lifted up Noah's ark nearer heaven—and as all the stones that were about Stephen's ears did but knock him the closer to Christ, the corner-stone—so all the strange rugged providences that we meet with, they shall raise us nearer heaven, and knock us nearer to Christ, that precious corner-stone.

**DEVICE 4. By suggesting to them that their graces are not true—but counterfeit.**

Says Satan—All is not gold which glitters, all is not free grace which you count grace, which you call grace. That which you call faith is but imagination; and that which you call zeal is but a natural heat and

passion; and that light you have, it is but common, it is short, to what many have attained to—who are now in hell. **Satan does not labor more mightily to persuade hypocrites that their graces are true when they are counterfeit; than he does to persuade precious souls that their graces are counterfeit, when indeed they are true**, and such as will abide the touchstone of Christ.

Yet it must be granted that many a fair flower may grow out of a stinking root—and many sweet dispositions and fair actions may be where there is only the corrupt root of nature.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That grace is taken two ways.**

[1.] It is taken for *the gracious good-will and favor of God*, whereby he is pleased of his own free love to accept of some in Christ for his own. This, some call the first grace, because it is the fountain of all other graces, and the spring from whence they flow, and it is therefore called grace, because it makes a man gracious with God—but this is only in God.

[2.] Grace is taken for *the gifts of grace*, and they are of two sorts, common or special. Some are common to believers and hypocrites, as a gift of knowledge, a gift of prayer, etc. Some are special graces, and they are proper and peculiar to the saints, as faith, humility, meekness, love, patience, etc. (Gal. 5:22, 23).

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, wisely to consider, **The differences between renewing grace and restraining grace, between sanctifying and temporary grace;** and this I will show you in these ten particulars.

[1.] **True grace makes all glorious within and without.** 'The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold' (Psalm 45:13). True grace makes the understanding glorious, the affections glorious. It casts a general glory upon all the noble parts of the soul: 'The King's daughter is all glorious within.' And as it makes the inside glorious, so it makes the outside glorious: 'Her clothing is of wrought gold.' It makes men look gloriously, and speak gloriously, and

walk and act gloriously, so that vain souls shall be forced to say that these are those who have seen Jesus. God brings not a pair of scales to weigh our graces—but a touchstone to try our graces. Purity, preciousness, and holiness is stamped upon all saving graces. Acts 15:9; 2 Peter 4:1; Jude 20.

As grace is a fire to burn up and consume the dross and filth of the soul, so it is an ornament to beautify and adorn the soul. True grace makes all new, the inside new and the outside new: 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature' (2 Cor. 5:17), but temporary grace does not this. (The Greek signifies 'a new creation': new man, new covenant, new paradise, new Lord, new law, new hearts, and new creatures go together.)

True grace changes the very nature of a man. Moral virtue does only restrain or chain up the outward man, it does not change the whole man. A lion in a cage is a lion still; he is restrained—but not changed, for he retains his lion-like nature still. So temporary graces restrain many men from this and that wickedness—but it does not change and turn their hearts from wickedness. But now true grace, that turns a lion into a lamb, as you may see in Paul (Acts 9), and a notorious strumpet into a blessed and glorious penitent, as you may see in Mary Magdalene (Luke 7).

**[2.] *The objects of true grace are supernatural.*** True grace is conversant about the choicest and the highest objects, about the most soul-ennobling and soul-greatening objects—as God, Christ, precious promises which are worth more than a world, and a kingdom which cannot be shaken, a crown of glory which does not wither, and heavenly treasures which do not rust. The objects of temporary grace are low and poor, and always within the compass of reason's reach. 2 Cor. 14:18; Prov. 14. A saint has his feet where other men's heads are (Matt 6).

**[3.] True grace enables a Christian, *when he is himself, to do spiritual actions with real pleasure and delight.*** To souls truly gracious, Christ's yoke 'is easy, and his burden is light.' 'His commandments are not grievous—but joyous.' 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man,' says Paul. The blessed man is described by this, that he 'delights in the law of the Lord' (Psalm 1:2). To a gracious soul, 'All the ways of the Lord are pleasantness, and his paths are peace (Prov.

3:17)

But to souls that have but temporary grace—but moral virtues, pious services are a toil, not a pleasure; a burden, and not a delight. 'We have fasted before you! Why aren't you impressed? We have done much penance, and you don't even notice it!' (Is. 58:3). 'You have said—What's the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the Lord Almighty that we are sorry for our sins?' (Mal. 3:14). 'You can't wait for the Sabbath day to be over and the religious festivals to end so you can get back to cheating the helpless. You measure out your grain in false measures and weigh it out on dishonest scales.' (Amos 8:5).

**[4.] True grace makes a man most careful, and most fearful of his own heart.**(Psalm 51:10; 119:36, 80; 86:11). It makes him most studious about his own heart—informing that, examining that, and watching over that. But temporary grace, mere moral virtues, make men more mindful and careful of others, to instruct them and counsel them, and stir up them, and watch over them. This does with open mouth, demonstrate that their graces are not saving—but that they are temporary; and no more than Judas, Demas, and the pharisees had.

**[5.] True grace will work a man's heart to love and cleave to the strictest and holiest ways and things of God, for their purity and sanctity, in the face of all dangers and hardships.** 'Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it (Psalm 119:140). Others love it, and like it, and follow it—for the credit, the honor, the advantage that they get by it; but I love it for the spiritual beauty and purity of it. So the psalmist, 'All this has happened despite our loyalty to you. We have not violated your covenant. Our hearts have not deserted you. We have not strayed from your path. Yet you have crushed us in the desert. You have covered us with darkness and death.' (Psalm 44:17-19). But temporary grace will not bear up the soul against all oppositions and discouragements in the ways of God, as is clear by their apostasy in John 6:60, 66, and by the stony ground hearers falling away (Matt. 13:20, 21).

**Grace is a panoply against all trouble, and a paradise of all pleasures.**

**[6.] True grace will *enable a man to step over the world's***

***crown, to take up Christ's cross; to prefer the cross of Christ above the glory of this world.*** It enabled Abraham, and Moses, and Daniel, with those other worthies in Heb. 11, to do so.

Godfrey Bouillon, crusader king of Jerusalem, refused to be crowned with a crown of gold, saying, 'That it not fitting for a Christian to wear a crown of gold—where Christ had worn a crown of thorns.' Oh! but temporary grace cannot work the soul to prefer Christ's cross above the world's crown; but when these two meet, a temporary Christian steps over Christ's cross to take up, and keep up, the world's crown. 'Demas has forsaken us to embrace this present world' (2 Tim. 4:10). So the young man in the Gospel had many good things in him; he bid fair for heaven, and came near to heaven; but when Christ set his cross before him, he steps over that to enjoy the world's crown (Matt. 19:19-22). When Christ bid him, 'go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor—he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.' If heaven be to be had upon no other terms, Christ may keep his heaven to himself, he will have none!

There are few are of Jerome's mind, who had rather have Paul's coat with his heavenly graces, than the purple of kings with their kingdoms.

**[7.] Sanctifying grace, renewing grace, *puts the soul upon spiritual duties, from spiritual and intrinsic motives,*** as from the sense of divine love—which constrains the soul to wait on God, and to act for God; and the sense of the excellency and sweetness of communion with God, and the choice and precious discoveries that the soul has formerly had of the beauty and glory of God, while it has been in the service of God. The good looks, the good words, the blessed love-letters, the glorious kisses, and the sweet embraces that gracious souls have had from Christ in his service—stimulate and move them to wait upon him in holy duties.

As what I have if offered to you, pleases not you, O Lord, without myself; so the good things we have from you, though they may refresh us, yet they satisfy us not without yourself.

Ah! but restraining grace, temporary grace, puts men upon religious duties only from external motives, as the care of the creature, the eye of the creature, the rewards of the creature, and the keeping up of a name among the creatures, and a thousand such like considerations, as you may see in Saul, Jehu, Judas, Demas, and the scribes and pharisees.

The abbot in Melancthon lived strictly, and walked demurely, and looked humbly, so long as he was but a monk—but when, by his seeming extraordinary sanctity, he got to be abbot, he grew intolerably proud and insolent; and being asked the reason of it, confessed, 'That his former lowly look was but to see if he could find the keys of the abbey.' Such poor, low, vain motives work temporary souls to all the service they do perform.

**[8.] Saving grace, renewing grace, will cause a man to follow the Lord fully in the desertion of all sin, and in the observation of all God's precepts.** Joshua and Caleb followed the Lord fully. (Num. 14:24). Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous before God, and walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Luke 1:5, 6). The saints in the Revelation are described by this, that 'they follow the Lamb wherever he goes' (Rev. 14:4).

But restraining grace, temporary grace, cannot enable a man to follow the Lord fully. All that temporary grace can enable a man to do, is to follow the Lord partially, unevenly, and haltingly, as you may see in Jehu, Herod, Judas, and the scribes and pharisees, who paid tithe of 'mint, and anise, and cummin—but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith' (Matt. 23:23).

True grace works the heart to the hatred of all sin, and to the love of all truth. It works a man to the hatred of those sins that for his blood he cannot conquer, and to loathe those sins that he would give all the world to overcome (Psalm 119:104, 128). So that a soul truly gracious can say, **Though there is no one sin mortified and subdued in me, as it should be, and as I would desire; yet every sin is hated and loathed by me.** So a soul truly gracious can say, Though I do not obey any one command as I should, and as I would desire, yet every word is sweet, every command of God is precious (Psalm 119:6, 119, 127, 167). I

dearly prize and greatly love those commands that I cannot obey; though there be many commands that I cannot in a strict sense fulfill, yet there is no command I would not fulfill, that I do not exceedingly love. 'I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold:' 'My soul has kept your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly' (Psalm 119, 127, 167).

'I had rather go to hell pure from sin, then to heaven polluted with that filth' (Anselm). 'Give what you command, and command what you will' (Augustine).

**[9.] True grace leads the soul to rest in Christ, as in his 'summum bonum,' the chief good.** It works the soul to center in Christ, as in his highest and ultimate end. 'Where should we go? you have the words of eternal life' (John 6:68). 'My lover is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others! I found the one I love. I held on to him and would not let him go!' (Cant. 5:10; 3:4). That wisdom which a believer has from Christ—it leads him to center in the wisdom of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). And that love the soul has from Christ—it leads the soul to center in the love of Christ. And that righteousness the soul has from Christ, it leads the soul to rest and center in the righteousness of Christ (Phil. 3:9).

Grace is that star that leads to Christ; it is that cloud and pillar of fire that leads the soul to the heavenly Canaan, where Christ sits chief. True grace is a beam of Christ, and where it is, it will naturally lead the soul to rest in Christ. The stream does not more naturally lead to the fountain, nor the effect to the cause—than true grace leads the soul to Christ.

But restraining grace, temporary grace, works the soul to center and rest in things below Christ. Sometimes it works the soul to center in the praises of the creature; sometimes to rest in the rewards of the creature: 'Verily they have their reward,' said Christ (Matt. 6:1, 2): and so in an hundred other things (Zech. 7:5, 6).

**[10.] True grace will enable a soul to sit down satisfied and contented with the naked enjoyments of Christ.** The enjoyment of Christ without honor will satisfy the soul; the enjoyment of Christ without riches, the enjoyment of Christ without pleasures, and without

the smiles of creatures, will content and satisfy the soul. 'It is enough; Joseph is alive' (Gen. 45:28). So says a gracious soul, though honor is not, and riches are not, and health is not, and friends are not—it is enough that Christ is, that he reigns, conquers, and triumphs. Christ is the pot of manna, the cruse of oil, a bottomless ocean of all comfort, contentment, and satisfaction. He who has him lacks nothing: he who lacks him enjoys nothing. 'Having nothing,' says Paul, 'and yet possessing all things' (2 Cor. 6:10). A contented man cannot be a poor man.

Oh! but a man who has but temporary grace—who has but restraining grace, cannot sit down satisfied and contented, under the lack of outward comforts. Christ is good with honors, says such a soul; and Christ is good with riches, and Christ is good with pleasures, and he is good with such and such outward contents. I must have Christ and the world, or else with the young man in the Gospel, in spite of my soul, I shall forsake Christ to follow the world. Ah! how many shining professors are there in the world, who cannot sit down satisfied and contented, under the lack of this or that outward comfort and convenience—but are like bedlams, fretting and vexing, raging and angry—as if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, nor no Christ—to make up all such outward comforts.

But a soul truly gracious can say: In having nothing I have all things, because I have Christ; having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward. Such a soul can say: Nothing is sweet to me without the enjoyment of Christ in it; honors, nor riches, nor the smiles of creatures, are not sweet to me no farther than I see Christ, and taste Christ in them. The confluence of all outward good, cannot make a heaven of glory in my soul, if Christ, who is the top of my glory, be absent.

As Absalom said, 'What is all this to me so long as I cannot see the king's face?' (2 Sam. 14:32). So says the saved soul: Why do you tell me of this and that outward comfort, when I cannot see the face of him whom my soul loves? Why, honor is not my Christ; riches are not my Christ; the favor of the creature is not my Christ! Let me have Jesus—and let the men of this world take the world, and divide it among themselves! I prize my Christ above all, I would enjoy my Christ above all other things in the world. His presence will make up the absence of all other comforts. His

absence will darken and embitter all my comforts—so that my comforts will neither taste like comforts, nor look like comforts, nor warm like comforts—when he who should comfort my soul stands afar off (Lam. 1:16). Christ is all and in all to souls truly gracious (Col. 3:11). We have all things in Christ. Christ is all things to a Christian. If we are sick, Jesus is a physician. If we thirst, Jesus is a fountain. If our sins trouble us, Jesus is our righteousness. If we stand in need of help, Jesus is mighty to save. If we fear death, Jesus is life. If we are in darkness, Jesus is light. If we are weak, Jesus is strength. If we are in poverty, Jesus is plenty. If we desire heaven, Jesus is the way. The soul cannot say, 'this I would have, and that I would have.' But having Jesus, he has all he needs—eminently, perfectly, eternally.

Luther said, he had rather be in hell with Christ than in heaven without him.

'None but Christ! none but Christ!' said Lambert the martyr, lifting up his hands and his flaming fingers!

Augustine upon Psalm 12 brings in rebuking a discontented Christian thus: What is your faith? have I promised you these things? What! were you made a Christian that you should flourish here in this world?

Contentment is the deputy of outward felicity, and supplies the place where it is absent. As the Jews throw the book of Esther to the ground before they read it, because the name of God is not in it, as the Rabbis have observed; so do saints in some sense those mercies wherein they do not read Christ's name, and see Christ's heart.

**DEVICE 5. By suggesting to them, That that conflict which is in them, is not a conflict which is only in saints—but such a conflict that is to be found in hypocrites and profane souls;** when the truth is, there is as much difference between the conflict which is in them, and that which is in wicked men, as there is between light and darkness, between heaven and hell. The devil is a liar, and the father of lies. The devil's breasts (says Luther) are very fruitful with lies. And the truth of this I shall evidence to you in the following particulars:

**[I.] *The whole frame of a believer's soul is against sin.***the understanding, the will, and the affections—all the powers and faculties of the soul—are in arms against sin. A **covetous** man may condemn covetousness, and yet the frame and bent of his heart may be to it. A **proud** person may condemn pride, and yet the frame of his spirit may be to it. The **drunkard** may condemn drunkenness, and yet the frame of his spirit may be to it. A man may condemn **stealing** and lying, and yet the frame of his heart may be to it. 'You who preach a man should not steal—do you steal? You who say a man should not commit adultery—do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols—do you commit sacrilege? You who make your boast of the law—through breaking the law you dishonor God.' (Rom. 2:21-23).

But a saint's will is against sin. 'The evil that I would not do, that I do.' And his affections are against it, 'What I hate, I do' (Rom. 7:19,20).

It was a good saying of Augustine, 'Lord, deliver me from an evil man, myself!' He complains that men do not tame their beasts in their own bosoms.

**[2.] A Christian conflicts against sin universally**, the least as well as the greatest; the most profitable and the most pleasing sin, as well as against those which are less pleasing and profitable. "I hate every false way." Psalm 119:104. The Hebrew signifies to hate with a deadly and irreconcilable hatred. He will combat with all sin, though he cannot conquer one as he should, and as he desires. He knows that all sin strikes at God's holiness, as well as his own happiness; at God's glory, as well as at his soul's comfort and peace.

The Christian knows that all sin is hateful to God, and that all sinners are traitors to the crown and dignity of the Lord Jesus. He looks upon one sin, and sees that which threw down Noah, the most righteous man in the world; and he looks upon another sin, and sees that which cast down Abraham, the greatest believer in the world; and he looks upon another sin, and sees that which threw down David, the best king in the world. He sees that one sin threw down Samson, the strongest man in the world; another cast down Solomon, the wisest man in the world; and another Moses, the meekest man in the world; and another sin cast down Job, the

most patient man in the world. This raises a holy indignation against all sin, so that nothing can satisfy and content his soul, but a destruction of all those lusts and vermin which vex and rack his righteous soul.

It will not suffice a gracious soul to see justice done upon one sin--but he cries out for justice upon all. He would not have some crucified and others spared; but cries out, "Lord, crucify them all, crucify them all!"

Oh! but now the conflict that is in wicked men is partial; they frown upon one sin and smile upon another; they strike at some sins yet stroke others; they thrust some out of doors but keep others close in their bosoms; as you may see in Jehu, Herod, Judas, Simon Magus, and Demas. Wicked men strike at gross sins, such as are not only against the law of God—but against the laws of nature and society—but make nothing of less sins; as vain thoughts, idle words, sinful motions, and petty oaths. They fight against those sins that fight against their honor, profits, and pleasures—but make truce with those which are as dear as right hands and as right eyes to them.

**[3.] *The conflict that is in a saint, against sin, is maintained by several arguments:*** by arguments drawn from the love of God, the honor of God, the sweetness and communion with God, and from the spiritual and heavenly blessings and privileges which are conferred upon them by God, and from arguments drawn from the blood of Christ, the glory of Christ, the eye of Christ, the kisses of Christ, and the intercession of Christ, and from arguments drawn from the indwelling of the Spirit, the seal of the Spirit, the witness of the Spirit, the comforts of the Spirit. Though to be kept from sin brings comfort to us; yet we oppose sin from spiritual and heavenly arguments, which brings most glory to God.

Oh! but the conflict that is in wicked men is from low, carnal, and legal arguments, drawn from the eye, ear or hand of the creature, or drawn from shame, hell, and curses of the law (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

**[4.] *The conflict that is in saints is a constant conflict.*** Though sin and grace were not born in the heart of a saint together, and though they shall not die together; yet, while a believer lives, they must conflict together. Paul had been fourteen years converted, when he cried out, 'I

have a law in my members rebelling against the law of my mind, and leading me captive to the law of sin' (Rom. 7:2, 3).

A Christian lives fighting and dies fighting, he stands fighting and falls fighting, with his spiritual weapons in his hands. It was an excellent saying of Eusebius, 'Our fathers overcame the torrents of the flames, let us overcome the fiery darts of vices.' Consider that **the pleasure and sweetness which follows victory over sin, is a thousand times beyond that seeming sweetness that is in sin!**

But the conflict that is in wicked men is inconstant: now they fall out with sin, and later they fall in with sin. Now sin is bitter, later it is sweet. Now the sinner turns from his sin, and later he turns to the wallowing in sin, as the swine does to the wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:19, 20). One hour you shall have him praying against sin, as if he feared it more than hell; and the next hour you shall have him pursuing after sin, as if there were no God to punish him, no justice to damn him, no hell to torment him.

**[5.] The conflict that is in the saints, is in the same faculties.** There is the judgment against the judgment, the mind against the mind, the will against the will, the affections against the affections. That is, the regenerate part against the unregenerate part, in all the parts of the soul.

But now, in wicked men, the conflict is not in the same faculties—but between the conscience and the will. The will of a sinner is bent strongly to such and such sins—but conscience puts in and tells the sinner, God has made me his deputy, he has given me a power to hang, to examine, scourge, judge, and condemn, and if you do such and such wickedness, I shall be your jailor and tormenter. I do not bear the rod nor the sword in vain, says conscience; if you sin, I shall do my office, and then your life will be a hell: and this raises a tumult in the soul.

**[6.] The conflict that is in the saints, is a more blessed, successful, and prevailing conflict.** A saint, by his conflict with sin, gains ground upon his sin: 'Those who are Christ's,' says the apostle, 'have crucified the world with its affections and lusts' (Gal. 5:24). Christ helps them to lead captivity captive, and to set their feet upon the necks

of those lusts which have formerly trampled upon their souls and their comforts. As the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker, and the house of David stronger and stronger, so the Lord, by the discoveries of his love, and by the influences of his Spirit—causes grace, the nobler part of a saint, to grow stronger and stronger, and corruption, like the house of Saul, to grow weaker and weaker.

But sin in a wicked heart gets ground, and grows stronger and stronger, notwithstanding all his conflicts. His heart is more encouraged, emboldened, and hardened in a way of sin, as you may see in the Israelites, Pharaoh, Jehu, and Judas, who doubtless found many strange conflicts, tumults, and mutinies in their souls, when God spoke such bitter things against them, and did such justice upon them (2 Tim. 3:13).

These two, grace and sin, are like two buckets of a well, when one is up, the other is down. When one flourishes the other withers. The more grace thrives in the soul, the more sin dies in the soul.

But remember this by way of caution: Though Christ has given sin its death-wound, yet it will die but a lingering death. As a man that is mortally wounded dies by little by little, so does sin in the heart of a saint. The death of Christ on the cross was a lingering death, so the death of sin in the soul is a lingering death; now it dies a little, and anon it dies a little, as the psalmist speaks, 'Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by your power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield' (Psalm 59:11). He would not have them utterly destroyed—but some relics preserved as a memorial. So God deals in respect of sin; it is wounded and brought down—but not wholly slain. Something is still left to keep us humble, wakeful, and watchful, and that our armor may be still kept on, and our weapons always in our hands.

Mortification of sin is a continued act, it is a daily dying to sin, 'I die daily.' A crucified man will strive and struggle, yet, in the eyes of the law, and in the account of all that see him, he is dead. It is just so with sin.

The best men's souls in this life hang between the flesh and the spirit, as it were, between two loadstones; like the tribe of Manasseh, half on this side of Jordan, in the land of the Amorites, and half on that side, in the

Holy Land. Yet, in the final outcome, they shall overcome the flesh, and trample upon the necks of their spiritual enemies. The Romans lost many a battle, and yet in the final outcome, were conquerors in all their wars; it is just so with the saints.

There is no such pleasure, as to have overcome a sinful pleasure. Neither is there any greater conquest, as to overcome a man's corruption.

**DEVICE 6.** By suggesting to the soul, that surely his estate is not good, because he cannot joy and rejoice in Christ as once he could; because he has lost that comfort and joy that once was in his spirit.

*Says Satan,* You know the time was when your heart was much carried out to joying and rejoicing in Christ; you do not forget the time when your heart used to be full of joy and comfort; but now, how are you fallen in your joys and comforts! Therefore, your estate is not good; you do but deceive yourself to think that ever it was good, for surely if it was, your joy and comfort would have continued. And hereupon the soul is apt to take part with Satan, and say—It is even so; I see all is nothing, and I have but deceived my own soul.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, *That the loss of comfort is a separable adjunct from grace.* The soul may be full of holy affections, when it is empty of divine consolations. There may be, and often is, true grace, yes, much grace, where there is not a drop of comfort, nor dram of joy. Comfort is not of the being—but of the well-being, of a Christian. God has not so linked these two choice lovers together—but that they may be put asunder. That wisdom which is from above will never work a man to reason thus: I have no comfort, therefore I have no grace; I have lost that joy that once I had, therefore my condition is not good, and was never good. But it will enable a man to reason thus: Though my comfort is gone, yet the God of my comfort abides; though my joy is lost, yet the seeds of grace remain. The best men's joys are as fragile as glass, bright and brittle, and evermore in danger of breaking. Spiritual joy is a sun that is often clouded. It is like a precious flower—subject to fade and wither. (Psalm 63:1, 2, 8; Is. 50:10;

Micah 7:8, 9; Psalm 42:5.)

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, ***That the precious things that you still enjoy are far better than the joys and comforts that you have lost.*** Your union with Christ, your communion with Christ, your sonship, your saintship, your heirship—which you still enjoy by Christ—are far better than the comforts you have lost by sin. What though your comforts are gone, yet your union and communion with Christ remains (Jer. 31:18, 19, 20). Though your comforts are gone, yet you are a son, though a comfortless son; an heir, though a comfortless heir; a saint, though a comfortless saint. Though the 'bag of silver'—your comforts, are lost; yet the 'box of jewels'—your union with Christ, your communion with Christ, your sonship, your saintship, your heirship, which you still enjoy, is far better than the bag of silver you have lost. Yes, the least of those precious jewels is more worth than all the comforts in the world. Let this be a cordial to comfort you, a star to lead you, and a staff to support you—that your box of jewels are safe, though your bag of silver is lost.

When one objected to Faninus' cheerfulness, compared to Christ's agony and sadness—he answered, 'Christ was sad, that I might be merry; he had my sins, and I have his righteousness.'

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, *That your condition is no different than what has been the condition of those precious souls whose names were written upon the heart of Christ, and who are now at rest in the bosom of Christ.* One day you shall have them praising and rejoicing, the next day a-mourning and a-weeping. One day you shall have them a-singing, 'The Lord is our portion!' The next day a-sighing and expostulating with themselves, 'Why are you cast down, O our souls?' 'Why is our harp turned to mourning? and our organ to the voice of those who weep?' (Psalm 51:12, 30:6, 7; Job 23:6, 8, 9, 30, 31; Lam. 1:16; Matt. 27:46; Psalm 42:5; Lam. 5:15)

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, *That the causes of joy and comfort are not always the same.* Perhaps your former joy and comfort sprang from the witness of the Spirit, he bearing witness to your soul—that your nature was changed, your sins pardoned, your soul reconciled. Now, the Spirit may, upon some special occasion, bear witness to the soul, that the heart of God is dearly set upon him, that he loves him with an everlasting love, and yet the soul may never enjoy such a testimony all the days of his life again. Though the Spirit is a witnessing Spirit, it is not his office every day to witness to believers their interest in God, Christ, heaven. The Spirit does not every day make a feast in the soul; he does not make every day to be a day of weaving the wedding robes.

Or, perhaps your former joy and comfort sprang from the newness and suddenness of the change of your condition. For a man in one hour to have his night turned into day, his darkness turned into light, his bitter into sweet, God's frowns into smiles, his hatred into love, his hell into a heaven—must greatly joy and comfort him. It cannot but make his heart to leap and dance in him, who, in one hour, shall see Satan accusing him, his own heart condemning him, the eternal God frowning upon him, the gates of heaven barred against him, all the creation standing armed, at the least beck of God, to execute vengeance on him, and the mouth of the infernal pit open to receive him. Now, in this hour, for Christ to come to the amazed soul, and to say to it, I have trod the wine-press of my Father's wrath for you; I have laid down my life a ransom for you; by my

blood I have satisfied my Father's justice, and pacified his anger, and procured his love for you; by my blood I have purchased the pardon of your sins, your freedom from hell, and your right to heaven! Oh! how wonderfully will this cause the soul to leap for joy!

A pardon given unexpectedly into the hand of a malefactor, when he is on the last step of the ladder, ready to be pushed off, will cause much joy and rejoicing. The newness and suddenness of the change of his condition will cause his heart to leap and rejoice; yet, in process of time, much of his joy will be abated, though his life be as dear to him still as ever it was.

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, ***That God will restore and make up the comforts of his people.*** Though your candle be put out, yet God will light it again, and make it burn more bright than ever. Though your sun for the present be clouded, yet he who rides upon the clouds shall scatter those clouds, and cause the sun to shine and warm your heart as in former days, as the psalmist speaks: 'You who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side' (Psalm 71:20, 21).

God takes away a little comfort, that he may make room in the soul for a greater degree of comfort. This the prophet Isaiah sweetly shows: 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners' (Isa. 57:18). Bear up sweetly, O precious soul! your storm shall end in a calm, and your dark night in a sunshine day! Your mourning shall be turned into rejoicing, and the waters of consolation shall be sweeter and higher in your soul than ever! The mercy is surely yours—but the time of giving it is the Lord's. Wait but a little, and you shall find the Lord comforting you on every side. See Psalm 126:6, and 42:7, 8.

**DEVICE 7. By suggesting to the soul his often relapses into the same sin which formerly he has pursued with particular sorrow, grief, shame, and tears, and prayed, complained, and resolved against.**

Says Satan—Your heart is not right with God; surely your estate is not good. You only flatter yourself to think that ever God will eternally own and embrace such a one as you are—who complains against sin, and yet relapses into the same sin; who with tears and groans confesses your sin, and yet always falls into the same sin.

I confess this is a very sad condition for a soul after he has obtained mercy and pity from the Lord, after God has spoken peace and pardon to him, and wiped the tears from his eyes, and set him upon his legs, to return to folly. Ah! how do relapses lay men open to the greatest afflictions and worst temptations! How do they make the wound to bleed afresh! How do they darken and cloud former assurances and evidences for heaven! How do they put a sword into the hand of conscience to cut and slash the soul! They raise such fears, terrors, horrors, and doubts in the soul—that the soul cannot be so frequent in duty as formerly; nor so fervent in duty as formerly; nor so confident in duty as formerly; nor so bold, familiar, and delightful with God in duty as formerly; nor so constant in duty as formerly. They give Satan an advantage; they make the work of repentance more difficult; they make a man's life a burden, and they render death to be very terrible unto the soul.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, *That there are many scriptures which clearly evidence a possibility of the saints falling into the same sins whereof they have formerly repented.* 'I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely: for my anger is turned away from them,' says the Lord by the prophet Hosea (chap. 14:4). So the prophet Jeremiah speaks: 'Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, O backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep my anger forever. Turn, O backsliding Israel, says the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion' (Chap. 3:12, 14). So the psalmist: 'They turned back, and dealt unfaithfully with their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.' And no wonder, for **though their repentance is ever so sincere and sound, yet their graces are but weak, and their mortification of sin is imperfect in this life.**

Though by grace they are freed from the dominion of sin, and from the damnatory power of every sin, and from the love of all sin, yet grace does not free them from the indwelling of any one sin; and therefore it is possible for a soul to fall again and again into the same sin. If the fire is not wholly put out, who would think it impossible that it should catch and burn again and again?

The sin of backsliding is a soul sin, 'I will heal their backsliding.' You read of no arms for the back though, you do for the bosom. When a soldier bragged too much of a great scar in his forehead, Augustus Caesar asked him if he did not get it as he looked back when he fled.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, *That God has nowhere engaged himself by any particular promise, that souls converted and united to Christ shall not fall again and again into the same sin after conversion.* I cannot find in the whole book of God where he has promised any such strength or power against this or that particular sin, as that the soul should be forever, in this life, put out of a possibility of falling again and again into the same sins. And where God has not a mouth to speak, I must not have a heart to believe. **God will graciously pardon those sins to his people, which he will not in this life totally subdue in his people.** I have never seen a promise in Scripture, which says that when our sorrow and grief has been so great, or so much, for this or that sin—that then God will preserve us from ever falling into the same sin. The sight of such a promise would be as life from the dead to many a precious soul, who desires nothing more than to keep close to Christ, and fears nothing more than backsliding from Christ.

In some cases the saints have found God better than his word. He promised the children of Israel only the land of Canaan; but besides that he gave them two other kingdoms which he never promised. And to Zacharias he promised to give him his speech at the birth of the child—but besides that he gave him the gift of prophecy.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, *That the most renowned and now crowned saints*

*have, in the days of their being on earth, relapsed into one and the same sin.* **Lot** was twice overcome with wine; **John** twice worshiped the angel; **Abraham** did often deceive, and lay his wife open to adultery to save his own life, which some heathens would not have done. 'And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is your kindness which you shall show unto me; at every place where we shall come, say of me, He is my brother' (Gen. 20:13). **David** in his wrath was resolved, that he would be the death of Nabal, and all his innocent family; and after this he fell into the foul murder of Uriah.

Though Christ told his **disciples** that his 'kingdom was not of this world,' yet again, and again, and again, they desired to be high, great, and glorious in this world. Their pride and ambitious desires put them—who were but as so many beggars—upon striving for pre-eminence and greatness in the world, when their Lord and Master told them several times of his sufferings in the world, and of his going out of the world. **Jehoshaphat**, though a godly man, yet joins with Ahab (2 Chron. 18:1-3, 30, 31); and though he was saved by a miracle, yet soon after, he falls into the same sin, and 'joins himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly' (2 Chron. 20:35-37). **Samson** is by the Spirit of the Lord numbered among the faithful worthies, yet he fell often into gross immorality. **Peter**, you know, relapsed often, and so did **Jonah**. **A sheep may often slip into a slough—as well as a swine.**

And this happens, that they may see their own inability to stand, or to resist or overcome any temptation or corruption (Jude 14-16), and that they may be taken off from all false confidences, and rest wholly upon God, and only upon God, and always upon God; and for the praise and honor of the power, wisdom, skill, mercy, and goodness of the physician of our souls—who can heal, help, and cure when the disease is most dangerous, when the soul is relapsed, and grows worse and worse, and when others say, 'There is no help for him in his God,' and when his own heart and hopes are dying.

Perhaps the prodigal son, sets out unto us a Christian relapse, for he was a son before, and with his father, and then went away from him, and spent all; and yet he was not quite undone—but returned again. The

prodigal saw the compassion of his father the greater, in receiving him after he had run away from him.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, *That there are relapses into ENORMITIES, and there are relapses into INFIRMITIES.* Now it is not usual with God to leave his people frequently to relapse into enormities; for by his Spirit and grace, by his smiles and frowns, by his word and rod—he usually preserves his people from a frequent relapsing into enormities. Yet he does leave his choicest ones frequently to relapse into infirmities (and of his grace he pardons them)—as idle words, passion, and vain thoughts. Though gracious souls strive against these, and complain of these, and weep over these, yet the Lord, to keep them humble, leaves them frequently to relapse into these. These frequent relapses into infirmities shall never be their bane, because they are their burden.

Relapses into enormities are destructive sins. Therefore the Lord is graciously pleased to put under his everlasting arms, and keep his chosen ones from frequent falling into them.

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, *That there are involuntary relapses, and there are voluntary relapses.* **Involuntary** relapses are, when the resolution and full bent of the heart is against sin, when the soul strives with all its might against sin, by sighs and groans, by prayers and tears, and yet out of weakness is forced to fall back into sin, because there is not spiritual strength enough to overcome. Now, though involuntary relapses must humble us, yet they must never discourage us; for God will freely and readily pardon those, in course.

**Voluntary** relapses are, When the soul longs and loves to 'return to the flesh-pots of Egypt' (Exod. 16:3). When it is a pleasure and a pastime to a man to return to his old courses, such voluntary relapses speak out the man blinded, hardened, and ripened for ruin.

There is a great difference between a sheep which by weakness falls into the mire--and a swine which delights to wallow in the mire; between a woman who is raped, though she fights and cries out--and an alluring

adulteress.

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, *That there is no such power, or infinite virtue, in the greatest horror or sorrow the soul can be under for sin, nor in the sweetest or choicest discoveries of God's grace and love to the soul—as forever to fence and secure the soul from relapsing into the same sin.* Grace may be prevailed against by the secret, subtle, and strong workings of sin in our hearts. And those discoveries which God makes of his love, beauty and glory to the soul, do not always abide in their freshness and power upon the heart; but by degrees they fade and wear off, and then the soul may return again to folly. We see this in Peter, who, after he had a glorious testimony from Christ's own mouth of his blessedness and happiness, labors to prevent Christ from going up to Jerusalem to suffer, out of slavish fears that he and his fellows could not be secure, if his Master should be brought to suffer (Matt. 16:15-19, 22-24). And again, after this, Christ had him up into the mount, and there showed him his beauty and his glory, to strengthen him against the hour of temptation which was coming upon him; and yet, soon after he had the honor and happiness of seeing the glory of the Lord (which most of his disciples had not), he basely and most shamefully denies the Lord of glory, thinking by that means to provide for his own safety. And yet again, after Christ had broke his heart with a look of love for his most unlovely dealings, and bade those who were first acquainted with his resurrection to 'go and tell Peter that he was risen' (Mark 16:7). I say, after all this, slavish fears prevail upon him, and he basely dissembles, and plays the Jew with the Jews, and the Gentile with the Gentiles, to the seducing of Barnabas (Gal. 2:11-13).

Yet, by way of caution, know, it is very rare that God does leave his beloved ones frequently to relapse into one and the same gross sin; for the law of nature is in arms against gross sins, as well as the law of grace, so that a gracious soul cannot, dares not, will not, frequently return to gross folly. And God has made even his dearest ones dearly smart for their relapses, as may be seen by his dealings with Samson, Jehoshaphat, and Peter. Ah, Lord! what a hard heart has that man, who can see you stripping and whipping your dearest ones for their relapses, and yet

making nothing of returning to folly.

**DEVICE 8. By persuading them that their estate is not good, their hearts are not upright, their graces are not sound, because they are so followed, vexed, and tormented with temptations.**

It is Satan's method, first to weary and vex your soul with temptations, and then to persuade the soul, that surely it is not loved by God, because it is so much tempted. And by this stratagem he keeps many precious souls in a sad, doubting, and mourning temper many years, as many of the precious sons of Zion have found by woeful experience. He may so tempt as to make a saint weary of his life (Job. 10:1): 'My soul is weary of my life.'

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, *That those who have been best and most beloved, have been most tempted by Satan.* Though Satan can never rob a Christian of his crown, yet such is his malice, that he will therefore tempt, that he may spoil them of their comforts. Such is his enmity to the Father, that the nearer and dearer any child is to him, the more will Satan trouble him, and vex him with temptations. Christ himself was most near and most dear, most innocent and most excellent, and yet none so much tempted as Christ! David was dearly loved by God, and yet by Satan tempted him greatly. Job was highly praised by God himself, and yet much tempted and tried. Peter was much prized by Christ; witness that choice testimony which Christ gave of his faith and happiness, and his showing him his glory in the mount, and that eye of pity that he cast upon him after his fearful fall—and yet tempted by Satan. 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail you not' (Luke 22:31, 32).

Pirates do not use to set upon poor empty vessels; and beggars need not fear the thief. Those that have most of God, and are most rich in grace—shall be most assaulted by Satan, who is the greatest and craftiest pirate in the world.

Paul had the honor of being exalted as high as heaven, and of seeing that glory which could not be expressed; and yet he was no sooner stepped out of heaven—but he is buffeted by Satan, 'lest he should be exalted above measure' (2 Cor. 12:2, 7). If these, who were so really, so gloriously, so eminently beloved of God, if these, who have lived in heaven, and set their feet upon the stars, have been tempted, let no saints judge themselves not to be loved by God, because they are tempted. It is as natural for saints to be tempted, who are dearly loved by God, as it is for the sun to shine, or a bird to sing. The eagle complains not of her wings, nor the peacock of his train of feathers, nor the nightingale of her voice—because these are natural to them. No more should saints complain of their temptations, because they are natural to them. 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood—but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' (Eph. 6:12).

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, ***That all the temptations that befall the saints shall be sanctified to them by a hand of love.*** Ah! the choice experiences that the saints get of the power of God supporting them, of the wisdom of God directing them (so to handle their spiritual weapons, their graces, as not only to resist—but to overcome), of the mercy and goodness of the Lord pardoning and succouring of them. And therefore, says Paul, 'I received the messenger of Satan for to buffet me, lest I should be exalted, lest I should be exalted above measure' (2 Cor. 12:7). If he had not been buffeted, who knows how his heart would have swelled; he might have been carried higher in conceit, than before he was in his ecstasy.

Temptation is God's school, wherein he gives his people the clearest and sweetest discoveries of his love; a school wherein God teaches his people to be more frequent and fervent in duty. When Paul was buffeted, then he prayed thrice, *that is*, frequently and fervently; a school wherein God teaches his people to be more tender, meek, and compassionate to other poor, tempted souls than ever. Temptation is a school wherein God teaches his people to see a greater evil in sin than ever, and a greater emptiness in the creature than ever, and a greater need of Christ and free grace than ever. This is a school wherein God will teach his people that all

temptations are but his goldsmiths, by which he will try and refine, and make his people more bright and glorious. The outcome of all temptations shall be to the good of the saints, as you may see by the temptations which Adam and Eve, and Christ and David, and Job and Peter and Paul met with. Those hands of power and love, which bring light out of darkness, good out of evil, sweet out of bitter, life out of death, heaven out of hell—will bring much sweet and good to his people, out of all the temptations which come upon them.

Luther said, there were three things that made a preacher: meditation, prayer and temptation.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, wisely to consider, *That no temptations do hurt or harm the saints, so long as they are resisted by them, and prove the greatest afflictions that can befall them.* It is not Satan's tempting—but your assenting; not his enticing—but your yielding, which makes temptations hurtful to your soul. If the soul when it is tempted, resists temptation, and says with Christ, 'Get behind me, Satan' (Matt. 16:23); and with that young convert, 'I am not the man I was,' or as Luther counsels all men to answer all temptations with these words, "I am a Christian!"—if a man's temptation is his greatest affliction, then is the temptation no sin upon his soul, though it be a trouble upon his mind. When a soul can look the Lord in the face, and say, 'Ah, Lord! I have many outward troubles upon me, I have lost such and such a near mercy, and such and such desirable mercies; and yet you who knows the heart—you know that all my crosses and losses do not make so many wounds in my soul, nor fetch so many sighs from my heart, or tears from my eyes—as those temptations do, which Satan dogs my soul with! When it is thus with the soul, then temptations are only the soul's trouble, they are not the soul's sin.

Satan is a malicious and envious enemy. As his names are, so is he. His names are all names of enmity—the accuser, the tempter, the destroyer, the devourer, the envious one. And this malice and envy of his he shows sometimes by tempting men to such sins as are quite contrary to the natural dispositions, as he did Vespasian and Julian, men of sweet and excellent natures, to be most bloody murderers.

And sometimes he shows his malice by tempting men to such things as will bring them no honor nor profit. 'Fall down and worship me' (Matt. 4:9). He tempts to blasphemy, and atheism—the thoughts and first motions whereof cause the heart and flesh to tremble. And sometimes he shows his malice by tempting them to those sins which they have not found their natures prone to, and which they abhor in others.

Now, if the soul resists these, and complains of these, and groans and mourns under these, and looks up to the Lord Jesus to be delivered from these—then shall they not be put down to the soul's account—but to Satan's, who shall be so much the more tormented, by how much the more the saints have been by him maliciously tempted.

Sometimes he shows his malice by letting those things abide by the soul as may most vex and plague the soul, as Gregory observes in his leaving of Job's wife, which was not out of his forgetfulness, carelessness, or any love or pity to Job—but to vex and torment him, and to work him to blaspheme God, despair, and die.

Make present and decided resistance against Satan's temptations; bid defiance to the temptation at first sight. It is safe to resist, it is dangerous to dispute. Eve lost herself and her posterity by falling into artifices of dispute, when she should have resisted, and stood upon terms of defiance with Satan. He who would stand in the hour of temptation must plead with Christ, 'It is written.' He who would triumph over temptations must plead still, 'It is written.' Satan is bold and impudent, and if you are not decided in your resistance, he will give you fresh onsets. It is your greatest honor, and your highest wisdom, decidedly to withstand the beginnings of a temptation; for an after-remedy comes often too late.

Catherine Bretterge once, after a great conflict with Satan, said, 'Reason not with me, I am but a weak woman; if you have anything to say, say it to my Christ; he is my advocate, my strength, and my redeemer, and he shall plead for me.'

Men must not seek to resist Satan's craft with craft—but by open defiance. He shoots with Satan in his own bow—who thinks by disputing and reasoning to put him off. As soon as a temptation shows its face, say

to the temptation, as Ephraim to his idols, 'Get you hence, what have I any more to do with you?' (Hosea 14:8). Oh! say to the temptation, as David said to the sons of Zeruiah, 'What have I to do with you? You will be too hard for me!' He who does thus resist temptations, shall never be undone by temptations.

Make strong and constant resistance against Satan's temptations. Make resistance against temptations by arguments drawn from the honor of **God**, the love of God, your union and communion with God; and from the blood of **Christ**, the death of Christ, the kindness of Christ, the intercession of Christ, and the glory of Christ; and from the voice of the **Spirit**, the counsel of the Spirit, the comforts of the Spirit, the presence of the Spirit, the seal of the Spirit, the whisperings of the Spirit, the commands of the Spirit, the assistance of the Spirit, the witness of the Spirit; and from the glory of heaven, the excellency of grace, the beauty of holiness, the worth of the soul, and the vileness or bitterness and evil of sin—the least sin being a greater evil than the greatest temptation in the world.

And see that you make **constant** resistance, as well as **strong** resistance. Satan will come on with new temptations when old ones are too weak. In a calm prepare for a storm. The tempter is restless, impudent, and subtle; he will suit his temptations to your constitutions and inclinations. Satan loves to sail with the wind. If your knowledge is weak—he will tempt you to error. If your conscience is tender—he will tempt you to scrupulosity and too much preciseness, as to do nothing but hear, pray, and read. If your consciences be wide and large—he will tempt you to carnal security. If you are bold-spirited—he will tempt you to presumption; if timorous, to desperation; if flexible, to inconstancy; if proud and stiff, to gross folly. Therefore still fit for fresh assaults, make one victory a step to another. When you have overcome a temptation, take heed of unbending your bow, and look well to it, that your bow is always bent, and that it remains in strength. When you have overcome one temptation, you must be ready to enter the battle with another.

As distrust in some sense, is the mother of safety; so carnal security is the gate of danger. A man had need to fear this most of all—that he fears not at all. If Satan were always roaring, we would be always a-watching and

resisting him. And certainly he who makes strong and constant resistance of Satan's temptations, shall in the end get above his temptations, and for the present is secure enough from being ruined by his temptations.

Luke 4:13, 'And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.' Christ had no rest until he was exactly tried with all sorts of temptations.

For a close of this, remember, that it is dangerous to yield to the least sin—to be rid of the greatest temptation. To take this course were as if a man should think to wash himself clean in ink, or as if a man should exchange a light cross, made of paper, for an iron cross, which is heavy, toilsome, and bloody. The least sin set home upon the conscience, will more wound, vex, and oppress the soul, than all the temptations in the world can. Therefore never yield to the least sin—to be rid of the greatest temptation. I will leave you to make the application.

He who will yield to sin to be rid of temptation, will be so much the more tempted—and the less able to withstand temptations.

## **SATAN'S DEVICES TO DESTROY & ENSNARE ALL SORTS & RANKS OF MEN IN THE WORLD**

### **I. DEVICES AGAINST THE GREAT AND HONORABLE OF THE EARTH**

**DEVICE 1.** His first device to destroy *the great and honorable of the earth is, **By working them to make it their business to seek themselves, to seek how to elevate themselves, to raise themselves, to enrich themselves, to secure themselves,*** as you may see in Pharaoh, Ahab, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Absalom, Joab, Haman, and others. Self-seeking, like the deluge, overthrows the whole world. But were the Scripture silent, our own experiences do abundantly evidence this way and method of Satan to destroy the great and the

honorable; to bury their souls in hell, by drawing them wholly to mind themselves, and only to mind themselves, and in all things to mind themselves, and always to mind themselves. 'All,' said the apostle 'mind themselves' (Phil. 2:21). That is—all comparatively, in respect of the dearth of others who let fall their private interests, and drown all self-seeking, in the glory of God and the public good.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, *That self-seeking is a sin which will put men upon a plethora of sins, upon sins not only against the law of God, the rules of the gospel—but which are against the very laws of nature—which are so much darkened by the fall of man.* It puts the Pharisees upon opposing Christ, and Judas upon betraying Christ, and Pilate upon condemning Christ. It puts Gehazi upon lying, and Balaam upon cursing, and Saul and Absalom upon plotting David's ruin. It puts Pharaoh and Haman upon contriving ways to destroy those Jews whom God did purpose to save by his mighty arm. It puts men upon using wicked balances, and the bag of deceitful weights. It puts men upon ways of oppression and 'selling the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes' (Amos 2:6). I know not any sin in the world but this **sin of self-seeking** will put men upon it—though it be their eternal loss!

Self-love is the root of the hatred of others, 2 Tim. 3:2. First, lovers of themselves, and then fierce, etc. The naturalists observe, that those beasts which are most cruel to others are most loving to their own.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, *That self-seeking does exceedingly abase a man.* It strips him of all his royalty and glory. It makes a man become a servant to the creature, yes, often to the worst of creatures; yes, a slave to slaves, as you may see in Judas, Demas, Balaam, and the scribes and Pharisees.\* Self-seekers bow down to the creatures, as Gideon's many thousands bowed down to the waters. Self-seeking will make a man say anything, do anything, and be anything, to please the lusts of others, in order to get advantages upon others. Self-seeking transforms a man into all shapes and forms; now it makes a man appear as an angel of light, anon as an angel of darkness. Now self-seekers are seemingly for God, anon they are openly against God; now you shall have them crying,

'Hosanna in the highest,' and anon, 'Crucify him, crucify him;' now you shall have them build with the saints, and anon you shall have them plotting the overthrow of the saints, as those self-seekers did in Ezra and Nehemiah's time. Self-seekers are the basest of all people. There is no service so base, so poor, so low—but they will bow to it. They cannot look neither above, nor beyond their own lusts, and the enjoyment of the creature (Rom. 1:25). These are the prime and ultimate objects of their desires.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly ***To dwell upon those dreadful curses and woes that are from heaven denounced against self-seekers.*** 'Destruction is certain for you who buy up property so others have no place to live. Your homes are built on great estates so you can be alone in the land.' (Is. 5:8). So Habakkuk 2:6, 9-12: 'How terrible it will be for you who get rich by unjust means! You believe your wealth will buy security, putting your families beyond the reach of danger. But by the murders you committed, you have shamed your name and forfeited your lives. The very stones in the walls of your houses cry out against you, and the beams in the ceilings echo the complaint. How terrible it will be for you who build cities with money gained by murder and corruption!' The materials of the house built up by oppression shall come as joint witnesses. The stones of the wall shall cry, 'Lord, we were built up by blood and violence; and the beam shall answer, True, Lord, even so it is.' The stones shall cry, Vengeance, Lord! upon these self-seekers! and the beam shall answer, Woe to him, because he built his house with blood!

So Isaiah: 'Destruction is certain for the unjust judges, for those who issue unfair laws. They deprive the poor, the widows, and the orphans of justice. Yes, they rob widows and fatherless children!' (Is. 10:1, 2). So Amos: 'Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria. You push away every thought of coming disaster, but your actions only bring the day of judgment closer. How terrible it will be for you who sprawl on ivory beds surrounded with luxury, eating the meat of tender lambs and choice calves. You sing idle songs to the sound of the harp.' (Amos 6:1, 3-6). So Micah: 'How terrible it will be for you who lie awake at night, thinking up evil plans. You rise at dawn and hurry to

carry out any of the wicked schemes you have power to accomplish. When you want a certain piece of land, you find a way to seize it. When you want someone's house, you take it by fraud and violence. No one's family or inheritance is safe with you around!' (Micah 2:1, 2).

By these scriptures, you see that self-seekers labor like a woman in travail—but their birth proves their death, their pleasure their pain, their comforts their torment, their glory their shame, their exaltation their desolation. Loss, disgrace, trouble and shame, vexation and confusion, will be the certain portion of self-seekers.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, ***That self-seekers are self-losers and self-destroyers.*** Absalom and Judas seek themselves, and hang themselves. Saul seeks himself, and kills himself. Ahab seeks himself, and loses himself, his crown and kingdom. Pharaoh seeks himself, and overthrows himself and his mighty army in the Red Sea. Cain sought himself, and slew two at once, his brother and his own soul. Gehazi sought change of clothing—but God changed his clothing into a leprous skin. Haman sought himself, and lost himself. The princes and residents sought themselves, in the ruin of Daniel—but ruined themselves, their wives and children.

That which self-seekers think should be a staff to support them, becomes by the hand of justice an iron rod to break them; that which they would have as springs to refresh them, becomes a gulf utterly to consume them. The crosses of self-seekers shall always exceed their mercies: their pain their pleasure; their torments their comforts. Every self-seeker is a self-tormentor, a self-destroyer; he carries a hell, an executioner, in his own bosom.

Adam seeks himself—and loses himself, paradise, and that blessed image that God had stamped upon him. Lot seeks himself (Gen. 13:10, 11) and loses himself and his goods. Peter seeks to save himself and miserably loses himself. Hezekiah in the business of the ambassadors, seeks himself, and lost himself and his life too, had not God saved him by a miracle.

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, *To dwell much upon the famous examples of those worthy saints that have denied themselves and preferred the public good before their own particular advantage.* As Moses: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Leave me alone so I may destroy them and erase their name from under heaven. Then I will make a mighty nation of your descendants, a nation larger and more powerful than they are.' (Deut. 9:14). Oh! but this offer would not take with Moses, he being a man of brave public spirit. He is hot in his desires and prayers that the people might be spared and pardoned; says he, 'Please pardon the sins of this people because of your magnificent, unfailing love, just as you have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt. Then the Lord said, "I will pardon them as you have requested.' (Num. 14:19-20). Ah! should God make such an offer to many, I am afraid they would prefer their own advantage above the public good; they would not care what became of the people, so that they and theirs might be made great and glorious in the world; they would not care about others, so that they might have a Babel built for them, though it was upon the ashes and ruin of the people.

Baser spirits than these are not in hell; no, not in hell; and I am sure there are no such spirits in heaven. Such men's hearts and principles must be changed, or they will be undone forever. Nehemiah was a choice soul, a man of a brave public spirit, a man that spent his time, his strength, and his estate, for the good and ease of his people. 'I would like to mention that for the entire twelve years that I was governor of Judah—from the twentieth until the thirty-second year of the reign of King Artaxerxes—neither I nor my officials drew on our official food allowance. This was quite a contrast to the former governors who had laid heavy burdens on the people, demanding a daily ration of food and wine, besides a pound of silver. Even their assistants took advantage of the people. But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way. I devoted myself to working on the wall and refused to acquire any land. And I required all my officials to spend time working on the wall. I asked for nothing, even though I regularly fed 150 Jewish officials at my table, besides all the visitors from other lands! The provisions required at my expense for each day were one ox, six fat sheep, and a large number of domestic fowl. And every ten days we needed a large supply of all kinds of

wine. Yet I refused to claim the governor's food allowance because the people were already having a difficult time. Remember, O my God, all that I have done for these people, and bless me for it.' (Neh. 5:14-19). Likewise Daniel was a man of a brave public spirit: 'Then the other administrators and princes began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling his affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize. He was faithful and honest and always responsible. So they concluded, Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the requirements of his religion.' (Daniel 6:4, 5).

Christ had a public spirit; he laid out himself, and laid down himself for a public good. Oh! never leave looking and meditating upon these precious and sweet examples until your souls are quickened and raised up, to act for the public good, more than for your own particular advantage. Many heathens have been excellent at this.

Macrobius writes of Augustus Caesar, in whose time Christ was born, that he carried such an entire and fatherly affection to the commonwealth, that he called it *filiam suam*, his own daughter; and therefore refused to be called *Dominus*, the lord or master of his country, and would only be called *Pater patriae*, father of his country, because he governed it not by fear but by love; the senate and the people of Rome jointly saluting him by the name of *Pater patriae*, father of his country. The people very much lamented his death, using that speech, 'Would he had never died.'

So Marcus Regulus, to save his country from ruin, exposed himself to the greatest sufferings that the malice and rage of his enemies could inflict. So Titus and Aristides, and many others, have been famous for their preferring the public good above their own advantage. My prayer is, and shall be, that all our rulers may be so spirited by God, that they may be willing to be anything, to be nothing, to deny themselves, and to trample their sinful selves under feet, in order to the honor of God, and a public good; that so neither saints nor heathens may be witnesses against them in that day, wherein the hearts and practices of all the rulers in the world shall be open and naked before him who judges the world in righteousness and judgment.

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously

to consider, *That self is a great hindrance to divine things; therefore the prophets and apostles were usually carried out of themselves, when they had the clearest, choicest, highest, and most glorious visions.* Self-seeking so blinds the soul, that it cannot see a beauty in Christ, nor an excellency in holiness; it distempers the palate, that a man cannot taste sweetness in the word of God, nor in the ways of God, nor in the society of the people of God. It shuts the hand against all the soul-enriching offers of Christ; it hardens the heart against all the knocks and entreaties of Christ; it makes the soul as an empty vine, and as a barren wilderness: 'Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit to himself' (Hosea 10:1).

**There is nothing that speaks a man to be more empty and void of God, Christ, and grace, than self-seeking.** The Pharisees were great self-seekers, and great undervaluers of Christ, his word and Spirit. There is not a greater hindrance to all the duties of piety than self-seeking. Oh! this is that which keeps many a soul from looking after God and the precious things of eternity. They cannot wait on God, nor act for God, nor abide in those ways wherein they might meet with God, by reason of self. Self-seeking is that which puts many a man upon neglecting and slighting the things of his peace. Self-seekers will neither go into heaven themselves, nor allow others to enter, that are ready to take the kingdom by violence, as you may see in the scribes and Pharisees. Oh! but a gracious spirit is acted quite other ways, as you may see in that sweet scripture (Cant. 7:13), 'At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for you, O beloved.' All the church has and is, is only for him. Let others bear fruit to themselves, and lay up for themselves, gracious spirits will work for Christ and lay up for Christ.

All the divine endeavors and productions of saints fall into God's bosom, and empty themselves into his lap. As Christ lays up his merits for them, his graces for them, his comforts for them, his crown for them; so they lay up all their fruits, and all their loves, all their graces, and all their experiences, and all their services, only for him who is the soul of their comforts, and the crown and top of all their royalty and glory.

Self-seekers, with Esau, prefers bowl of pottage above their birthright,

and with the men of Shechem, esteem the bramble above the vine, the olive, and the fig-tree; yes they esteem empty things above a full Christ, and base things above a glorious Christ. The saints' motto is, 'For you, Lord, for you; not unto us, Lord.'

**DEVICE 2. By engaging them against the people of God, against those who are his jewels, his pleasant portion, the delight of his eye and the joy of his heart.** Thus he drew Pharaoh to engage against the children of Israel—and that was his overthrow. So he engaged Haman against the Jews—and so brought him to hang upon that gallows that he had made for Mordecai (Esther 7). So he engaged those princes against Daniel—which was the utter ruin of them and their relations (Dan. 6). So in Revelation 20:7-9, "When the thousand years end, Satan will be let out of his prison. He will go out to deceive the nations from every corner of the earth, which are called Gog and Magog. He will gather them together for battle—a mighty host, as numberless as sand along the shore. And I saw them as they went up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded God's people and the beloved city. But fire from heaven came down on the attacking armies and consumed them."

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, *That none have engaged against the saints—but have been ruined by the God of saints.* Divine justice has been too hard for all who have opposed and engaged against the saints, as is evident in Saul, Pharaoh, and Haman 'He reproveth kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm' (Psalm 105:15). When men of Balaam spirits and principles have been engaged against the saints, how has the angel of the Lord met them in the way, and jostled their bones against the wall! How has he broke their backs and necks, and by his drawn sword cut them off in the prime of their days, and in the height of their sins!

Ah! what a harvest has hell had in our days, of those who have engaged against the Lamb, and those who are called, chosen and faithful! Ah! how has divine justice poured out their blood as water upon the ground! how has he laid their honor and glory in the dust, who, in the pride and madness of their hearts, said, as Pharaoh, 'We will pursue, we will overtake, we will divide the spoil, our lusts shall be satisfied upon them.'

We will draw our sword, our hand shall destroy them' (Exod. 15:9). In the things wherein they have spoken and done proudly, justice has been above them. History abounds in many instances of this kind.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, *To dwell some time every morning upon the following scriptures, wherein God has engaged himself to stand by his people and for his people, and to make them victorious over the greatest and wisest of their enemies.* 'Associate yourselves,' says the Lord by the prophet, 'O you people, and you shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all you of far countries: gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nothing; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.' 'Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel: I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff. You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them, and you shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel.' 'No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, says the Lord.' 'Now also many nations are gathered together against you that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel; for he shall gather them as sheaves into the floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoof brass, and you shall beat in pieces many people, and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.' 'Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege, both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.' (Is. 8:9, 41:14, 15, and 54:17. Micah 4:11-13; Zech. 12:2, 3.)

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, to

consider, ***That you cannot engage against the saints—but you must engage against God himself, by reason of that near and blessed union that is between God and them.*** You cannot be fighters against the saints—but you will be found in the casting up of the account to be fighters against God himself. And what greater madness than for weakness itself—to engage against an almighty strength! The near union that is between the Lord and believers, is set forth by that near union that is between a husband and his wife. 'They two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church; we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,' says the apostle (Eph. 5:32). This near union is set forth by that union that is between the head and the members, which make up one body, and by that union that is between the graft and the stock, which are made one by grafting. The union between the Lord and a believer is so near, that you cannot strike a believer—but the Lord is sensible of it, and takes it as done to himself. 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute you me?' (Acts 9:4); and 'in all their afflictions he was afflicted' (Is. 63:9). Ah, souls! who ever engaged against God and prospered? who ever took up the sword against him but perished by it? **God can speak you to hell and nod you to hell at pleasure.** It is your greatest concernment to lay down your weapons at his feet, and to 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the midway' (Psalm 2:12).

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, ***That you are much engaged to the saints, as instruments for the mercies that you do enjoy, and for the preventing and removing of many a judgment that otherwise might have been your ruin before this day.*** Were it not for the saints' sake, God would quickly make the heavens to be as brass and the earth as iron; God would quickly strip you of your robes and glory, and set you upon the ash-heap with Job. They are the props that bear the world from falling about your ears, and that keep the iron rod from breaking of your bones. 'Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them' (Psalm 106:23).

Ah! had not the saints many a time cast themselves into the breach

between God's wrath and you, you had been cut off from the land of the living, and had had your portion with those whose names are written in the dust. Many a nation, many a family, is surrounded with blessings for the Josephs' sakes who live therein, and are preserved from many calamities and miseries for the Moses', the Daniels', the Noahs', and the Jobs', sakes, who dwell among them. That is a sweet word (Prov. 10:25), 'As the whirlwind passes, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation, or is the foundation of the world.' The righteous is the foundation of the world, which but for their sakes would soon shatter and fall to ruin. So the psalmist (Psalm 75:3), 'The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.'

'He could have what he would of God', said one concerning Luther. Prayer is the gate of heaven, a key to let us into paradise. 'When the danger is over, the saint is forgotten', is a French proverb and that which many saints in England have found by experience.

The emperor Marcus Antoninus being in Germany with his army, was enclosed in a dry country by his enemies, who so stopped all the passages that he and his army were likely to perish for lack of water. The emperor's lieutenant seeing him so distressed, told him that he had heard that the Christians could obtain anything of their God by their prayers, whereupon the emperor, having a legion of Christians in his army, desired them to pray to their God for his and the army's delivery out of that danger, which they presently did, and presently a great thunder fell among the enemies, and abundance of water upon the Romans, whereby their thirst was quenched, and the enemies overthrown without any fight.

Mary, Queen of Scots, was accustomed to say, 'That she feared Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men.'

I shall close up this last remedy with those sweet words of the psalmist: 'God is well known in Judah; his name is great in Israel. Jerusalem is where he lives; Mount Zion is his home. There he breaks the arrows of the enemy, the shields and swords and weapons of his foes.' (Psalm 76:1-3).

## II. DEVICE AGAINST THE LEARNED AND THE WISE

Secondly, Satan has his devices to ensnare and destroy the learned and the wise: and that, sometimes **by working them to pride themselves in their parts and abilities**; and sometimes by drawing them to rest upon their parts and abilities; and sometimes by causing them to make light and slight of those who lack their parts and abilities, though they excel them in grace and holiness; and sometimes by drawing them to engage their parts and abilities in those ways and things that make against the honor of Christ, the joy of the Spirit, the advancement of the gospel, and the liberty of the saints. The truth of this you may see in the learned scribes and Pharisees. (John 5:44; 1 Kings 22:22-25; 1 Cor. 1:18-29.)

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, **That you have nothing but what you have received, Christ being as well the fountain of common gifts as of saving grace.** 'What have you,' says the apostle, 'that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?' (1 Cor. 4:7). 'Whatever you are, you owe to him who made you; and whatever you have, you owe to him who redeemed you' (*Bernard*).

There are those who would hammer out their own happiness, like the spider climbing up by the thread of her own weaving. Of all the parts and abilities that are in you, you may well say as the young man did of the axe, 'Alas, master! it was but borrowed' (2 Kings 6:5). Alas, Lord! all I have is but borrowed from that fountain that fills all the vessels in heaven and on earth. My gifts are not so much mine as yours: 'Of your own have we offered unto you,' said that princely prophet (1 Chron. 29:14).

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, **That men's learning and trusting to their own wits, parts, and abilities, have been their utter overthrow and ruin**; as you may see in Ahithophel, and those princes that engaged against Daniel, and in the scribes and Pharisees. God loves to confute men in their confidences. He who stands upon his parts and abilities, does but stand upon a quicksand that will certainly fail him. There is

nothing in the world which provokes God more to withdraw from the soul than this; and how can the soul stand, when his strength is departed from him? Everything which a man leans upon—will be a dart that will certainly pierce his heart through and through! Ah! how many in these days have lost their estates, their friends, their lives, their souls, by leaning upon their admired parts and abilities! The saints are described by their leaning upon their beloved, the Lord Jesus (Cant. 8:5). He who leans only upon the bosom of Christ, lives the highest, choicest, safest, and sweetest life. Miseries always lie at that man's door that leans upon anything below the precious bosom of Christ; such a man is most in danger, and this is none of his least plagues, that he thinks himself secure. It is the greatest wisdom in the world to take the wise man's counsel: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding' (Prov. 3:5).

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, ***That you do not transcend others more in parts and abilities, than they do you in grace and holiness.*** There may be, and often is, great parts and abilities, where there is but little grace, yes, no grace. And there may be, and often is, a great deal of grace, where there is but weak parts and abilities. You may be higher than others in gifts of knowledge, utterance, and learning, and those very souls may be higher than you in their communion with God, in their delighting in God, in their dependence upon God, in their affections to God, and in their humble, holy, and unblameable walking before God. Is it folly and madness in a man, to make light and slight of another, because he is not so rich in lead or iron as he, when he is a thousand thousand times richer in silver and gold, in jewels and in pearls, than he? And is it not madness and folly with a witness, in those who have greater parts and abilities than others, to slight them upon that account, when that those very people that they make light and slight of, have a thousand times more grace than they? And yet, ah! how does this evil spirit prevail in the world!

Judas and the scribes and Pharisees had great parts—but no grace. The disciples had grace—but weak parts. (Luke 11:1; 24:19-28.)

It was the sad complaint of Augustine in his time: 'The unlearned,' says

he, 'rise up and take heaven by violence, and we with all our learning are thrust down to hell.' It is sad to see how many of the rabbis of these times do make an idol of their parts and abilities, and with what an eye of pride, scorn, and contempt do they look upon those who lack their parts, and who do not worship the idol that they have set up in their own hearts. Paul, who was the great doctor of the Gentiles, did wonderfully transcend in all parts and abilities the doctors and rabbis of our times, and yet, ah! how humbly, how tenderly, how sweetly, does he carry himself towards the lowest and the weakest! 'To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some' (1 Cor. 9:22). 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? Wherefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I make my brother to offend' (1 Cor. 8:13).

But, ah how little of this sweet spirit is to be found in the doctors of our age, who look sourly and speak bitterly against those who do not see as they see, nor cannot speak as they speak. Sirs! the Spirit of the Lord, even in despised saints, will be too hard for you, and his appearance in them, in these latter days, will be so full of spiritual beauty and glory, as that they will darken that which you are too apt to count and call your glory. The Spirit of the Lord will not allow his choicest jewel grace to be always buried under the straw and stubble of parts and gifts (Is. 60:13-17).

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, *That there is no such way for men to have their gifts and parts blasted and withered, as to pride themselves in them, as to rest upon them, as to make light and slight of those who lack them, as to engage them against those people, ways, and things, that Jesus Christ has set his heart upon.* Ah! how has God blasted and withered the parts and abilities of many among us, that have once been famous shining lights! How is their sun darkened, and their glory clouded! 'How is the sword of the Lord upon their arm, and upon their right eye! how is their arm clean dried up, and their right eye utterly darkened!' as the prophet speaks (Zech. 11:17). This is matter of humiliation and lamentation. Many precious discerning saints see this, and in secret mourn for it; and oh! that they were kindly sensible of God's

withdrawing from them, that they may repent, keep humble, and carry it sweetly towards God's jewels, and lean only upon the Lord, and not upon their parts and understanding, that so the Lord may delight to visit them with his grace at such a rate as that their faces may shine more gloriously than ever, and that they may be more serviceable to the honor of Christ, and the faith of the saints, than formerly they have been.

Becanus says, that the tree of knowledge bears many leaves, and little fruit. Ah! that it were not so with many in these days.

### III. DEVICE AGAINST THE SAINTS

Thirdly, Satan has his devices to destroy the saints; and one great device that he has to destroy the saints is, **By working them first to be cold, and then to divide, and then to be bitter and jealous, and then 'to bite and devour one another'** (Gal. 5:15). Our own woeful experience is too great a proof of this. The Israelites in Egypt did not more vex one another, than Christians in these days have done, which occasioned a deadly consumption to fall upon some. (If we knock, we break. Dissolution is the daughter of dissension.)

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, ***To dwell more upon one another's graces than upon one another's weaknesses and infirmities.*** It is sad to consider that saints should have many eyes to behold one another's infirmities, and not one eye to see each other's graces, that they should use spectacles to behold one another's weaknesses, rather than looking-glasses to behold one another's graces.

Flavius Vespasian, the emperor, was more ready to conceal the vices of his friends than their virtues. Can you think seriously of this, Christians, that a heathen should excel you, and not blush?

Erasmus tells of one who collected all the lame and defective verses in Homer's works—but passed over all that was excellent. Ah! this is the practice of many professors—that they are careful and skillful to collect

all the weaknesses of others, and to pass over all those things which are excellent in them. The Corinthians did eye more the incestuous person's sin than his sorrow, which was likely to have drowned him in sorrow.

Tell me, saints, is it not a more sweet, comfortable, and delightful thing to look more upon one another's graces than upon one another's infirmities? Tell me what pleasure, what delight, what comfort is there in looking upon the enemies, the wounds, the sores, the sickness, the diseases, the nakedness of our friends? Now sin, you know, is the soul's enemy, the soul's wound, the soul's sores, the soul's sickness, the soul's disease, the soul's nakedness; and ah! what a heart has that man who loves thus to look! Grace is the choicest flower in all a Christian's garden; it is the richest jewel in all his crown; it is his princely robes; it is the top of royalty; and therefore must needs be the most pleasing, sweet, and delightful object for a gracious eye to be fixed upon. Sin is darkness, grace is light; sin is hell, grace is heaven; and what madness is it to look more at darkness than at light, more at hell than at heaven! (Not race of place—but grace truly sets forth a man.)

Tell me, saints, does not God look more upon his people's graces than upon their weaknesses? Surely he does. He looks more at David's and Asaph's uprightness than upon their infirmities, though they were great and many. He eyes more Job's patience than his passion. 'Remember the patience of Job,' not a word of his impatience (James 5:11). He who drew Alexander while he had a scar upon his face, drew him with his finger upon the scar. God puts his fingers upon his people's scars, that no blemish may appear. Ah! saints, that you would make it the top of your glory in this, to be like your heavenly Father! By so doing, much sin would be prevented, the designs of wicked men frustrated, Satan outwitted, many wounds healed, many sad hearts cheered, and God more abundantly honored.\*

Sin is Satan's work, grace is God's work; and is it not most fit that the child should eye most and mind most, his father's work?

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, ***That love and union makes most for your own safety and security.*** We shall be invincible if we are inseparable.

The world may frown upon you, and plot against you—but they cannot hurt you. Unity is the best bond of safety in every church and commonwealth.

There was a temple of Concord among the heathens; and shall it not be found among Christians, that are temples of the Holy Spirit?

And this did that Scythian king in Plutarch's book represent lively to his eighty sons, when, being ready to die, he commanded a bundle of arrows fast bound together to be given to his sons to break; they all tried to break them—but, being bound fast together, they could not; then he caused the band to be cut, and then they broke them with ease. He applied it thus: 'My sons, so long as you keep together, you will be invincible; but if the band of union be broke between you, you will easily be broken in pieces.'

Pancirollus says, 'that the most precious pearl among the Romans was called *unio*, union.'

Pliny writes of a stone in the island of Scyros, that if it be whole, though a large and heavy one, it swims above water—but being broken, it sinks. (No doubt a volcanic, porous product.) So long as saints keep whole, nothing shall sink them; but if they break, they are in danger of sinking and drowning.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, ***To dwell upon those commands of God which require you to love one another.*** Oh! when your hearts begin to rise against each other, charge the commands of God upon your hearts, and say to your souls, O our souls! has not the eternal God commanded you to love those who love the Lord? And is it not life to obey, and death to rebel? Therefore look that you fulfill the commands of the Lord, for his commands are not like those who are easily reversed; but they are like those of the Medes, which cannot be changed. Oh! be much in pondering upon these commands of God. 'A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another' (John 13:34). It is called a new commandment, because it is renewed in the gospel, and set home by Christ's example, and because it is rare, choice, special, and remarkable above all others.

'This is my commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you.' 'These things I command you, that you love one another.' 'Owe no man anything—but love one another: for he who loves another, has fulfilled the law.' 'Let brotherly love continue.' 'Love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God.' 'See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently.' 'Finally, be all of one mind, having compassion one for another. Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.' 'For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.' 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' Oh! dwell much upon these precious commands, that your love may be inflamed one to another. (John 15:12, 17; Rom. 13:8; Heb. 13:1; 1 John 4:7; 1 Peter 1:22, and 3:8; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:11.)

In the primitive times, it was much taken notice of by the heathens, that in the depth of misery, when fathers and mothers forsook their children, Christians, otherwise strangers, stuck one to another, whose love of religion proved firmer than that of nature. Ah! that there were more of that spirit among the saints in these days! The world was once destroyed with water for the heat of lusts, and it is thought it will be again destroyed with fire for the coldness of love.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, *To dwell more upon these choice and sweet things wherein you agree, than upon those things wherein you differ.* Ah! did you but thus, how would sinful arguments be abated, and your love raised, and your spirits sweetened one to another! You agree in most things, you differ but in a few; you agree in the greatest and weightiest things, as concerning God, Christ, the Spirit, and the Scripture. You differ only in those points that have been long disputable among men of greatest piety and parts. You agree to own the Scripture, to hold to Christ the head, and to walk according to the law of the new creature.

Shall Herod and Pilate agree? Shall Turks and pagans agree? Shall bears and lions, tigers, and wolves, yes, shall a legion of devils, agree in one body? And shall not saints agree, who differ only in such things as have

least of the heart of God in them, and that shall never hinder your meeting in heaven?

What a sad thing was it that a heathen should say, 'No beasts are so mischievous to men, as Christians are one to another!'

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, *That God delights to be styled—'the God of peace'; and Christ to be styled—'the Prince of peace, and King of peace'; and the Spirit is a Spirit of peace.* 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace' (Gal 5:22). Oh! why then should not the saints be children of peace? Certainly, men of froward, unquiet, fiery spirits cannot have that sweet evidence of their interest in the God of peace, and in the Prince of peace, and in the Spirit of peace, as those precious souls have, who follow after the things that make for love and peace. The very name of peace is sweet and comfortable; the fruit and effect thereof pleasant and profitable, more to be desired than innumerable triumphs. Peace is a blessing which ushers in a multitude of other blessings. Where Peace is, there is Christ, because Christ is peace. (2 Cor. 13:11; Is. 9:6).

The ancients were accustomed to paint peace in the form of a woman, with a horn of plenty in her hand. The Grecians had the statue of Peace, with Pluto, the god of riches, in her arms. Ah! peace and love among the saints, is that which will secure them and their mercies at home; yes, it will multiply their mercies; it will engage the God of mercy to crown them with the choicest mercies; and it is that that will render them most zealous, men invincible, and successful abroad. Love and peace among the saints is that which puts the counsels of their enemies to a standstill, and renders all their enterprises abortive; it is that which does most weaken their hands, wound their hopes, and kill their hearts.

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, ***To make more care and conscience, of keeping up your peace with God.*** Ah! Christians, I am afraid that your remissness herein is that which has occasioned much of that sourness, bitterness, and divisions that be among you. (There is no fear of knowing too much—but there is much fear in practicing too little.) Ah! you have not, as you should, kept up your peace with God, and therefore it is that you do so dreadfully break the

peace among yourselves. The Lord has promised, 'That when a man's ways please him, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him' (Prov. 16:7). Ah! how much more then would God make the children of peace to keep the peace among themselves, if their ways do but please him! All creatures are at his beck and check. Laban followed Jacob with one troop. Esau met him with another, both with hostile intentions; but Jacob's ways pleasing the Lord, God by his mighty power so works that Laban leaves him with a kiss, and Esau met him with a kiss; he has a promise from one, tears from the other, peace with both. If we make it our business to keep up our league with God, God will make it his work and his glory to maintain our peace with men; but if men make light of keeping up their peace with God, it is just with God to leave them to a spirit of pride, envy, passion, contention, division, and confusion, to leave them 'to bite and devour one another, until they are consumed one by another.'

Pharnaces sent a crown to Caesar at the same time he rebelled against him; but he returned the crown and this message back, 'Let him return to his obedience first.' There is no sound peace to be had with God or man—but in a way of obedience.

**Remedy (7).** The seventh remedy against this device of Satan is, ***To dwell much upon that near relation and union that is between you.*** This consideration had a sweet influence upon Abraham's heart: 'And Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray you, between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen—for we are brethren' (Gen.13:8). The Hebrew signifies, 'Oh! let there be no bitterness between us—for we are brethren.'

That is a sweet word in the psalmist, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to live together in unity' (Psalm 133:1). It is ***good and pleasant***. There be some things that are good and not pleasant, as patience and discipline; and there are some things that are pleasant but not good, as carnal pleasures, and voluptuousness. And there are some things that are neither good nor pleasant, as malice, envy, and worldly sorrow; and there are some things that are both good and pleasant, as piety, charity, peace, and union among brethren. Oh! that we could see more of this among those who shall one day meet in their Father's

kingdom and never part. And as they are brethren, so they are all fellow-members: 'Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular' (1 Cor. 12:27). And again: 'We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones' (Eph. 5:30).

Shall the members of the natural body be serviceable and useful to one another, and shall the members of this spiritual body cut and destroy one another? Is it against the law of nature for the natural members to cut and slash one another? And is it not much more against the law of nature and of grace for the **members** of Christ's glorious body to do so? And as you are all fellow-members, so you are fellow **soldiers** under the same Captain of salvation, the Lord Jesus, fighting against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And as you are all fellow-soldiers, so you are all fellow **sufferers** under the same enemies, the devil and the world. And as you are all fellow-sufferers, so are you fellow-**travelers** towards the land of Canaan, 'the new Jerusalem that is above.' 'Here we have no abiding city—but we look for one to come.' The heirs of heaven are strangers on earth. And as you are all fellow-travelers, so are you all fellow-**heirs** of the same crown and inheritance. (Rev. 12:7, 8; Heb. 2:10; Rev. 2:10; John 15:19, 20; Heb. 12:14, 13; Rom. 8. 15-17)

**Remedy (8).** The eighth remedy against this device of Satan is, *To dwell upon the miseries of discord.* Dissolution is the daughter of dissension. Ah! how does the name of Christ, and the way of Christ, suffer by the discord of saints! How are many who are entering upon the ways of God hindered and saddened, and the mouths of the wicked opened, and their hearts hardened against God and his ways—by the discord of his people! Remember this—the disagreement of Christians is the devil's triumph; and what a sad thing is this, that Christians should give Satan cause to triumph! Our dissensions are one of the Jews' greatest stumbling-blocks. Can you think of it, and your hearts not bleed?

It was a notable saying of one, 'Take away strife, and call back peace, lest you lose a man, your friend; and the devil, an enemy, rejoice over you both.'

**Remedy (9).** The ninth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, *That it is no disparagement to you to be first in*

***seeking peace and reconciliation—but rather an honor to you, that you have begun to seek peace.*** Abraham was the elder, and more worthy than Lot, both in respect of grace and nature also, for he was uncle unto Lot, and yet he first seeks peace of his inferior, which God has recorded as his honor.

Ah! how does the God of peace, by his Spirit and messengers, pursue after peace with poor creatures! God first makes offer of peace to us: 'Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God' (2 Cor. 5:20). God's grace first kneels to us, and who can turn their backs upon such blessed and bleeding embracements—but souls in whom Satan the god of this world reigns? God is the party wronged, and yet he sues for peace with us at first: 'I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name' It is doubled to show God's exceeding forwardness to show favor and mercy to them. (Is. 65:1).

Ah! how does the sweetness, the freeness, and the riches of his grace break forth and shine upon poor souls. When a man goes from the sun, yet the sunbeams follow him; so when we go from the Sun of righteousness, yet then the beams of his love and mercy follow us. Christ first sent to Peter who had denied him, and the rest who had forsaken him: 'Go your ways, and tell his disciples and Peter, that he goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see him, as he said unto you' (Mark 16:7). Ah! souls, it is not a base, low thing—but a God-like thing, though we are wronged by others, yet to be the first in seeking after peace. Such actings will speak out much of God with a man's spirit. They shall both have the name and the note, the comfort and the credit, of being most like unto God, who first begin to pursue after peace with alienated mankind.

Christians, it is not matter of liberty whether you will or you will not pursue after peace—but it is matter of duty that lies upon you; you are bound by express precept to follow after peace; and though it may seem to fly from you, yet you must pursue after it: 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.' The Greek signifies to follow after peace, as the persecutor does him whom he persecutes. Peace and holiness are to be pursued after with the greatest eagerness that can be imagined. So the psalmist: 'Depart from evil, and

do good; seek peace and pursue it' (Psalm 34:14). The Hebrew word that is here rendered *seek*, signifies to seek earnestly, vehemently, affectionately, studiously, industriously. 'And pursue it.' That Hebrew word signifies earnestly to pursue, being a metaphor taken from the eagerness of wild beasts or ravenous fowls, which will run or fly both fast and far rather than be disappointed of their prey. So the apostle presses the same duty upon the Romans: 'Let us follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherein one may edify another' (Rom. 14:19). Ah! you froward, sour, dogged Christians, can you look upon these commands of God without tears and blushing?

I have read a remarkable story of Aristippus, though but a heathen, who went of his own accord to Aeschines his enemy, and said, 'Shall we never be reconciled until we become a tabletalk to all the country?' and when Aeschines answered he would most gladly be at peace with him, 'Remember, then, said Aristippus, that though I were the elder and better man, yet I sought first unto you.' You are indeed, said Aeschines, a far better man than I, for I began the quarrel—but you the reconciliation. My prayer shall be that this heathen may not rise in judgment against the flourishing professors of our times, 'Who whet their tongues like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words' (Psalm 64:3).

**Remedy (10).** The tenth remedy against this device of Satan is, ***For saints to join together and walk together in the ways of grace and holiness so far as they do agree, making the word of God their only touchstone and judge of their actions.*** That is sweet advice that the apostle gives: 'I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 3:14-16). 'I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. Therefore, all who are mature should think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this to you also. In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained.' Ah! Christians, God loses much, and you lose much, and Satan gains much by this—that you do not, that you will not, walk lovingly together so far as your ways lie together. It is your sin and shame that you do not, that you will not, pray together, and hear together, and confer together, and mourn together; because that in some

far lesser things you are not agreed together. What folly and madness is it in those whose way of a hundred miles, lies 99 miles together, yet will not walk so far together, because that they cannot go the other mile together; yet such is the folly and madness of many Christians in these days, who will not do many things they may do, because they cannot do everything they should do. I fear God will whip them into a better temper before he is done with them. He will break their bones, and pierce their hearts—but he will cure them of this malady.

And be sure you make the word of God the only touchstone and judge of all people and actions: 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them' (Is. 8:20). It is best and safest to make that to be the judge of all men and things now, that all shall be judged by in the latter day: 'The word, says Christ, that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day' (John 12:48). Make not your dim light, your notions, your fancies, your opinions, the judge of men's action—but still judge by rule, and plead, 'It is written.'

When an ignorant man cried out in contest with a holy man, 'Hear me, hear me,' the holy man answered, 'Neither hear me, nor I you—but let us both hear the apostle.'

Constantine, in all the disputes before him with the Arians, would still call for the word of God as the only way, if not to convert, yet to stop their mouths.

**Remedy (11).** The eleventh remedy against this device of Satan is, **To be much in self-judging.** 'Judge yourselves, and you shall not be judged by the Lord' (1 Cor. 11:31). Ah! were Christians' hearts more taken up in judging themselves and condemning themselves, they would not be so apt to judge and censure others, and to carry it sourly and bitterly towards others who differ from them. (It is storied of Nero, himself being unchaste, he did think there was no man chaste.) There are no souls in the world who are so fearful to judge others—as those who do most judge themselves; nor so careful to make a righteous judgment of men or things—as those who are most careful to judge themselves. There are none in the world who tremble to think evil of others, to speak evil of others, or to do evil to others—as those who make it their business to judge

themselves. There are none who make such sweet constructions and charitable interpretations of men and things—as those who are best and most in judging themselves. In the Olympic games, the wrestlers did not put their crowns upon their own heads—but upon the heads of others. It is just so with souls that are good at self-judging.

One request I have to you that are much in judging others and little in judging yourselves, to you that are so apt and prone to judge harshly, falsely, and unrighteously, and that is, that you will every morning dwell a little upon these scriptures:

'Judge not, that you be not judged; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete out, it shall be measured to you again' (Matt. 7:1, 2). 'Judge not according to appearance—but judge righteous judgment' (John 7:24). 'The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.' (Rom. 14:3, 10, 13).

'We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us not judge one another any more—but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.' 'Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.' (1 Cor. 4:5). 'Speak not evil one of another, brethren: he who speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law—but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy' (James 4:11, 12). 'Who are you that judges another man's servant? to his own master he stands or falls; yes, he shall be held up, for God is able to make him stand' (Rom. 14:4).

One Delphidius accusing another before Julian about that which he could

not prove, the party denying the fact, Delphidius answers, 'If it be sufficient to deny what is laid to one's charge, who shall be found guilty?' Julian answers, 'And if it be sufficient to be accused, who can be innocent?' You are wise, and know how to apply it.

**Remedy (12).** The twelfth remedy against this device of Satan is this, above all, ***Labor to be clothed with humility.*** Humility makes a man peaceable among brethren, fruitful in well-doing, cheerful in suffering, and constant in holy walking (1 Pet. 5:5). Humility fits for the highest services we owe to Christ, and yet will not neglect the lowest service to the lowest saint (John 13:5). Humility can feed upon the lowest dish, and yet it is maintained by the choicest delicacies, as God, Christ, and glory. Humility will make a man bless him who curses him, and pray for those who persecute him. An humble heart is an habitation for God, a scholar for Christ, a companion of angels, a preserver of grace, and a fitter for glory. Humility is the nurse of our graces, the preserver of our mercies, and the great promoter of holy duties. Humility cannot find three things on this side heaven: it cannot find fullness in the creature, nor sweetness in sin, nor life in an ordinance without Christ. An humble soul always finds three things on this side heaven: the soul to be empty, Christ to be full, and every mercy and duty to be sweet wherein God is enjoyed.

Humility can weep over other men's weaknesses, and joy and rejoice over their graces. Humility will make a man quiet and contented in the lowest condition, and it will preserve a man from envying other men's prosperous condition (1 Thess. 1:2, 3). Humility honors those who are strong in grace, and puts two hands under those who are weak in grace (Eph. 3:8). Humility makes a man richer than other men, and it makes a man judge himself the poorest among men. Humility will see much good abroad, when it can see but little at home.

Ah, Christian! though faith be the champion of grace, and love the nurse of grace, yet humility is the beautifier of grace; it casts a general glory upon all the graces in the soul. Ah! did Christians more abound in humility, they would be less bitter, willful, and sour, and they would be more gentle, meek, and sweet in their spirits and practices. Humility will make a man have high thoughts of others and low thoughts of himself; it will make a man see much glory and excellency in others, and much

baseness and sinfulness in himself; it will make a man see others rich, and himself poor; others strong, and himself weak; others wise, and himself foolish.

Humility will make a man excellent at covering others' infirmities, and at recording their gracious services, and at delighting in their graces; it makes a man rejoice in every light which outshines his own, and every wind which blows others good. Humility is better at believing, than it is at questioning other men's happiness. I judge, says a humble soul, it is well with these Christians now—but it will be far better with them hereafter. They are now upon the borders of the New Jerusalem, and it will be but as a day before they slide into Jerusalem. A humble soul is more willing to say, Heaven is that man's, than mine; and Christ is that Christian's, than mine; and God is their God in covenant, than mine. Ah! were Christians more humble, there would be less contention, and more love among them than now is.

Humility, said Bernard, is that which keeps all graces together.

The humble soul is like the violet, which grows low, hangs the head downwards, and hides itself with its own leaves; and were it not that the fragrant smell of his many virtues discovered him to the world, he would choose to live and die in his self-contenting secrecy.

#### IV. DEVICE AGAINST POOR AND IGNORANT SOULS

Fourthly, As Satan has his device to destroy gracious souls, so he has his devices to destroy *poor ignorant souls*, and that sometimes, ***By drawing them to esteem ignorance, and to neglect, slight, and despise the means of knowledge.*** Ignorance is the mother of mistake, the cause of trouble, error, and of terror; it is the highway to hell, and it makes a man both a prisoner and a slave to the devil at once. Ignorance unmans a man; it makes a man a beast, yes, makes him more miserable than the beast which perishes. (Ignorant ones have this advantage—they have a cooler hell.) There are none so easily nor so frequently captured in Satan's snares—as ignorant souls. They are easily

drawn to dance with the devil all day, and to dream of supping with Christ at night. 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.' Hosea 4:6. 'You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.' Matthew 22:29.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, ***That an ignorant heart is an evil heart.*** 'Without knowledge the mind is not good' (Prov. 19:2). As an ignorant heart is a naughty heart, it is a heart in the dark; and no good can come into a dark heart—but it must pass through the understanding: 'And if the eye be dark, all the body is dark' (Matt. 6:22). A leprous head and a leprous heart are inseparable companions. Ignorant hearts are so evil that they let fly on all hands, and spare not to spit their venom in the very face of God, as Pharaoh did when thick darkness was upon him.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, ***That ignorance is the deformity of the soul.*** As blindness is the deformity of the face, so is ignorance the deformity of the soul. As the lack of fleshly eyes spoils the beauty of the face, so the lack of spiritual eyes spoils the beauty of the soul. A man without knowledge is as a workman without his hands, as a painter without his eyes, as a traveler without his legs, or as a ship without sails, or a bird without wings, or like a body without a soul.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, ***That ignorance makes men the objects of God's hatred and wrath.*** 'It is a people who err in their hearts, and have not known my ways. Therefore I swear in my wrath, they should never enter into my rest' (Heb. 3:10, 11). 'My people are a people of no understanding; therefore he who made them will have no mercy on them' (Is. 27:11). Christ has said that he will come 'in flaming fire, to render vengeance on them that know not God' (2 Thess. 1:8). Ignorance will end in vengeance. When you see a poor blind man here, you do not loathe him, nor hate him—but you pity him. Oh! but soul-blindness makes you abominable in the sight of God. God has sworn that ignorant people shall never come into heaven. Heaven itself would be a hell to ignorant souls. They must needs err that know not God's ways, yet cannot they wander so wide as to miss of hell. 'My people are destroyed for want of knowledge;

because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you' (Hosea 4:6).

Chilo, one of the seven sages, being asked what God had done, answered, 'He exalted humble men, and suppressed proud ignorant fools.'

The Catholic Church says that ignorance is the mother of devotion—but the Scripture says, it is the mother of destruction.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, ***That ignorance is a sin that leads to all sins.*** All sins are seminally in ignorance. 'You do err, not knowing the Scriptures' (Matt. 22:29). It puts men upon hating and persecuting the saints. 'They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.' (John 16:2, 3). Paul thanks his ignorance for all his cruelties to Christians. 'I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly' (1 Tim. 1:13). (It seems right to note that the apostle does not allege his ignorance, for which he was responsible, as the ground of the 'mercy' shown him—but only as the source and explanation of his sin and violence. The clause, 'but I obtained mercy,' is parenthetical, and it is of importance to note this.)

It was ignorance that put the Jews upon crucifying Christ: 'Father, forgive them,' says Christ of his murderers, 'for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). 'For if the princes of this world had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory' (1 Cor. 2:8).

Sin at first was the cause of ignorance—but now ignorance is the cause of all sin. 'Swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and whoring abound,' says the prophet, 'because there is no knowledge of God in the land.' There are none so frequent, and so impudent in the ways of sin, as ignorant souls; they care not, nor mind not what they do, nor what they say against God, Christ, heaven, holiness, and their own souls. 'Our tongues are our own, who shall control us?' 'They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walks through the earth. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat

bread, and call not upon the Lord?' 'Therefore, pride is their necklace, and violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge out from fatness; the imaginations of their hearts run wild. They mock, and they speak maliciously; they arrogantly threaten oppression. They set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues strut across the earth. They say —'How can God know? Does the Most High know everything?' Look at them—the wicked!' Psalm 73:6-12

Aristotle makes ignorance the mother of all the misrule in the world. They did like Oedipus, who killed his father Laius, king of Thebes, and thought he killed his enemy.

## **FIVE MORE OF SATAN'S DEVICES**

Whereby he keeps poor souls from believing in Christ, from receiving of Christ, from embracing of Christ, from resting, leaning, or relying upon Christ—for everlasting happiness and blessedness, according to the gospel; and remedies against these devices.

**DEVICE 1. *By suggesting to the soul the greatness and vileness of his sins.***

What! says Satan, do you think you shall ever obtain mercy by Christ—you who have sinned with so high a hand against Christ? you who have slighted the offers of grace? you who have grieved the Spirit of grace? you who have despised the word of grace? you who have trampled under feet the blood of the covenant by which you might have been pardoned, purged, justified, and saved? you who have spoken and done all the evil that you could? No! no! says Satan, he has mercy for others—but not for you; pardon for others—but not for you; righteousness for others—but not for you. Therefore it is in vain for you to think of believing in Christ, or resting and leaning your guilty soul upon Christ (Jer. 3:5).

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, ***That the greater your sins are, the more you stand in***

**need of a Savior.** The greater your burden is, the more you stand in need of one to help to bear it. The deeper the wound is, the more need there is of the surgeon. The more dangerous the disease is, the more need there is of the physician. Who but madmen will argue thus: My burden is great, therefore I will not call out for help; my wound is deep, therefore I will not call out for balm; my disease is dangerous, therefore I will not go to the physician. Ah! it is spiritual madness, it is the devil's logic to argue thus: My sins are great, therefore I will not go to Christ, I dare not rest nor lean on Christ. Whereas the soul should reason thus: The greater my sins are, the more I stand in need of mercy, of pardon—and therefore I will go to Christ, who delights in mercy, who pardons sin for his own name's sake, who is as able and as willing to forgive pounds as pence, thousands as hundreds (Micah 7:18; Is. 43:25).

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, ***That the promise of grace and mercy is to returning souls.*** And, therefore, though you are ever so wicked, yet if you will return, God will be yours, and mercy shall be yours, and pardon shall be yours (2 Chron. 30:9): 'For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful. If you return to him, he will not continue to turn his face from you.' So Jer. 3:12: 'This is what the Lord says: O Israel, my faithless people, come home to me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever.' So Joel 2:13: 'Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts.' Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.' So Is. 55:7 'Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,' or, as the Hebrew reads it, 'He will multiply pardon.' So Ezekiel 18.

Ah! sinner, it is not your great transgressions that shall exclude you from mercy, if you will break off your sins by repentance and return to the fountain of mercy. Christ's heart, Christ's arms, are wide open to embrace the returning prodigal. it is not simply the greatness of your sins—but your decided persisting in sin, that will be your eternal overthrow.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly

to consider, ***That the greatest sinners have obtained mercy, and therefore you may obtain mercy.*** Manasseh was a notorious sinner. "**Manasseh** did what was evil in the LORD's sight, imitating the detestable practices of the pagan nations whom the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites. He rebuilt the pagan shrines his father, Hezekiah, had destroyed. He constructed altars for Baal and set up an Asherah pole, just as King Ahab of Israel had done. He also bowed before all the starry hosts and worshiped them. He even built pagan altars in the Temple of the Lord, the place where the Lord had said his name should be honored. He built these altars for all the starry hosts in both courtyards of the Lord's Temple. Manasseh even sacrificed his own son in the fire. He practiced sorcery and divination, and he consulted with mediums and spiritists. He did much that was evil in the Lord's sight, arousing his anger. Manasseh even took an Asherah pole he had made and set it up in the Temple!" (2 Kings 21:1-7). Ah! what a devil incarnate was he in his actings! Yet when he humbled himself, and sought the Lord, the Lord was entreated of him and heard his supplication, and brought him to Jerusalem, and made himself known unto him, and crowned him with mercy and loving-kindness, as you may see in 2 Chron. 33.

So **Paul** was once a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, yet he obtained mercy (1 Tim. 1:13). So **Mary Magdalene** was a notorious strumpet, a common whore, out of whom Christ cast seven devils, yet she is pardoned by Christ, and dearly beloved of Christ (Luke 7:37, 38). So Mark 16:9, 'Now, when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.'

Jansenius on the place says, it is very observable that our Savior after his resurrection first appeared to Mary Magdalene and Peter, both of whom had been grievous sinners; that even the worst of sinners may be comforted and encouraged to come to Christ, to believe in Christ, to rest and stay their souls upon Christ, for mercy here and glory hereafter. That is a very precious word for the worst of sinners to hang upon (Psalm 68:18). The psalmist speaking of Christ says, You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.'

What though you are a rebellious child, or a rebellious servant! What

though you are a rebellious swearer, a rebellious drunkard! Yet Christ has received gifts for you, 'even for the rebellious also.' He has received the gift of pardon, the gift of righteousness, yes, all the gifts of the Spirit for you, that your heart may be made a delightful house for God to dwell in.

John Godin has a story concerning a great rebel that had made a strong party against a Roman emperor. The emperor makes proclamation, that whoever could bring the rebel dead or alive, he would be rewarded with a great sum of money. The rebel hearing of this, comes and presents himself before the emperor, and demands the sum of money. Now, says the emperor, if I would put him to death, the world would say I did it to save my money. And so he pardons the rebel, and gives him the money.

Ah! sinners! Shall a heathen do this, who had but a drop of mercy and compassion in him: and will not Christ do much more, who has all fullness of grace, mercy, and glory in himself? Surely his affections do yearn towards the worst of rebels. Ah! if you still but come in, you will find him ready to pardon, yes, one fully made up of pardoning mercy. Oh! the readiness and willingness of Jesus Christ to receive to favor the greatest rebels! The father of mercies did meet, embrace, and kiss that prodigal mouth, which came from feeding with swine and kissing of harlots (Col. 1:19; 2:3, 4).

Ephraim had committed idolatry, and was backslidden from God; he was guilty of lukewarmness and unbelief, etc., yet says God, 'Ephraim is my dear son, he is a pleasant child, my affections are troubled for him, I will have mercy,' or rather as it is in the original, 'I will have mercy, mercy upon him, says the Lord.' (Hosea, 4:17; 5:3; 6:8, 11; 12:12, 14; 13:12. Vide Jer. 31:20)

Well! says God, though Ephraim is guilty of crimson sins, yet he is a son, a dear son, a precious son, a pleasant child; though he is black with filth, and red with guilt, yet my affections are troubled for him; I will have mercy, mercy upon him. Ah sinners, if these affections of mercy do not melt, win, and draw you—justice will be a swift witness against you, and make you lie down in eternal misery for kicking against the affections of mercy.

Christ hangs out still, as once that warlike Scythian did, a white flag of grace and mercy to returning sinners who humble themselves at his feet for favor. But if sinners continue to rebel, Christ will put forth his red flag, his bloody flag, and they shall die for ever by a hand of justice. **Sinners! there is no way to avoid perishing by Christ's iron rod—but by kissing his golden scepter!**

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, *That Jesus Christ has never refused the worst of sinners who are willing to receive him, to believe in him, to rest upon him for happiness and blessedness.* Ah! sinners, why should you be more cruel and unmerciful to your own souls than Christ is? Christ has not excluded you from mercy, why should you exclude your own souls from mercy? Oh that you would dwell often upon that choice Scripture (John 6:37): 'Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out.' Or as the original has it, 'I will not, no never cast out.'

Well! says Christ, if any man will come, or is coming to me, let him be more sinful or less; more unworthy or less; let him be ever so guilty, ever so filthy, ever so rebellious, ever so leprous—yet if he will but come, I will not, no never cast him off. So much is held forth in 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 'Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were! But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.'

Ah! sinners, do not think that he who has received such notorious sinners to mercy, will reject you. 'He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever' (Heb. 13:8). Christ was born in an inn, to show that he receives all comers; his garments were divided into four parts, to show that out of whatever part of the world we come, we shall be received. If we be naked, Christ has robes to clothe us; if we be harborless, Christ has room to lodge us. That is a choice scripture (Acts 10:34, 35) 'Then Peter opened his mouth and said—I now realize how true it is that God does not show

favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.'

The three tongues that were written upon the cross, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew (John 19:19, 20), to witness Christ to be the king of the Jews, do each of them in their several idioms avouch this singular axiom, that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior; and 'a threefold cord is not easily broken.' The apostle puts this out of doubt: Heb. 7:25: 'therefore he is able also to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.' Now, he were not an all-sufficient Savior, if he were not able to save the worst, as well as the least of sinners. Ah! sinners, tell Jesus Christ that he has not excluded you from mercy, and therefore you are resolved that you will sit, wait, weep, and knock at the door of mercy, until he shall say, 'Friends, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven, your persons are justified, and your souls shall be saved.'

**Remedy (5).** The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, *That the greater sinner you are, the dearer you will be to Christ, when he shall behold you as the travail of his soul* (Is. 53:11): 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.' The dearer we pay for anything, the dearer that thing is to us. Christ has paid most, and prayed most, and sighed most, and wept most, and bled most for the greatest sinners; and therefore they are dearer to Christ than others that are less sinful. Rachel was dearer to Jacob than Leah, because she cost him more; he obeyed, endured, and suffered more by day and night for her than for Leah. **Ah! sinners, the greatness of your sins does but set off the freeness and riches of Christ's grace, and the immensity of his love!** This makes heaven and earth to ring of his praise, that he loves those who are most unlovely, that he shows most favor to those who have sinned most highly against him, as might be showed by several instances in Scripture, as Paul, Mary Magdalene, and others. Who sinned more against Christ than these? And who had sweeter and choicer manifestations of divine love and favor than these?

**Remedy (6).** The sixth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, *That the longer you keep off from Christ, the greater and stronger your sins will grow.* All divine power and

strength against sin flows from the soul's union and communion with Christ (Rom. 8:10; 1 John 1:6, 7). While you keep off from Christ, you keep off from that strength and power which is alone able to make you trample down strength, lead captivity captive, and slay the Goliaths that bid defiance to Christ. It is only faith in Christ that makes a man triumph over sin, Satan, hell, and the world (1 John 5:4). It is only faith in Christ that binds the strong man's hand and foot, that stops the issue of blood, that makes a man strong in resisting, and happy in conquering (Matt. 5:15-35). Sin always dies most where faith lives most. The most believing soul is the most mortified soul.

Ah! sinner, remember this, there is no way on earth effectually to be rid of the guilt, filth, and power of sin—but by believing in the Savior. It is not resolving, it is not complaining, it is not mourning—but believing, which will make you divinely victorious over that body of sin that to this day is too strong for you, and that will certainly be your ruin, if it be not ruined by a hand of faith.

**Remedy (7).** The seventh remedy against this device of Satan is, wisely to consider, ***That as there is nothing in Christ to discourage the greatest sinners from believing in him, so there is everything in Christ that may encourage the greatest sinners to believe on him, to rest and lean upon him for all happiness and blessedness***(Cant. 1:3). If you look upon his nature, his disposition, his names, his titles, his offices as king, priest, and prophet—you will find nothing to discourage the greatest sinners from believing in him—but many things to encourage the greatest sinners to receive him, to believe in him. (Col. 1:19; 2:3; Cant. 5:10.)

Christ is the greatest good, the choicest good, the chief good, the most suitable good, the most necessary good. He is a pure good, a real good, a total good, an eternal good, and a soul-satisfying good (Rev. 3:17, 18). Sinners, are you poor? Christ has gold to enrich you. Are you naked? Christ has royal robes, he has white clothing to clothe you. Are you blind? Christ has eye-salve to enlighten you. Are you hungry? Christ will be manna to feed you. Are you thirsty? He will be a well of living water to refresh you. Are you wounded? He has a balm under his wings to heal you. Are you sick? He is a physician to cure you. Are you prisoners? He

has laid down a ransom for you. Ah, sinners! tell me, tell me, is there anything in Christ to keep you off from believing? No! Is there not everything in Christ that may encourage you to believe in him? Yes! Oh, then, believe in him, and then, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool' (Is. 1:18). No, then, your iniquities shall be forgotten as well as forgiven, they shall be remembered no more. God will cast them behind his back, he will throw them into the bottom of the sea! (Is. 43:25; 38:17; Micah 7:19).

**Remedy (8).** The eighth remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, ***The absolute necessity of believing in Christ.*** Heaven is too holy to hold unbelievers; their lodging is prepared in hell (Rev. 21:8): 'But the fearful and unbelieving etc. shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' 'If you believe not that I am he,' says Christ, 'you shall die in your sins' (John 8:24). **And he who dies in his sins must go to judgment and to hell in his sins.** Every unbeliever is a condemned man: 'He who believes not,' says John, 'is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And he who believes not the Son, shall not see life—but the wrath of God abides on him' (John 3:18, 36). Ah, sinners! the law, the gospel, and your own consciences, have passed the sentence of condemnation upon you, and there is no way to reverse the sentence but by believing in Christ. And therefore my counsel is this—Stir up yourselves to lay hold on the Lord Jesus, and look up to him, and wait on him, from whom every good and perfect gift comes, and give him no rest until he has given you that jewel 'faith'—which is more worth than heaven and earth, and which will make you happy in life, joyful in death, and glorious in the day of Christ (Is. 64:7; James 1:17; Is. 62:7).

And thus much for the remedies against this first device of Satan, whereby he keeps off thousands from believing in Christ.

**DEVICE 2. *By suggesting to sinners their unworthiness.***

Ah! says Satan, as you are worthy of the greatest misery, so you are unworthy of the least crumb of mercy. What! do you think, says Satan, that ever Christ will own, receive, or embrace such an unworthy wretch as

you are? No! No! if there were any worthiness in you, then, indeed, Christ might be willing to be entertained by you. You are unworthy to entertain Christ into your house, how much more unworthy are you to entertain Christ into your heart.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, *That God has nowhere in the Scripture required any worthiness in the creature before believing in Christ.* If you make a diligent search through all the Scripture, you shall not find, from the first line in Genesis to the last line in the Revelation, one word that speaks out God's requiring any worthiness in the creature before the soul's believing In Christ, before the soul's leaning and resting upon Christ for happiness and blessedness; and why, then, should that be a bar and hindrance to your faith, which God does nowhere require of you before you come to Christ, that you may have life? (Matt. 19:8; John 5:29). Ah, sinners! remember Satan objects your unworthiness against you only out of a design to keep Christ and your souls asunder forever; and therefore, in the face of all your unworthiness, rest upon Christ, come to Christ, believe in Christ, and you are happy forever (John 6:40, 47).

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, wisely to consider, *That none ever received Christ, embraced Christ, and obtained mercy and pardon from Christ—but unworthy souls.* Pray, what worthiness was in Matthew, Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene, Manasseh, Paul, and Lydia, before their coming to Christ, before their faith in Christ? Surely none! Ah, sinners! you should reason thus: Christ has bestowed the choicest mercies, the greatest favors, the highest dignities, the sweetest privileges, upon unworthy sinners, and therefore, O our souls, do not faint, do not despair—but patiently and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. Who can tell but that free grace and mercy may shine forth upon us, though we are unworthy, and give us a portion among those blessed ones who are now triumphing in heaven.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, *That if the soul will keep off from Christ until it is worthy—it will never close with Christ, it will never embrace Christ.* It will never be one with Christ, it must lie down in everlasting sorrow (Is. 50:11). God has laid up all worthiness in Christ, that the creature may

know where to find it, and receive it. There is no way on earth to make unworthy souls worthy—but by believing in Christ (James 2:23). Believing in Christ—of slaves, it will make you worthy sons; of enemies, it will make you worthy friends. God will count none worthy, nor call none worthy, nor carry it towards none as worthy—but believers, who are made worthy by the worthiness of

Christ's person, righteousness, satisfaction, and intercession (Rev. 3:4).

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, *That if you make a diligent search into your own hearts, you shall find that it is the pride and folly of your own hearts which puts you upon bringing of a worthiness to Christ.* Oh! you would gladly bring something to Christ that might render you acceptable to him; you are reluctant to come empty-handed. The Lord cries out, 'Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost! Why do you spend money on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods!' (Is. 55:1, 2). Here the Lord calls upon moneyless souls, upon penniless souls, upon unworthy souls—to come and partake of his precious favors freely. But sinners are proud and foolish, and because they have no money, no worthiness to bring, they will not come, though he sweetly invites them. Ah, sinners! what is more just than that you should perish forever—who prefer husks among swine, before the milk and wine, the sweet and precious things of the gospel, which are freely and sweetly offered to you. Well, sinners! remember this, it is not so much the sense of your unworthiness, as your pride, that keeps you off from a blessed closing with the Lord Jesus.

**DEVICE 3.** *By suggesting to sinners the lack of such and such preparations and qualifications.*

Says Satan, You are not prepared to entertain Christ; you are not thus and thus humbled and justified; you are not heart-sick of sin; you have not been under horrors and terrors as such and such; you must stay until you are prepared and qualified to receive the Lord Jesus.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly to consider, ***That such as have not been so and so prepared and qualified as Satan suggests, have received Christ, believed in Christ, and been saved by Christ.*** Matthew was called, sitting at the tax collector's booth, and there was such power went along with Christ's call, that made him to follow Christ (Matt. 9:9). We read not of any horrors or terrors that he was under before his being called by Christ. Reader! what preparations and qualifications were found in Zacchaeus, Paul, the jailor, and Lydia, before their conversion? (Luke 19:9, Acts 16:14, *seq.*). God brings in some by the sweet and still voice of the gospel, and usually such that are thus brought into Christ are the sweetest, humblest, choicest, and most fruitful Christians.

God is a free agent to work by law or gospel, by smiles or frowns, by presenting hell or heaven to sinners' souls. God thunders from mount Sinai upon some souls, and conquers them by thundering. God speaks to others in a still voice, and by that conquers them. You who are brought to Christ by the law, do not you judge and condemn those who are brought to Christ by the gospel; and you who are brought to Christ by the gospel, do not you despise those who are brought to Christ by the law. Some are brought to Christ by fire, storms, and tempests; others by more easy and gentle gales of the Spirit. The Spirit is free in the works of conversion, and, as the wind, it blows when, where, and how it pleases (John 3:8). Thrice happy are those souls that are brought to Christ, whether it be in a winter's night or in a summer's day.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, solemnly ***To dwell upon these following scriptures, which clearly evidence that poor sinners who are not such and such prepared and qualified to meet with Christ, to receive and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ; may, notwithstanding that, believe in Christ; and rest and lean upon him for happiness and blessedness, according to the gospel.*** Read Prov. 1:20-33, and chap 8:1-11, and chap. 9:1-6; Ezek. 16:1-14; John 3:14-18, 36; Rev. 3:15-20. Here the Lord Jesus Christ stands knocking at the Laodiceans' door; he would gladly have them to sup with him, and that he might sup with them; that is, that they might have intimate communion and fellowship

one with another.

Now, tell me, what preparations or qualifications had these Laodiceans to entertain Christ? Surely none; for they were lukewarm, they were 'neither hot nor cold,' they were 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked'; and yet Christ, to show his free grace and his condescending love, invites the very worst of sinners to open to him, though they were not such and such prepared or qualified to entertain him.

**Remedy (3).** The third remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, ***That the Lord does not in all the Scripture, require such and such preparations and qualifications before men come to Christ, before they believe in Christ, or entertain, or embrace the Lord Jesus.*** Believing in Christ is the great thing that God presses upon sinners throughout the Scripture, as all know that know anything of Scripture.

*Obj.* But does not Christ say, 'Come unto me all who *labor and are heavy laden*, and I will give you rest'? (Matt. 11:28). To this I shall give these three answers:

(1.) That though the invitation be to such that 'labor and are heavy laden,' yet the promise of giving rest, it is made over to 'coming,' to 'believing.'

(2.) That all this scripture proves and shows is, that such as labor under sin as under a heavy burden, and that are laden with the guilt of sin and sense of God's displeasure, ought to come to Christ for rest; but it does not prove that only such must come to Christ, nor that all men must be thus burdened and laden with the sense of their sins and the wrath of God, before they come to Christ.

Poor sinners, when they are under the sense of sin and wrath of God, are prone to run from creature to creature, and from duty to duty, and from ordinance to ordinance, to find rest; and if they could find it in anything or creature, Christ would never hear of them; but here the Lord sweetly invites them; and to encourage them, he engages himself to give them rest: 'Come,' says Christ, 'and I will give you rest.' I will not *show* you rest, nor barely *tell* you of rest—but 'I will *give* you rest.' I am faithfulness

itself, and cannot lie, 'I *will* give you rest.' I that have the greatest power to give it, the greatest will to give it, the greatest right to give it, 'Come, *heavy laden sinners*, and I will give you rest.' Rest is the most desirable good, the most suitable good, and to you the greatest good. 'Come,' says Christ, that is, 'believe in me, and I will give you rest'; I will give you peace with God, and peace with conscience; I will turn your storm into an everlasting calm; I will give you such rest, which the world can neither give to you nor take from you.

(3.) No one scripture speaks out the whole mind of God; therefore do but compare this one scripture with those several scriptures that are laid down in the second remedy last mentioned, and it will clearly appear, that though men are thus and thus burdened and laden with their sins and filled with horror and terror, if they may come to Christ, they may receive and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Remedy (4).** The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is, to consider, ***That all that trouble for sin, all that sorrow, shame, and mourning which is acceptable to God, and delightful to God, and prevalent with God, flows from faith in Christ, as the stream does from the fountain, as the branch does from the root, as the effect does from the cause.*** Zech. 12:10, 'They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.' All gospel mourning flows from believing; they shall first look, and then mourn. All who know anything about the gospel, know this, that 'whatever is not of faith is sin' (Rom. 14:23). **Until men have faith in Christ, their best services are but splendid sins!**

**DEVICE 4.** ***By suggesting to a sinner Christ's unwillingness to save.***

It is true, says Satan. Christ is able to save you—but is he willing? Surely, though he is able, yet he is not willing to save such a wretch as you are, who has trampled his blood under your feet, and who has been in open rebellion against him all your days.

**Remedy (1).** ***First, The great journey that he has taken, from heaven to earth, on purpose to save sinners, strongly demonstrates his willingness to save them.*** Matt. 9:13: 'I came

not to call the righteous—but sinners to repentance.' 1 Tim. 1:15: 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.'

*Secondly*, His divesting himself of his glory in order to sinners' salvation, speaks out his willingness to save them. He leaves his Father's bosom, he puts off his glorious robes, and lays aside his glorious crown, and bids adieu to his glistering courtiers the angels; and all this he does, that he may accomplish sinners' salvation. From the cradle to the cross, his whole life was a life of sufferings.

*Thirdly*, That sea of sin, that sea of wrath, that sea of trouble, that sea of blood that Jesus Christ waded through, that sinners might be pardoned, justified, reconciled, and saved, strongly evidences his willingness to save sinners (2 Cor. 5:19, 20).

*Fourthly*, His sending his ambassadors, early and late, to woo and entreat sinners to be reconciled to him, does with open mouth show his readiness and willingness to save sinners.

*Fifthly*, His complaints against such as refuse him, and who turn their backs upon him, and who will not be saved by him, strongly declares his willingness to save them (John 1:11): 'He came to his own, and his own received him not.' So in John 5:40, 'But you will not come to me, that you may have life.'

*Sixthly*, The joy and delight that he takes at the conversion of sinners demonstrates his willingness that they should be saved (Luke 15:7): 'I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.' God the Father rejoices at the return of his prodigal son; Christ rejoices to see the travail of his soul; the Spirit rejoices that he has another temple to dwell in; and the angels rejoice that they have another brother to delight in (Is. 53:11).

**DEVICE 5. *By working a sinner to mind more the secret decrees and counsels of God, than his own duty.***

What need you to busy yourself about receiving, embracing, and

entertaining of Christ? says Satan; if you are elected, you shall be saved; if not, all that you can do will do you no good. No, he will work the soul not only to doubt of its election—but to conclude that he is not elected, and therefore, let him do what he can, he shall never be saved.

**Remedy (1).** The first remedy against this device of Satan is, seriously to consider, *That not all the angels in heaven, nor all the men an earth, nor all the devils in hell, cannot tell to the contrary—but that you may be an elect person, a chosen vessel.* You may be confident of this, that God never made Satan one of his privy council, God never acquainted him with the names of such that he has set his love upon to eternity.

**Remedy (2).** The second remedy against this device of Satan is, *To meddle with that which you have to do.* 'Secret things belong to the Lord—but revealed things belong to you' (Deut. 29:29). Your work, sinner, is, to be peremptory in believing, and in returning to the Lord; your work is to cast yourself upon Christ, lie at his feet, to wait on him in his ways; and to give him no rest until he shall say, Sinner, I am your portion, I am your salvation—and nothing shall separate between you and me.

## SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF FALSE TEACHERS

Satan labors might and main, by false teachers, which are his emissaries, to deceive, delude, and forever undo the precious souls of men (Jer. 23:13) 'I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.' Micah 3:5: 'The prophets make my people to err.' They seduce them, and carry them out of the right way into by-paths and blind thickets of error, blasphemy, and wickedness, where they are lost forever. 'Beware of false prophets, for they come to you in sheep's clothing—but inwardly they are ravening wolves' (Matt. 7:15). These lick and suck the blood of souls (Phil. 3:2), 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers.' These kiss and kill; these cry, Peace, peace, until souls fall into everlasting flames! (Prov. 7). (Acts. 20:28-30; 2 Cor. 11:13-

15; Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 3:4-6; Titus 1:11, 22; 2 Peter 2:18,19.)

Now the best way to deliver poor souls from being deluded and destroyed by these messengers of Satan is, to discover them in their colors, that so, being known, poor souls may shun them, and fly from them as from hell itself.

Now you may know them by these characters following:

**[1.] False teachers are *men-pleasers*.**

Such are not true teachers; Gal. 1:10, 1 Thess. 2:1-4. They preach more to please the ear than to profit the heart (Is. 30:10): 'Who say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things: speak to us smooth things; prophecy deceits.' Jer. 5:30, 31: "A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophecy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?" Jeremiah 5:30-31. False teachers handle holy things rather with wit and trifling, rather than with fear and reverence. False teachers are soul-murderers. They are like evil surgeons, that skin over the wound—but never heal it. Flattery undid Ahab and Herod, Nero and Alexander. False teachers are hell's greatest enrichers. Not bitter—but flattering words do all the mischief, said Valerian, the Roman emperor. Such smooth teachers are sweet soul-poisoners. "This is my warning to my people," says the Lord Almighty. 'Do not listen to these prophets when they prophecy to you, filling you with futile hopes. They are making up everything they say. They do not speak for the Lord! They keep saying to these rebels who despise my word, 'Don't worry! The Lord says you will have peace!' And to those who stubbornly follow their own evil desires, they say, 'No harm will come your way!'" (Jer. 23:16, 17).

**[2.] False teachers are notable in casting dirt, scorn, and reproach upon the persons, names, and credits of Christ's most faithful ambassadors.**

Thus Korah, Dathan, and Abiram charged Moses and Aaron that they took too much upon them, seeing all the congregation was holy (Num. 16:3). You take too much state, too much power, too much honor, too much holiness upon you; for what are you more than others, that you take so much upon you? And so Ahab's false prophets fell foul on good

Micaiah, paying of him with blows for lack of better reasons (1 Kings 22:10-26). Yes, Paul, that great apostle of the Gentiles, had his ministry undermined and his reputation blasted by false teachers: 'For his letters,' say they, 'are weighty and powerful—but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible' (2 Cor. 10:10). They rather condemn him than admire him; they look upon him as a dunce rather than a doctor. And the same hard measure had our Lord Jesus from the scribes and Pharisees, who labored as for life to build their own credit upon the ruins of his reputation. And never did the devil drive a more full trade this way than he does in these days (Matt. 27:63). Oh! the dirt, the filth, the scorn that is thrown upon those of whom the world is not worthy! I suppose false teachers mind not that saying of Augustine: 'He who willingly takes from my good name, unwillingly adds to my reward.' The proverb is, 'A man's eye and his good name can bear no jests.'

**[3.] False teachers are *venters of the devices and visions of their own heads and hearts.***

Jer. 14:14: "Then the Lord said unto me—These prophets are telling lies in my name. I did not send them or tell them to speak. I did not give them any messages. They prophesy of visions and revelations they have never seen or heard. They speak foolishness made up in their own lying hearts." "This is my warning to my people," says the Lord Almighty. "Do not listen to these prophets when they prophesy to you, filling you with futile hopes. They are making up everything they say. They do not speak for the Lord!" Jeremiah 23:16.

Are there not multitudes in this nation whose visions are but golden delusions, lying vanities, brain-sick fantasies? These are Satan's great benefactors, and such as divine justice will hang up in hell as the greatest malefactors, if the physician of souls does not prevent it.

Matt. 24:4, 5; 11:14; Titus 1:10; Rom. 16:18

**[4.] *False teachers easily pass over the great and weighty things both of law and gospel, and stand most upon those things that are of the least importance and concern to the souls of men.***

1 Tim. 1:5-7: 'Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure

heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith sincere; from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law, and understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm.' Matt. 23:23: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for you pay tithe of mint, and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' False teachers are nice in the lesser things of the law, and as negligent in the greater. 1 Tim. 6:3-5: 'If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing—but doting about questions and strife of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw yourself.' If such teachers are not hypocrites in grain, I know nothing (Rom. 2:22). The earth groans to bear them, and hell is fitted for them (Matt. 24:32).

Luther complained of such in his time as would strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. This age is full of such teachers, such monsters! The high priest's spirit (Matt. 23:24) lives and thrives in these days.

**[5.] False teachers *cover and color their dangerous principles and soul-deceptions with very fair speeches and plausible pretenses, with high notions and golden expressions.***

Many in these days are bewitched and deceived by the magnificent words, lofty strains, and stately terms of deceivers. As strumpets paint their faces, and deck and perfume their beds, the better to allure and deceive simple souls; so false teachers will put a great deal of paint and garnish upon their most dangerous principles and blasphemies, that they may the better deceive and delude poor ignorant souls. They know sugared-poison goes down sweetly; they wrap up their pernicious, soul-killing pills in gold! (Gal. 6:12; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Rom. 16:17, 18; Matt. 16:6,11,12; 7:15.)

In the days of Hadrian the emperor, there was one Ben-Cosbi gathered a multitude of Jews together, and called himself *Ben-cocuba*, the son of a star, applying that promise to himself (Num. 24:17)—but he proved *Bar-chosaba*, the son of a lie. And so will all false teachers, for all their

flourishes prove at the last the sons of lies.

**[6.] False teachers *strive more to win over men to their opinions, than to better them in their lives.***

Matt. 23:15: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves!' They busy themselves most about men's heads. Their work is not to better men's hearts, and mend their lives; and in this they are very much like their father the devil, who will spare no pains to gain proselytes.

For shame! says Epictetus to his Stoics; either live as Stoics, or leave off the name of Stoics. The application is easy.

**[7.] False teachers *make merchandise of their followers***

"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping." 2 Peter 2:1-3. They eye your goods more than your good; and mind more the serving of themselves, than the saving of your souls. So they may have your substance, they care not though Satan has your souls (Rev. 18:11-13). That they may the better pick your purse, they will hold forth such principles as are very indulgent to the flesh. False teachers are the great worshipers of the golden calf. "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit." (Jer. 6:13).

Crates threw his money into the sea, resolving to drown it, lest it should drown him. But false teachers care not who they drown—so they may have their money.

Now, by these characters you may know them, and so shun them, and deliver your souls out of their dangerous snares.

## SIX PROPOSITIONS CONCERNING SATAN AND HIS DEVICES

And now, to prevent objections, I shall lay down some propositions or conclusions concerning Satan and his devices, and then give you the reasons of the point, and so come to make some use and application of the whole to ourselves.

***Proposition (1). That though Satan has his devices to draw souls to sin, yet we must be careful that we do not lay all our temptations upon Satan, that we do not wrong the devil, and father that upon him that is to be fathered upon our own base hearts.***

I think that oftentimes men charge that upon the devil that which is to be charged upon their own hearts. 'And the Lord said unto the woman, What is this that you have done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat' (Gen. 3:13). Sin and shifting of sin, came into the world together. This is no small baseness of our hearts, that they will blame that naughtiness upon Satan. Man has an evil root within him; that were there no devil to tempt him, nor no wicked men in the world to entice him, yet that root of bitterness, that cursed sinful nature which is in him, would draw him to sin, though he knows beforehand that 'the wages of sin is eternal death' (Rom. 6:23). 'For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies' (Matt. 15:19). The whole frame of man is out of frame. The understanding is dark, the will cross, the memory slippery, the affections crooked, the conscience corrupted, the tongue poisoned, and the heart wholly evil, only evil, and continually evil. Should God chain up Satan, and give him no liberty to tempt or entice people to vanity or folly, yet they could not but sin against him, by reason of that cursed nature that is in them, that will still be a-provoking them to those sins that will provoke and stir up the anger of God against them (Jude 15, 16).

Satan has only a *persuading* sleight, not an *enforcing* might. He may tempt us—but without ourselves he cannot conquer us; he may entice us—but without ourselves he cannot hurt us. Our hearts carry the greatest guilt in every sin. Satan can never undo a man without himself; but a man may easily undo himself without Satan. Satan can only present the golden cup—but he has no power to force us to drink the poison that is in the cup; he can only present to us the glory of the world, he cannot force us to fall down and worship him, to enjoy the world; he can only spread his snares, he has no power to force us to walk in the midst of his snares. Therefore do the devil so much right, as not to excuse yourselves, by your accusing him, and laying the load upon him, that you should lay upon your own hearts.

We are no sooner born, than buried in a bog of wickedness (*Cicero*).

The fire is our wood, though it be the devil's flame (*Nazianzen*).

***Prop. (2). That Satan has a great hand and stroke in most sins.*** It was Satan who tempted our first parents to rebellion. It was Satan who provoked David to number the people. It was Satan who put Peter upon rebuking Christ; therefore says Christ, 'Get behind me, Satan'. It was Satan who put Cain upon murdering of righteous Abel, therefore it is that he is called 'a murderer from the beginning'. It was Satan who put treason into the heart of Judas against Christ, 'And supper being ended, the devil having put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him'. It was Satan who put Ananias upon lying; Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?' (Gen. 3:1-5; 1 Chron. 21:1; Matt. 16:22, 23; John 8:44, 13:2; Acts 5:3)

As the hand of Joab was in the tale of the woman of Tekoah, so Satan's hand is usually in all the sins that men commit. Such is Satan's malice against God, and his envy against man, that he will have a hand one way or other in all the sins, though he knows that all the sins he provokes others to shall be charged upon him to his greater woe, and eternal torment.

Ambrose brings in the devil boasting against Christ and challenging Judas as his own: 'He is not yours, Lord Jesus, he is mine; his thoughts

beat for me; he eats with you—but is fed by me: he takes bread from you—but money from me; he drinks wine with you, and sells your blood to me.' Such is his malice against Christ, and his wrath and rage against man, that he will take all advantages to draw men to that which may give him advantage to triumph over men's souls forever.

**Prop. (3). That Satan must have a double permission before he can do anything against us.**

He must have permission from God, and permission from ourselves, before he can do anything against our happiness. He must have his permission from God, as you may see in the example of Job (Job 1:11, 12; 2:3-5). Though the devil had malice enough to destroy him, yet he had not so much as power to touch him, until God gave him permission.

They could not so much as enter into the swine without permission from Christ (Luke 8:32). Satan would gladly have combated with Peter—but this he could not do without leave. 'Satan has desired to have you, to winnow you' (Luke 22:31). So Satan could never have overthrown Ahab and Saul—but by permission from God (1 Kings 22). **Ah! what a cordial, what a comfort should this be to the saints—that their greatest, subtlest, and most vigilant enemy cannot hurt nor harm them, without permission from him who is their sweetest Savior, their dearest husband, and their choicest friend.**

And as Satan must have permission from God, so he must have permission from us. When he tempts, we must assent; when he makes offers, we must hearken; when he commands, we must obey, or else all his labor and temptations will be frustrated, and the evil that he tempts us to shall be put down only to his account. That is a remarkable passage in Acts 5:3, 'Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?' He does not expostulate the matter with Satan; he does not say, Satan, 'Why have you filled Ananias's heart to make him lie to the Holy Spirit?' but he expostulates the case with Ananias; Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled *your* heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?' Why have you given him an advantage to fill your heart with infidelity, hypocrisy, and obstinate audacity, to lie to the Holy Spirit? As if he had said, Satan could never have done this in you, which will now forever undo you, unless you had

given him permission. If, when a temptation comes, a man cries out, and says, "Ah, Lord! here is a temptation that would force me, that would deflower my soul, and I have no strength to withstand it! Oh! help! help! for your honor's sake, for your Son's sake, for your promise's sake!" it is a sign that Satan has not gained your consent—but committed a rape upon your souls, which he shall dearly pay for.

***Prop. (4). That no weapons but spiritual weapons will be useful and serviceable to the soul in fighting and combating with the devil.***

This the apostle shows: 'Therefore take unto you,' says he, 'the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand' (Eph. 6:13). So the same apostle tells you, 'That the weapons of your warfare are not carnal—but mighty through God, to the casting down of strongholds' (2 Cor. 10:4). You have not to do with a weak—but with a mighty enemy, and therefore you had need to look to it, that your weapons are mighty—which they cannot be, unless they are spiritual. Carnal weapons have no power in them towards the making of a conquest upon Satan. It was not David's sling nor stone that gave him the honor and advantage of setting his feet upon Goliath—but his faith in the name of the Lord Almighty. 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a shield—but I have come to you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied' (1 Sam. 17:45).

He who fights against Satan, in the strength of his own resolutions, constitution or education, will certainly fly and fall before him. Satan will be too hard for such a soul, and lead him captive at his pleasure. The only way to stand, conquer, and triumph, is still to plead, 'It is written,' as Christ did (Matt. 4:10). There is no sword but the two-edged sword of the Spirit, that will be found to be metal of proof when a soul comes to engage against Satan; therefore, when you are tempted to impurity, plead, 'It is written, be holy, as I am holy' (1 Peter 1:16); and, 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord' (2 Cor. 7:1). If he tempts you to distrust God's providence and fatherly care of you, plead, 'It is written, 'Those who fear the Lord shall lack no good thing.' (Psalm 34:9).

We read of many that, out of fortitude, could subdue nature—but were at a loss when they came to deal with a corruption or a temptation. Heraclitus's motto was, 'A Deo victoria!' It is God that gives victory; and that should be every Christian's motto.

It is written, 'The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those who live purely' (Psalm 84:11).

If he tempts you to fear that you shall faint, and fall, and never be able to run to the end of the race that is set before you, plead, It is written, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger' (Job. 17:9).

It is written, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good—but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from me' (Jer. 32:40).

It is written, 'Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint' (Is. 40:31).

If Satan tempts you to think that because your sun for the present is set in a cloud, that therefore it will rise no more, and that the face of God will shine upon you no more; that your best days are now at an end, and that you must spend all your time in sorrow and sighing; plead, It is written, 'He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, and cast all our sins into the depth of the sea' (Micah 7:19).

It is written, 'For a small moment have I forsaken you—but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment—but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer' (Is. 54:8, 10).

It is written, 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed—but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you.'

It is written, 'Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not

have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will not I forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of my hands, your walls are continually before me' (Is. 49:15, 16).

If ever you would be too hard for Satan, and after all his assaults, have your bow abide in strength, then take to yourself the Word of God, which is 'the two-edged sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, whereby you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil' (Eph. 6:17). It is not spitting at Satan's name, nor crossing yourselves, nor leaning to your own resolutions, that will get you the victory.

Luther reports of Staupitius, a German minister, that he acknowledged himself, that before he came to understand aright the free and powerful grace of God, he vowed and resolved a hundred times against some particular sin, and never could get power over it. At last he saw the reason to be his trusting to his own resolution. Therefore be skillful in the word of righteousness, and in the actings of faith upon Christ and his victory, and that crown of glory which is set before you, and Satan will certainly fly from you (James 4:7).

***Prop. (5). That we may read much of Satan's nature and disposition by the diverse names and epithets that are given him in the Scripture.***

Sometimes he is called *Behemoth*, whereby the greatness and brutishness of the devil is figured (Job 40:15). Those evil spirits are sometimes called accusers, for their calumnies and slanders; and evil ones, for their malice. Satan is *Adversarius*, an adversary, that troubles and molests (1 Pet. 5:8). *Abaddon* is a destroyer (Rev. 9:11). They are *tempters*, for their suggestion; *lions*, for their devouring; *dragons*, for their cruelty; and *serpents*, for their subtlety. As his names are, so is he; as face answers to face, so do Satan's names answer to his nature. He has the worst names and the worst nature of all created creatures.

***Prop. (6). That God will shortly tread down Satan under the saints' feet.***

Christ, our champion, has already won the field, and will shortly set our

feet upon the necks of our spiritual enemies. Satan is a foiled adversary. Christ has led him captive, and triumphed over him upon the cross. Christ has already overcome him, and put weapons into your hands, that you may overcome him also, and set your feet upon his neck. Though Satan be a roaring lion, yet Christ, who is the lion of the tribe of Judah, will make Satan fly and fall before you. Let Satan do his worst, yet you shall have the honor and the happiness to triumph over him. Cheer up, you precious sons of Zion, for the certainty and sweetness of victory will abundantly recompense you for all the pains you have taken in making resistance against Satan's temptations. The broken horns of Satan shall be trumpets of our triumph and the coronets of our joy.

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." Romans 16:20. The Greek word signifies to break or crash a thing to pieces. Being applied to the feet—it means that crushing which is by stamping upon a thing.

## **FIVE REASONS OF THE POINT**

Now I shall come to the reasons of the point, and so draw to a close.

***Reason (1). That their hearts may be kept in a humble, praying, watching frame.***

Oh! has Satan so many devices to ensnare and undo the souls of men? How should this awaken dull, drowsy souls, and make them stand upon their watch! A Christian should be like the seraphim, beset all over with eyes and lights, that he may avoid Satan's snares, and stand fast in the hour of temptation.

The Lord has in the Scripture discovered the several snares, plots, and devices that the devil has to undo the souls of men, that so, being forewarned, they may be forearmed; that they may be always upon their watch-tower, and hold their weapons in their hands, as the Jews did in Nehemiah's time.

The philosopher had a ball of brass in his hand; if he chanced to sleep it fell into a basin and awaked him to his studies. You are wise and know how to apply it.

***Reason (2). From that malice, envy, and enmity that is in Satan against the souls of men.***

Satan is full of envy and enmity, and that makes him very studious to suit his snares and plots to the tempers, constitutions, fancies, and callings of men, that so he may make them as miserable as himself.

Malice cares not what it says or does, just so that it may kill or gall.

The Russians are so malicious, that they have a man hide some of his own goods in the house of him whom he hates, and then accuse him for the stealing of them. So does Satan, out of malice to the souls of men, hide his goods, his wares, as I may say, in the souls of men, and then go and accuse them before the Lord; and a thousand, thousand other ways Satan's malice, envy, and enmity puts him upon, eternally to undo the precious souls of men.

An envious heart and plotting head, are inseparable companions.

***Reason (3). The third reason is drawn from that long experience that Satan has had.***

He is a spirit of mighty abilities; and his abilities to lay snares before us are mightily increased by that long standing of his. He is a spirit of over five thousand years' standing. He has had time enough to study all those ways and methods which tend most to ensnare and undo the souls of men. And as he has time enough, so he has made it his whole study, his only study, his constant study, to find out snares, traps, and stratagems, to entangle and overthrow the souls of men. When he was but a young serpent, he did easily deceive and outwit our first parents. But now he is grown into that 'old serpent,' as John speaks (Rev. 12:9). He is as old as the world, and is grown very cunning by experience.

***Reason (4). In judgment to the men of the world, that they***

***may stumble and fall, and be ensnared forever.***

Wicked men who withstand the offers of mercy, and despise the Spirit of grace; who will not open, though God knocks ever so hard by his Word and rod, by his Spirit and conscience—are given up by a hand of justice, to be hardened, deceived, and ensnared by Satan, to their everlasting ruin (1 Kings 22:23). And what can be more just than that they should be taken and charmed with Satan's wiles, who have frequently refused to be charmed by the Spirit of grace, though he has charmed ever so wisely, and ever so sweetly?

***Reason (5). That the excellency and power of God's grace may be more illustrated and manifested, by making his people able to grapple with this mighty adversary, and that notwithstanding all the plots, devices, and stratagems of Satan, yet he will make them victorious here, and crown them with glory hereafter.***

The greater and the subtler the enemies of the children of Israel were—the more did divine power, wisdom, and goodness, sparkle and shine; and that, notwithstanding all their power, plots, and stratagems, yet to Canaan God would bring them at last. When Paul had weighed this, he sits down and glories in his infirmities and distresses and Satan's buffetings—that the power of Christ might rest upon him (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

## **TEN SPECIAL HELPS AND RULES AGAINST SATAN'S DEVICES**

If Satan has such a world of devices and stratagems to ensnare and undo the souls of men; then, instead of wondering that so few are saved, sit down and wonder that any are saved, that any escape the snares of this cunning fowler, who spreads his nets and casts forth his baits in all places, in all cases and companies.

But this is not the main thing that I intend to speak to; my main business shall be, to set before you some special rules and helps against all his devices.

***The first help.*** If you would not be taken by any of Satan's devices, then ***walk by rule of the Word of God.*** (Prov. 12:24; Gal. 6:16) He who walks by rule, walks most safely; he who walks by rule, walks most honorably; he who walks by rule, walks most sweetly. **When men throw off the Word, then God throws them off, and then Satan takes them by the hand, and leads them into snares at his pleasure.** He who thinks himself too good to be ruled by the Word, will be found too bad to be owned by God; and if God does not, or will not own him—Satan will by his stratagems overthrow him. Those who keep to the rule, shall be kept in the hour of temptation. 'Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.' (Rev. 3:10)

***The second help.*** As you would not be taken with any of Satan's devices, ***take heed of vexing and grieving of the Holy Spirit of God.*** The Divine Spirit is very tender; if you grieve him, he will certainly grieve and vex your precious souls (Lam. 1:16.) It is the Spirit who is best able to discover Satan's snares against us; it is only he who can point out all his plots, and discover all his methods, and enable men to escape those pits that Satan has dug for their precious souls. Ah! if you set that sweet and blessed Spirit a-mourning, who alone can secure you from Satan's depths—by whom will you be preserved? Man is a weak creature, and no way able to discover Satan's snares, nor to avoid them—unless the Spirit of the Lord gives skill and power. Therefore, whoever is grieved, be sure the Spirit is not grieved by your enormities, nor by your refusing the cordials and comforts that he sets before you, nor by slighting and despising his gracious actings in others, nor by calling sincerity hypocrisy, and faith fancy, nor by fathering those things upon the Spirit, that are the offspring and fruits of your own hearts. (Is. 63:10; Psalm 73:23; 1 Thess. 5:19; Acts 2:13.)

The Spirit of the Lord is your counselor, your comforter, your upholder, your strengthener. It is the Spirit alone, who makes a man too great for

Satan to conquer. 'Greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4).

**The third help.** If you would not be taken with any of Satan's devices, then **labor for more heavenly wisdom.** Ah, souls! you are much in the dark, you have but a little wisdom compared to what others have, and compared to that you might have had. There are many educated souls—but there are but a few wise souls. There is oftentimes a great deal of knowledge, where there is but a little wisdom to improve that knowledge. It is not the most knowing Christian—but the most wise Christian, who sees, avoids, and escapes Satan's snares. 'The way of life leads upward for the wise,' says Solomon, 'that he may depart from hell beneath' (Prov. 15:24). Heavenly wisdom makes a man delight to fly high; and the higher any man flies, the more he is out of the reach of Satan's snares.

Ah, souls! you had need of a great deal of heavenly wisdom, to see where and how Satan lays his baits and snares; and wisdom to find out proper remedies against his devices, and wisdom to apply those remedies seasonably, inwardly, and effectually to your own hearts, that so you may avoid the snares which that evil one has laid for your precious souls.

If men could but see the fair face of wisdom with mortal eyes, they would be in love with her, says Plato.

**The fourth help.** If you would not be taken with any of Satan's devices, then **make immediate resistance against Satan's first motions.** It is safe to resist, it is dangerous to dispute. Eve disputes, and falls in paradise (Gen. 3); Job resists, and conquers upon the ash-heap. He who will play with Satan's bait, will quickly be taken with Satan's hook! The promise of conquest is given to resisting, not to disputing: 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (James 4:7). Ah, souls! were you better at resisting than at disputing, your temptations would be fewer, and your strength to stand would be greater than now it is.

**The fifth help.** If you would not be taken with any of Satan's devices, then **labor to be filled with the Spirit.** The Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of light and power; and what can a soul do without light and power against spiritual wickedness in high places? (Eph. 6:12). It is not enough

that you have the Spirit—but you must be filled with the Spirit, or else Satan, that evil spirit, will be too hard for you, and his plots will prosper against you. That is a sweet word of the apostle, 'Be filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18); *that is*, labor for abundance of the Spirit. He who thinks he has enough of the Holy Spirit, will quickly find himself vanquished by the evil spirit. Satan has his snares to take you in prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in strength and weakness, when you are alone and when you are in company, when you come on to spiritual duties and when you come off from spiritual duties, and if you are not filled with the Spirit, Satan will be too hard and too crafty for you, and will easily and frequently take you in his snares, and make a prey of you in spite of your souls. Therefore labor more to have your hearts filled with the Spirit than to have your heads filled with notions, your shops with wares, your chests with silver, or your bags with gold; so shall you escape the snares of this fowler, and triumph over all his plots.

Luther says, a holy gluttony is to lay on, to feed hard, and to fetch hearty draughts, until they be even drunk with the abundance of the Spirit. Oh that there were more such holy gluttony in the world!

***The sixth help.*** If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then ***keep humble.*** An humble heart will rather lie in the dust than rise by wickedness, and sooner part with all than the peace of a good conscience. Humility keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting, and snares of his spreading; as the low shrubs are free from many violent gusts and blasts of wind, which shake and rend the taller trees. The devil has least power to fasten a temptation on him who is most humble. He who has a gracious measure of humility, is neither affected with Satan's offers nor terrified with his threatenings.

I have read of one who, seeing in a vision many snares of the devil spread upon the earth, he sat down, and mourned, and said in himself, Who shall pass through these? Whereupon he heard a voice answering, *Humility shall.*

God has said, that 'he will teach the humble,' and that 'he will dwell with the humble,' and that 'he will fill and satisfy the humble. And if the teachings of God, the indwellings of God, if the pourings in of God, will

not keep the soul from falling into Satan's snares, I do not know what will. And therefore as you would be happy in resisting Satan, and blessed in triumphing over Satan and all his snares—keep humble! I say again, keep humble! (Psalm 25:9; Is. 57:15, James 4:6.)

***The seventh help.*** If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then ***keep a strong, close, and constant watch*** (1 Thess. 5:6). A sleepy soul is already an ensnared soul. That soul that will not watch against temptations, will certainly fall before the power of temptations. Satan works most strongly on the imagination, when the soul is drowsy. The soul's slothfulness is Satan's opportunity to fall upon the soul and to destroy the soul, as Joshua did the men of Ai. The best way to be safe and secure from all Satan's assaults is, with Nehemiah and the Jews, to watch and pray, and pray and watch. By this means they became too hard for their enemies, and the work of the Lord did prosper sweetly in their hands.

Remember how Christ chid his sluggish disciples. 'What! could you not watch with me one hour?' what, cannot you watch with me? how will you then die with me? if you cannot endure words, how will you endure wounds? Satan always keeps a crafty and malicious watch, 'seeking whom he may devour.' 1 Peter 5:8. Satan is very envious of our condition, that we should enjoy that paradise out of which he is cast, and out of which he shall be forever kept!

We must effectually mind these following scriptures, wherein this duty of watchfulness is so strictly enjoined: Matt 26:40; Mark 13:33, 34, 35, 37; 1 Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2; 1 Peter 4:7; Rev. 2:3.

Shall Satan keep a crafty watch, and shall not Christians keep a holy spiritual watch? Our whole life is beset with temptations. Satan watches all opportunities to break our peace, to wound our consciences, to lessen our comforts, to impair our graces, to slur our evidences, and to dampen our assurances. Oh! what need then have we to be always upon our watch-tower, lest we be surprised by this subtle serpent. Watchfulness includes a waking, a rousing up of the soul. It is a continual, careful observing of our hearts and ways, in all the turnings of our lives—that we still keep close to God and his Word.

Hannibal never rested, whether he did conquer or was conquered. It is so with Satan. 'Learn, for shame of the devil,' said blessed Latimer, 'to watch, seeing the devil is so watchful.'

Watchfulness is nothing else but the soul running up and down, to and fro, busy everywhere. Watchfulness is the heart busied and employed with diligent observation of what comes from within us, and of what comes from without us and into us. Ah, souls! you are no longer safe and secure than when you are upon your watch. While Antipater kept the watch, Alexander was safe; and while we keep a strict watch, we are safe. A watchful soul is a soul upon the wing, a soul out of gun-shot, a soul upon a rock, a soul in a castle, a soul above the clouds, a soul held fast in God's everlasting arms!

I shall conclude this seventh head with this advice: Remember the dragon is subtle, and bites the elephant's ear, and then sucks his blood, because he knows that to be the only place which the elephant cannot reach with his trunk to defend; so our enemies are so subtle, that they will bite us, and strike us where they may most mischief us, and therefore it does very much concern us, to stand always upon our guard.

***The eighth help.*** If you would not be taken with any of Satan's snares and devices, then ***keep up your communion with God.*** Your strength to stand and withstand Satan's fiery darts is from your communion with God. A soul high in communion with God may be tempted—but will not easily be conquered. Such a soul will fight it out to the death. Communion with God furnishes the soul with the greatest and the choicest arguments to withstand Satan's temptations. Communion is the result of union. Communion is a reciprocal exchange between Christ and a gracious soul. Communion is Jacob's ladder, where you have Christ sweetly coming down into the soul, and the soul, by divine influences, sweetly ascending up to Christ. Communion with Christ is very inflaming, elevating and strengthening. While Samson kept up his communion with God, no enemy could stand before him—he goes on conquering and to conquer. But when he was fallen in his communion with God, he quickly falls before the plots of his enemies. It will be so with your souls. So long as your communion with God is kept up, you will be too hard for 'spiritual wickedness in high places'; but if you fall from your communion with

God, you will fall, as others, before the face of every temptation.

David, so long as he kept up his communion with God, he stands, and triumphs over all his enemies; but when he was fallen in his communion with God, then he falls before the enemies that were in his own bosom, and flies before those who pursued after his life. It will be so with your souls, if you do not keep up your communion with God. Job keeps up his communion with God, and conquers Satan upon the ash-heap; Adam loses his communion with God, and is conquered by Satan in paradise. Communion with God is a shield upon land, as well as an anchor at sea; it is a sword to defend you, as well as a staff to support you; therefore keep up your communion.

***The ninth help.*** If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then ***do not engage Satan in your own strength—but be every day drawing new virtue and strength from the Lord Jesus.*** Certainly that soul that engages against any old or new temptation without new strength, new influences from on high—will fall before the power of the temptation. You may see this in Peter; he rested upon some old received strength—"Though all men should deny you, yet I will not!" (Matt. 26:35)—and therefore he falls sadly before a new temptation. He curses and swears, and denies him thrice—who had thrice appeared gloriously to him. **Ah, souls! when the snare is spread, look up to Jesus Christ,** who is lifted up in the gospel, as the brazen serpent was in the wilderness, and say to him, "Dear Lord! here is a new snare laid to catch my soul, and grace formerly received, without fresh supplies from your blessed bosom, will not deliver me from this snare. Oh! give me new strength, new power, new influences, new measures of grace, that so I may escape the snares!"

Ah, souls! remember this, that your strength to stand and overcome must not be expected from graces received in the past—but from the fresh and renewed influences of heaven. You must lean more upon Christ than upon your duties; you must lean more upon Christ than upon your spiritual tastes and discoveries: you must lean more upon Christ than upon your graces, or else Satan will lead you into captivity.

"Apart from me you can do nothing." Separate from me, or apart from

me, you can do nothing.

***The tenth help.*** If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then ***be much in prayer.*** Prayer is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God and a scourge to the devil. David's heart was often more out of tune than his harp. He prays, and then, in spite of the devil, cries, 'Return unto your rest, O my soul.' Prayer is the gate of heaven, a key to let us into paradise. There is nothing that renders Satan's plots fruitless like prayer; therefore says Christ: 'Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation' (Matt. 26:41). You must watch and pray, and pray and watch, if you would not enter into temptation.'

When Sennacherib and Haman had laid plots and snares to have destroyed the Jews, they prayed, and their souls were delivered, and Sennacherib and Haman destroyed. David had many snares laid for him, and this puts him upon prayer. "But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign Lord; in you I take refuge--do not give me over to death. Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, from the traps set by evildoers. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by in safety." (Psalm 141:8-10).

"Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from men of violence who plan to trip my feet. Proud men have hidden a snare for me; they have spread out the cords of their net and have set traps for me along my path. O Lord, I say to you, 'You are my God.' Hear, O Lord, my cry for mercy." (Psalm 140:4-6). Saul and many others had laid snares for David, and this puts him upon prayer, and so the snares are broken and he is delivered.

Ah, souls! take words to yourselves, and tell God that Satan has spread his snares in all places and in all companies! Tell God that he digs deep, and that he has plot upon plot, and device upon device—and all to undo you! Tell God that you have neither skill nor power to escape his snares! Tell God that it is a work too high and too hard for any created creature to work your deliverance, unless he puts under his own everlasting arms! Tell God how his honor is engaged to stand by you, and to bring you off a victor, that you be not ruined by Satan's plots! Tell God how the wicked would triumph, if you should fall into Satan's snares! Tell God of the love

of Christ, of the blood of Christ, and of the intercession of Christ for you, that a way may be found for your escape! Tell God that if he will make it his honor to save you from falling into Satan's snares, you will make it your glory to speak of his goodness and to live out his kindness. Christians must do as Daedalus, that when he could not escape by a way upon earth, went by a way of heaven—and that is, the way of prayer, which is the only way left to escape Satan's snares.

**USE.** The next use is a use of *thankfulness to those who escape Satan's snares—that they have not been taken by him at his will*. Ah! Christians, it stands upon you with that princely prophet David, to call upon your souls, and say, 'Bless the Lord, O our souls; and all that is within us, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O our souls, and do not forget all his benefits!' (Psalm 103:1, 2). God has not given us to be a prey to Satan, and to be ensnared by those snares that he has laid for our souls! The sense of this great favor did work up David's heart to praises: "Praise be to the Lord, who has not let us be torn by their teeth. We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 124:6-8).

Ah! Christians, remember that the greatest part of the world, yes, the greatest part of professors, are taken in Satan's snares. Can you think seriously of this, and not blush to be unthankful? What are you better than others? and what have you deserved of God, or done for God more than others—that you should by the help of a divine hand escape the snares, when others are taken and held in the snares of the devil to their eternal overthrow?

Will you be thankful for the escaping the snares that men spread for your lives or estates, and will you not be much more thankful for escaping those snares that Satan has laid for your precious souls? "But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure. I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign Lord; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone. Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous

deeds." (Psalm 71:14-17).

Remember this, that deliverance from Satan's snares does carry with it the clearest and the greatest evidence, that the soul and heart of God to are towards us. Many a man by a common hand of providence escapes many a snare that another has laid for him—but yet escapes not the snares that Satan has laid for him. Saul, and Judas, and Demas, doubtless escaped many snares that men had laid for them—but none of them escaped the snares that the devil had laid for them. Many men are lifted up above the snares of men by a common hand of providence, that are left to fall into the snares of the devil by a hand of justice. Your deliverance from Satan's snares is a fruit of special love. Can you thus look upon it and not be thankful, O precious soul? I judge not.

**USE.** The last use of this point is, *To encourage Christians to long to be at home with Jesus.* Oh! long to be in the bosom of Christ! long to be in the land of Canaan! for this world, this wilderness, is full of snares; and all our employments are full of snares; and all our enjoyments are full of snares. In civil things, Satan has his snares to entrap us; and in all spiritual things, Satan has his snares to catch us. All places are full of snares, city and country, shop and closet, sea and land. Even our mercies are all surrounded with snares! There are snares about our tables and snares about our beds! Yes, Satan is so powerful and subtle that he will oftentimes make our greatest, nearest, and dearest mercies to become our greatest snares! Sometimes he will make the wife that lies in the bosom to be a snare to a man, as Samson's was, and as Job's was. Sometimes he will make the child to be a snare, as Absalom was and Eli's sons were. And sometimes he will make the servant to be a snare, as Joseph was to his mistress.

Ah! souls, Satan is so cunning and artful, that he can turn your bread into snares, and your clothes into snares, and your houses into snares, and your gardens into snares, and all your recreations into snares. And oh! how should the consideration of these things work all your souls to say with the church, 'Make haste, my beloved, and be like a roe, or a young deer upon the mountain of spices,' and to love, and look, and long for the coming of Christ (Cant. 8:14). Shall the espoused maid long for the marriage day? Shall the servant long for his freedom? Shall the captive

long for his ransom? Shall the traveler for long his inn, and the mariner for his harbor? And shall not the people of the Lord long much more to be in the bosom of Christ? there being nothing below the bosom of Christ that is not surrounded with Satan's snares (Phil. 1:23, and 2 Cor. 5:2, 4).

Augustine wished that he might have seen three things: Rome flourishing, Paul preaching, and Christ conversing with men upon the earth. Bede comes after, and, correcting this last wish, says, Yes—but let me see the King in his beauty, Christ is his heavenly kingdom.

What Paul once spoke of bonds and afflictions, that they attended him in every place (Acts 20:23), that may all the saints say of Satan's snares—that they attend them in every place; which should cause them to cry out, "Let us go hence, let us go hence!" Ah! souls, until you are taken up into the bosom of Christ, your comforts will not be full, pure, and constant. Until then, Satan will still be thumping on you, and spreading snares to entangle you! Therefore you should always be crying out with the church, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' (Rev. 22:20).

Is not Christ the star of Jacob, that 'gives light to those who are in darkness'? Is not Christ that Prince of peace who brings the olive branch to souls that are perplexed? Is not the greatest worth and wealth in him? Are not the petty excellencies and perfections of all created creatures epitomized in him? Is not he the crown of crowns, the glory of glories, and the heaven of heavens? Oh then, be still a-longing after a full, clear, and constant enjoyment of Christ in heaven; for until then, Satan will still have plots and designs upon you. He acts by an untiring power, and will never let you rest until you are taken up to an everlasting rest in the bosom of Christ!

It is as easy to contain the sea in a nutshell—as to relate fully Christ's excellencies, or heaven's happiness!

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against **the devil's schemes**. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil

comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." *Ephesians 6:11-13*

## **A Word in Season to Suffering Saints**

**The special presence of God with His people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers.**

By Thomas Brooks, London, 1675

### **Chapter 1**

"At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But **the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength**, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth." 2 Timothy 4:16-17

## Chapter 2

It is God's favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people, which makes them persevere in an evil day: Romans 8:31, "If God is for us—who can be against us?"

## Chapter 3

What are the reasons why God will be favorably, specially, and eminently present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers?

### **APPLICATION**

#### Ten Inferences

We shall now come to the application or useful improvement of this great and seasonable truth. Then let me briefly give these ten INFERENCES.

#### Ten Exhortations

The next use is a use of exhortation, to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, as to keep the divine presence—as to keep the special, the singular presence of God, with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. Now that this may stick in power upon your souls, consider seriously of these following motives:

#### Means

What MEANS should we use that we may enjoy the gracious presence of the Lord with us in our greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers?

#### Comfort and consolation

The last use of all, is a use of comfort and consolation to all the people of God, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses.

"At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But **the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength**, so that through me the message might be fully

proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth." 2 Timothy 4:16-17

In my text you have three things which are most remarkable—

**First**, You have Paul's commemoration of that singular experience that he had of the favorable presence of Christ with him, and of his strengthening of him, "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength." Acts 23:11; though I was deserted by men—yet I was aided and assisted by Christ, 2 Tim. 4:16; though all men left me to shift for myself—yet the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me with wisdom, prudence, courage, and constancy, in the lack of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all outward discouragements, 2 Tim. 1:15.

**Secondly**, Here is the end for which the Lord stood by him, assisted, strengthened, and delivered him, namely—that he might preach the gospel to the nations, Romans 11:13; Phil. 4:22, that he might have more time, and further opportunity, to spread abroad the everlasting gospel among the Gentiles. *Rome*, at this time, was the queen of the world, and in its most flourishing condition; people from all parts of the world flocked to Rome. Now when they would hear and see Paul's prudence, courage, constancy, and boldness, in professing of Christ, and in preaching and professing the gospel—before that grand tyrant, that monster of mankind, Nero—they could not but be wrought upon, and the fame of the glorious gospel could not but by this means be spread all the world over.

**Thirdly**, Here is the greatness of the danger from which he was delivered, namely, "I was delivered from the lion's mouth." Some authors conceive these words to be a proverbial speech, noting some eminent, present, devouring danger; "I was delivered from the extreme hazard of death," even as a man rescued out of a lion's mouth, and pulled from between his teeth. Others more genuinely and properly, by "the lion's mouth," do understand Nero's rage and cruelty, who, for his potency in preying on the flock of Christ, is here fitly compared to a lion, which devoured and destroyed the flock of Christ. This cruel lion *Nero*, put a multitude of Christians to death, and made a bloody decree, that whoever confessed himself a Christian, he would, without any deliberation, be put

to death as a convicted enemy of mankind. This bloody monster, Nero, raised the first bloody persecution. To pick a quarrel with the Christians he set the city of Rome on fire, and then charged it upon the Christians, under which pretense he exposed them to the fury of the people, who cruelly tormented them as if they had been common burners and destroyers of cities, and the deadly enemies of mankind! Yes, Nero himself caused them to be apprehended and clad in wild beasts' skins and torn in pieces with dogs; others were crucified; some he made bonfires of to light his night-sports. To be short, such horrid cruelty he used towards them as caused many of their enemies to pity them. But God found out this bloody persecutor at last, for being adjudged by the senate an enemy to mankind, he was condemned to be whipped to death, for the prevention whereof he cut his own throat.

The words being thus briefly opened, the main point I shall insist upon is this—namely, That **when the people of God are in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—then the Lord will be most favorably, most specially, and most eminently present with them.**

They learned say that God is five ways present—

- (1.) In the humanity of *Christ*, by hypostatical union;
- (2.) In the *saints*, by knowledge and love;
- (3.) In the church, by his essence and direction;
- (4.) In heaven, by his majesty and glory;
- (5.) In *hell*, by his vindictive justice.

Hemingius says, There is a fourfold presence of God—

- (1.) There is a presence of *power* in all men, even in the reprobates;
- (2.) A presence of *grace*, only in the elect;
- (3.) A presence of *glory*, in the angels, and saints departed;

(4.) A *hypostatic* presence of the Father with the Son.

But, if you please, you may take notice that **there is a sixfold presence of the Lord—**

**1. First, There is a GENERAL presence of God**, and thus he is present with all creatures. "Where shall I flee from your presence?" Psalm 139:7. Empedocles, the philosopher, said well, that "God is a circle, whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere." God is not bound by any place, and not excluded from any place. Says another: "God is the soul of the world; his eye is in every corner, etc." To which purpose they so portrayed their goddess Minerva, that whichever way one cast his eye, she always beheld him. Though heaven is God's *palace*—yet it is not his *prison*. Diana's temple was burned down when she was busy at Alexander's birth, and could not be at two places together—but God is present both in paradise and in the wilderness at the same time. "God is higher than the heaven, deeper than hell, broader than the earth, and more diffuse than the sea!" —Bernard.

1 Kings 8:27, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built?" By the heaven of heavens is meant that which called the empyreal heaven, where the angels and the departed saints enjoy the glorious and beatific vision of God; and it is called the heaven of heavens, both because it is the highest and does contain the other heavens within its orb; and also by way of excellency, as the "most holy place" in the temple is called the "holy of holies," because it far surpasses all the rest in splendor and glory, Isaiah 66:1; Proverbs 5:21; Heb. 4:13; Job 26:6.

Jer. 23:24, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I should not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." Proverbs 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." God is all eye. The poor heathen could say, "God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves." Repletively he is everywhere, though inclusively nowhere. Job 34:21, "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings;" verse 22, "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Sinners shall never be able to shroud themselves nor their actions, from God's all-

seeing eye.

The Rabbis called God *Place*, because he is in every place, though in the assemblies of his saints more eminently and gloriously. God is present with all his creatures—

(1.) *Via productionis*, by raising them up;

(2.) *Via sustentationis*, by sustaining and keeping of them up; they are his family, and he feeds and clothes them, Mat. 5:45; Acts 17:27-28; Psalm 33:13-14;

(3.) *Vid inclinationis*, by giving unto them power of motion; man could neither live nor move unless the Lord were with him;

(4.) *Vid observationis*, by taking notice of them; he observes and marks both their persons and their actions—he sees who they are, and how they are employed;

(5.) *Vid ordinationis*, by governing and ruling of them and all their actions, to the service of his glory and the good of his poor people, Acts 4:25-29.

But this is not that presence that we are to discourse of.

**2. Secondly, There is a MIRACULOUS presence of Christ**, and this some of the prophets of old had, and the apostles and others had in Christ's time; and by virtue of this miraculous presence of Christ with them, they cast out devils, healed diseases, and did many wonderful things, Mat. 7:22; Mark 3:15. But this is not the presence that falls within the compass of that main point we purpose to speak to.

**3. Thirdly, There is a RELATIVE presence of Christ**, and that is his presence in his ordinances, and with his churches. [See Psalm 46:4-5; Cant. 7:5; Joel 3:21; Zech. 2:10-11, and 8:3; Psalm 135:21.] Of this presence the Scripture speaks very largely. Exod. 20:24, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you." Exod. 25:8, "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." Exod. 29:45, "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and

will be their God." Lev. 26:11, 12 "And I will set my tabernacle among you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people." Psalm 76:1, 2 "In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion." Isaiah 8:18, "From the Lord Almighty, who dwells in mount Zion." Psalm 9:11, "Sing praises to the Lord who dwells in Zion."

The churches are said to be the temples in which the Lord dwells, and the house of the living God, and the golden candlesticks among which he walks. [1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 2:1.] Oh, how much does it concern all the churches to prize their church state, and to keep close together, and to walk suitable to that gracious presence of God, which shines in the midst of them! But this is not that presence that falls under our present consideration. But,

**4. Fourthly, There is a majestic and GLORIOUS presence of Christ,** and thus he is said to be in **heaven**. Psalm 2:4, "He who sits in the heavens will laugh." Heb. 1:13, "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool?" chapter 9:24, "For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figure of the true—but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Not that heaven is a place wherein Christ is shut up—but the court, as it were, where his majesty, in acts of wisdom, and power, and mercy, and grace and glory, does most of all appear. [Job 16:19; 2 Thes. 1:9; Psalm 16:11; 1 Tim. 6:14-16; Rev. 3:21.]

As the soul of man, though it be in every part of man—yet it does principally appear and manifest itself in the heart and mind; so here, etc. Monica, Austin's mother, standing one day and seeing the sun shine, raised this meditation, "Oh, if the sun be so bright, what is the light of Christ's presence in glory!" But this is not the presence we design now to discourse of.

**5. Fifthly, There is a JUDICIAL or WRATHFUL presence of the Lord;** and thus he is present with wicked men, sometimes blinding them, sometimes hardening them, sometimes leaving them to their own heart's lusts, sometimes giving them up to their own heart's lusts, sometimes filling their faces with shame, and their consciences with terrors. [See

Exod. 9:14; Isaiah 6:9-10, and 64:1-4; Psalm 81:12; 2 Thes. 2:11-12; Psalm 68:2; Jer. 4:26; Ezek. 38:20; Hab. 1:12.] He is judicially present with wicked men by a particular observation of their persons and ways, Psalm 33:13-14; Job 34:21-22. He sees who they are, and how they are employed against his honor, his interest, his saints, his ways. He is judicially present with wicked men by a special detestation of their persons and ways, etc. But this is not that presence that at this time falls under our consideration; and therefore,

**6. Sixthly and lastly, There is a GRACIOUS, a favorable, a special, or eminent presence of the Lord** with his faithful people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, as the Scriptures do everywhere evidence. [The compassionate parent is most with the sick child; so here.] Take a taste of some: Gen. 39:20, "And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound, and he was there in the prison;" verse 21, "But *the Lord was with Joseph*, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." A prison cannot keep God away from his people. Witness the apostles and martyrs, whose *prisons*, by God's presence, became *palaces*; and their chains, by God's presence, became a music-school, Acts 16:25.

If men knew by experience the delight which is in suffering for Christ, they would desire with Chrysostom, if it were put to their choice, rather to be *Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ*, than *Paul enrapt up in the third heaven*. Basil, in his oration for Barlaam, that famous martyr, says, "He delighted in his vile prison, as in a pleasant green meadow, and he took pleasure in the several inventions of tortures, as in several sweet flowers." Luther reports of that martyr, Agatha, that as she went to her prisons and tortures, she said she went to banquets and weddings. "The sun enlightens the world," says Cyprian, "but he who made the sun is a greater light to you in prison, etc." "Fire, sword, prisons, famines, are pleasure, they are all delightful to me," says Basil. "Paul rattles his chain which he bears for the gospel, and was as proud of it as a woman of her jewelry," says Chrysostom. [Eph. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:16; Acts 15:26, 29; Phil. 1:7, 13-14, 16; Col. 4:3, 18; 2 Tim. 2:9, etc.]

Paul and Silas in a prison found more pleasure than pain, more joy than

sorrow; and when they were whipped, it was with rosemary branches, as I may say. Paul greatly rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ, and therefore often sings out, "I, Paul, *a prisoner* of Jesus Christ," not I, Paul, enrapt up in the third heaven. Christ showed his great love to him in bringing him up in the third heaven, and he showed his great love to Christ in a cheerful suffering for him.

Eusebius tells of one who wrote to his friend from a stinking dungeon, and dated his letter "From my beautiful orchard." Mr. Glover the martyr, rejoiced in his imprisonment. "God forgive me," said Mr. Bradford when a prisoner, "of my unthankfulness for this exceeding great mercy, that among so many thousands he chooses me to be one in whom he will suffer." Philip, landgrave of Hesse, being a long time prisoner under Charles the Fifth, was asked what upheld him in his long imprisonment. He answered that he felt the divine consolations of the martyrs.

Gen. 49:23, "The archers," or, as the Hebrew here has it, the arrow-masters, "have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him." These arrow-masters were Joseph's barbarous brethren who sold him, his adulterous mistress that, harlot-like, "hunted for his precious life;" his injurious master who, without any desert of his, imprisoned him; the tumultuating Egyptians, who pined with hunger, perhaps spoke of stoning of him; and the envious courtiers and enchanterers who spoke evil of him before Pharaoh, to bring him out of favor. But by divine assistance, and God's favorable preference, 1 Sam. 30:6, he proved too strong for them all. Verse 24, "But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were *made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob,*" etc.

Joseph is likened to a strong archer, who, as his many enemies shot at him—so his bow was steadfast, and his arms strong by the special presence of God with him. Such an eminent presence of God had Joseph with him, that he never lacked courage, comfort, or counsel when he was at his worst. The divine presence will make a man stand fast and firm under the greatest pressures. It made Joseph use his bow against his adversaries, as David did his sling against Goliath. He slung, says one, as if he had wrapped up God in his sling.

Psalm 23:4, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for *you are with me*; your rod and your staff they comfort me." The presence of the Lord with his people in the most deadly dangers fills their souls full of courage, confidence, and comfort. That darkness which comes upon a dying man, a little before he gives up the life, is the greatest darkness; and yet let a Christian then have but God by the hand, and he will not fear the most hideous and horrid representations of death!

Dan. 3:24, "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spoke and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast *three* men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king;" verse 25, "He answered and said, Lo, I see *four* men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." The presence of the Son of God turned the fiery furnace into a garden of delights, a gallery of pleasure. This divine presence in the midst of fire and flame kept them from fainting, sinning, and shrinking, and filled their souls with comfort, peace, ease, and heavenly refreshing. We may very safely understand this fourth person to be, as the words do literally bear, the very true Son of God, our Lord and Savior, who is specially present with his people in their greatest extremities and most deadly dangers.

Zech. 1:8, "In a vision during the night, I saw a man sitting on a red horse that was standing among some myrtle trees in a small valley. Behind him were red, speckled, and white horses, each with its own rider." The man riding upon the red horse is the man Christ Jesus; it is the captain of the Lord's army, and the captain of our salvation. [Tim. 2:5; Josh. 4:14; Heb. 2:10. Among the Romans the crown or garland of those who did shout for victory, or ride in triumph, was made of myrtle, Plin., lib. xv. c. 29.] Christ is here represented in his kingly state, under the type of a man riding on a red horse, and having his royal attendants; for under the type of the other horses behind him, is represented his having angels for ministers, and all creatures ready for every dispensation; whether sad, represented by *red*; or comfortable, represented by *white*; or mixed of mercy and judgment, represented by *speckled* horses.

Christ is here represented as a man on horseback, ready to sally forth for

the good of his people when they are at the lowest. The low, afflicted, and suffering state of the church is fitly compared to myrtle-trees which grow in a shady grove, in valleys, and bottoms, and by water-sides. Now, when his people are in a very low condition, then Christ appears on horseback, for his people's protection, and their enemies' confusion.

Christ will be sure to lodge with his people when they are at lowest. When the church is in danger, Christ is not asleep; he is always ready upon his red horse, watching all opportunities and advantages, to show his zeal and courage for his people, and his severity and fury against their enemies. The man who stood among the myrtle-trees, verse 10, is Christ Jesus, whose special residence is with his people when they are in the most low, dangerous, and forlorn condition. No troubles, no distresses, no dangers, can banish Christ from his people, or make him seek another lodging.

"But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says—Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Isaiah 43:1-3

The Israelites went through the Red Sea, and were not drowned; and the three Hebrew children walked up and down in the fiery furnace, and were not so much as singed, Dan. 3:27. By "fire and water" we may well understand the various troubles, distresses, and dangers which may attend the people of God. Now in all these various troubles, etc., the Lord will be specially present with them, to protect and defend, to secure and deliver them out of all their various troubles, their deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers.

2 Cor. 4:9, "Persecuted—but not forsaken; cast down—but not destroyed." Persecuted by men—but not forsaken by God. The saints may be shaken—but not shattered; persecuted—but not conquered; cast down—but not cast off. Luther, speaking of his enemies, says, "They may show their teeth—but not devour me; they may kill me—but not hurt me, because of

that favorable and special presence of Christ which is with me." Now this is that presence of the Lord that falls under our present consideration.

But for the further opening of this important point, let us a little inquire—**HOW the Lord does manifest his favorable, his special, his eminent presence to his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers?** Now to this question I shall give these twelve answers—

(1.) First, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by raising their faith to more than an ordinary pitch at such a time.**

Exodus 14:10-12 , "As Pharaoh and his army approached, the people of Israel could see them in the distance, marching toward them. The people began to panic, and they cried out to the Lord for help. Then they turned against Moses and complained, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? Why did you make us leave? Didn't we tell you to leave us alone while we were still in Egypt? Our Egyptian slavery was far better than dying out here in the wilderness!" Thus you see their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, they having a Red Sea before them, and a cruel, bloody, and enraged enemy just at the heels of them. Now in this extremity, see to what a high pitch Moses his faith rises: verse 13, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again." He says they shall never see the Egyptians again, that is, in that manner as they saw those who day insulting against them and pursuing after them—for they saw them afterward—but drowned, and lying dead upon the shore, Exod. 14:14, "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." A strong faith will help a Christian in difficult circumstances. Though Moses had received no particular promise how the Israelites should be delivered—yet he rested upon God's general promise before, that he would get himself honor upon Pharaoh and his army: "The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall be still." As if he had said, You shall be merely passive, and do nothing at all towards the subduing of your enemies, neither in words nor deeds; the Lord shall fight against your enemies, and defeat them

himself by a strong hand and an outstretched arm; compose yourselves, act faith and hope in God, without doubting, murmuring, grudging, fainting, or fretting; for God defers his chief aid—until man's greatest need. When the enemy is highest, salvation is nearest; when the danger is greatest, the help of God is readiest, as at this time they found it.

2 Chron. 13:3, "Abijah went into battle with a force of four hundred thousand able fighting men, and Jeroboam drew up a battle line against him with eight hundred thousand able troops." Jeroboam was outnumbered, two to one. Verse 7, "Some worthless scoundrels gathered around him and opposed Rehoboam son of Solomon when he was young and indecisive and not strong enough to resist them." Rehoboam was no warrior, he was no expert prince in the use of arms; he was but young, not in age—but in experience, policy, and valor; he was chicken-hearted, he had no courage, no mettle. [2 Chron. 12:13. He was forty-one years old when he came to the crown.] Jeroboam takes hold of these advantages, and gathers eight hundred thousand *Racas*—brainless fellows, light and empty; men of no piety, civility, ingenuity, or common honesty.

Now see what a mighty spirit of faith God raised in the children of Judah: verse 17, "Abijah and his men inflicted heavy losses on them, so that there were five hundred thousand casualties among Israel's able men." A monstrous and matchless slaughter, the greatest number that ever we read slain in any battle; far beyond that of Tamerlane when he took Bajazet, or Atius the Roman prefect, when he fought with Attila and his Huns in the fields of Catalonia, where were slain on both sides one hundred sixty-five thousand: verse 18, "The men of Israel were subdued on that occasion, and the men of Judah were victorious because they relied on the Lord, the God of their fathers," because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers. Strong faith never miscarries. God never has, nor never will, fail those who place their confidence upon him in their greatest dangers.

Esther 4:14, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Their great trouble, their deep distress, and their most deadly danger you have in Esther 3:13, "Dispatches were

sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods." [Here are great aggravations of his cruelty, in that neither gender nor age are spared. Rage and malice knows no bounds.] Haman, that grand informer, with his wicked crew, would have robbed them of their lives and goods—but that they were prevented by a miraculous providence, as you know. Now in this deep distress and most deadly danger, at what rate does Mordecai believe? "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews *will* arise from another place." This Mordecai speaks not by a spirit of prophecy—but by the power and force of his faith, grounded upon the precious promises of God's defending his church, hearing the cries of his people, arising for their relief and support, and grounded upon all the glorious attributes of God, namely, his power, love, wisdom, goodness, and all-sufficiency, etc., all which are engaged in the covenant of grace, to save, protect, and secure his people in their greatest troubles and most deadly dangers.

Mordecai's faith in this black, dark, dismal day, was a notable faith indeed, and worthy of highest commendation. Faith can look through the perspective of the promises, and see deliverance at a great distance, salvation at the door. What though sense says, "Deliverance will not come;" and what though reason says, "Deliverance cannot come;" yet a raised faith gets above all fears, and disputes, and says, "Deliverance will certainly come, redemption is at hand."

Num. 13:30, "Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said—We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." chapter 14:9, "Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." The spies by their lies did what they could to daunt and discourage the people, by crying up the strength of the Anakims, and the impossibility of the conquest, Num. 13:32-33. These hollow-hearted hypocritical spies blow hot and cold almost in a breath, Num. 13:23-28. First, they make a narrative of the fruitfulness of the land, and presently they conclude that

it was a land that was not sufficient to nourish the inhabitants, yes, a land which devoured the inhabitants, verse 32. Liars have no iron memories.

But now behold to what a mighty pitch Caleb's faith is raised. "Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are able to overcome it." Or, nearer the Hebrew, "Marching up, march up, subduing, subdue." Let us, says believing Caleb, march up to the land of Canaan courageously, resolutely, undauntedly, for the day is our own, the land is our own, all is our own. "They are bread for us," we shall make but a breakfast of them, we shall as easily and as surely root them out, and cut them down with our swords—as we cut the bread we eat. "Their defense is departed from them." In the Hebrew it is, "Their shadow is departed from them." The shadow you know guards a man from the scorching heat of the sun, Psalm 91:1, and 121:5-6. Caleb, by faith, saw God withdrawn from them; by the eye of his faith he looked upon them as a people without a fence, a shadow, a guard, a covert, a protection; and therefore, as a people that might easily be subdued and destroyed. His faith told him that it was not their strong cities, nor their high walls, nor their sons of Anak, that could preserve, shelter, secure, or defend them, seeing the Lord had forsaken them, and would be no longer as a shadow or a shelter to them. "And the Lord is with us," to make us victorious, to tread down our enemies, and to give us a quiet possession of the good land.

"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king—O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king." Daniel 3:16-17. In the fiery furnace they are protected by a divine providence, they escape death beyond all men's expectations, for the fire touched them not, neither could it burn during their abode in the furnace, for God so fortified their bodies that they could not be consumed by fire, which miracle made them in great estimation with the king, for that he saw that they were virtuous, and beloved of God, and for that cause they were highly honored by him.

Here is a fiery furnace before them, and a proud, boasting, tyrannical, enraged prince domineering over them, for not obeying his idolatrous will. Now to what a mighty pitch is their faith raised! "The God we serve

is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king!" Their faith was bottomed upon their propriety in God: "Our God;" and upon the power, providence, and all-sufficiency of God: "Is able to save us;" and upon the gracious readiness and willingness of God: "And he will rescue us from your hand, O king." When dangers are greatest, then God commonly raises the faith of his people highest; faith does most and best for us, when we are in impossible circumstances. Faith quenches the violence of fire, Heb. 11:34; as the apostle speaks, pointing at the faith of these three Hebrew *children*, or rather *champions*. Though now the fiery furnace was heated seven times hotter than it used to be at other times—yet such was the strength, and might, and power of their faith, that it so quenched the flames, that they had not one hair of their heads singed, nor their coats burned, nor the smell of fire found upon them, Dan. 3:27. And thus the blessed martyrs may be said by their faith, patience, and constancy to quench the violence of the fire, though their bodies were consumed to ashes in the fire.

Just so, in Dan. 6:16. Daniel is cast into the den of hungry, enraged lions; innocent Daniel is exposed to the cruel paws and hungry jaws of lions. This kind of capital punishment was not unusual among the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, and among the Romans also, with whom it was a common saying in Tertullian's time, "Let the Christians be cast to the lions!" The faces of the lions are stern, and their voices are terrible, Amos 3:8; they are roaring and ravenous, they are greedy for their prey. They are vigilant and subtle. Lying in wait to get their prey, they sleep little, and when they sleep, it is with open eyes. They mind their prey much, and are cunning to catch it, Psalm 17:12. The lion hides himself, and when the prey comes near he suddenly surprises it. They are proud and stately, they go alone, they eat not with the lioness, much less with other creatures, they will not stoop to any, or turn away from any, they do what they will; they are most cruel, bloody, devouring creatures; they have terrible claws, sharp teeth, and are strong and mighty to crush and break the bones; and it is very dangerous to meddle with lions. [Proverbs 30:3; Neh. 2:12; 2 Kings 17:6; Proverbs 28:15; 1 Pet. 5:8.]

Num. 24:9, "Like a lion they crouch and lie down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse them?" Lions if offended and provoked are very

revengeful. In the hunting or taking of lions, the lion observes who wounds him, and on him if possible he will be revenged. By these hints we may guess at the deadly danger that Daniel was in.

Josephus, to illustrate the history, says, that these informers pleaded before the king, saying that the lions were full and gorged, and therefore they would not touch Daniel; which the king hearing, being displeased with their injurious malice, cast them in to the lions den, to see whether they could likewise escape: but this being done, they were suddenly destroyed, before they came to the bottom of the den, Dan. 6:24. To what a fatal end came these informers! As to their wives and children that were cast into the den of lions, it is most probable that they were accessory to that wicked conspiracy against Daniel, by stirring up and provoking their husbands and fathers, to engage all their power, interest, and policy against him, and never to allow a poor captive to be advanced in honor and dignity above them. How just and righteous a thing was it with God, that those who had plotted together, and contrived together, the ruin and destruction of a holy innocent person, that these should suffer together, and go to the lion's den together, and be torn in pieces together. Sinners, look to yourselves; if you will sin with others, you must expect to suffer with others!

God secured Daniel in the midst of these dreadful dangers by the ministry of an angel. "My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me," Dan. 6:22. Others say, that God secured Daniel, by taking away the lions' hunger from them at that time, and by causing in them a satiety. And some tell us, that God secured him, by raising such a fantasy in the lions that they looked upon Daniel, not as a prey—but as on one who was a friend unto them. But now in the midst of this dreadful danger, how does Daniel's faith sparkle and shine: verse 23, "The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God." Daniel in a fiery furnace looks upon God as his God, in the midst of the flames he acts faith upon the power of God, the promises of God, etc. Of all living creatures lions are most fierce, cruel, and irresistible—and yet such was the strength and force of Daniel's faith, that it stopped their mouths, see Heb. 11:33; Judges 14:6; 1 Sam.

17:34.

Though Daniel was but one man—yet such was the power of his faith, that it stopped the mouths of many lions. As Luther says of prayer, so may I say of faith; it has a kind of *omnipotency* in it; it is able to do all things. Thus you see by these famous instances to what a mighty pitch the Lord has raised the faith of his people, when they have been in the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers; and this is the first way wherein the Lord does manifest his favorable, his special, his eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. But,

(2.) Secondly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, his special, his eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by his teaching and instructing of them.** Psalm 94:12, "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law." This divine presence turns every lash into a happy lesson. In this psalm the Holy Spirit uses six arguments to prove that a man is blessed who is chastened.

[1.] Because he is instructed by being afflicted, as here.

[2.] Because the end why God lays affliction on his people is to give them rest from the days of adversity, verse 13.

[3.] Until the pit is dug for the wicked, in verse 13, until the cold grave holds his body, and hot hell holds his soul.

[4.] Because God will support them under all their afflictions. When God casts his people into the furnace of afflictions, his everlasting arms shall be underneath them. Though God may cast *down* his people—yet he will never cast *off* his people.

[5.] Because there shall be a glorious restoration: verse 15, "Judgment shall return unto righteousness."

[6.] Because all the upright in heart shall follow it, in verse 15, namely, in their affections they are carried out after it, earnestly desiring that dear

day when God will unriddle his providences, and clear up his proceedings with the sons of men.

Jerome, writing to a sick friend, has this expression: "I account it a part of unhappiness not to know adversity; I judge you to be miserable, because you have not been miserable." Demetrius says, "Nothing seems more unhappy to me than he to whom no adversity has happened." "Freedom from punishment is the mother of security, the stepmother of virtue, the poison of religion, the moth of holiness," says Bernard. It was a speech of Gaspar Olevianus, in his sickness: "In this disease," says he, "I have learned how great God is, and what the evil of sin is. I never knew who God was before, nor what sin meant before." God's corrections are our instructions, his lashes our lessons, his scourges are our schoolmasters, his chastisements are our admonishments. [Isaiah 26:9; Proverbs 3:12-13, and 6:23.] And to note this, the Hebrews and Greeks both express *chastening* and *teaching* by one and the same word; because the latter is the true end of the former, according to that in the proverb, "Smart makes wit, and vexation gives understanding."

Job 36:8-10, "But if men are bound in chains, held fast by cords of affliction, he tells them what they have done—that they have sinned arrogantly. He makes them listen to correction and commands them to repent of their evil." Sanctified afflictions open men's ears to discipline, and turn them from iniquity, which is a piece of learning that a Christian can never pay too dearly for. Affliction is an excellent comment upon the Scriptures. Afflictions make way for the word of the Lord to come to the heart. Sanctified affliction is practical teaching.

Bernard had a brother of his, who was a riotous and profane soldier; Bernard gives him many good instructions and admonitions, etc.—but his brother slighted them, and made nothing of them. Bernard comes to him, and says, "God will make way to that hard heart of yours by some spear or lance." And so it fell out; for, going into the wars, he was wounded, and then he remembers his brother's instructions and admonitions, and then they got to his heart, and turned him from his sinful ways.

Job 33:16, "Then he opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction." "The eye that sin shuts, afflictions open," says Gregory. Troubles open

men's eyes, as the tasting of honey did Jonathan's. By correction God seals up instruction; God sets on the one by the other; as when a schoolmaster would have a lesson learned indeed, he sets it on with a whipping. As Gideon taught the elders of the city and the men of Succoth with the thorns and briars of the wilderness, so God teaches his people by affliction many a holy and happy lesson, Judges 8:16.

By afflictions, troubles, distresses, and dangers—the Lord teaches his people to look upon sin as the most loathsome thing in the world, and to look upon holiness as the most lovely thing in the world. Sin is never so bitter, and holiness is never so sweet, as when our troubles are greatest and our dangers highest. By afflictions the Lord teaches his people to sit loose from this world, and to make sure the great things of that other world. By affliction God shows his people the vanity, vexation, emptiness, weakness, and nothingness of all created

things—and the choiceness, preciousness, and sweetness of communion with himself, and of interest in himself. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word." Psalms 119:67. "I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me." Psalms 119:75

Christ, though he knew, "yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered," Heb. 5:8; that is, he showed obedience more than before; not as if Christ were to go to school to learn, or as if by certain acts he were to fit himself for obedience; he did not *learn* that which he knew not before—but *did* that which he did not before. He who was put upon the trial of his obedience, he came to know by experience what a hard matter it was thus to obey God.

By God's favorable presence a man comes to learn many lessons in a time of adversity which he never learned in a day of prosperity; for we are like idle boys and bad scholars—who learn best when the rod is over us. *Hezekiah* was better upon his sick-bed than when he was showing of his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, Isaiah 39:1-5; and *David* was a better man when he was in his wilderness-condition than when he sat upon his royal throne, Psalm 30:6-7. The *Jews* are ever best when in the worst condition; the *Athenians* would never mend until they

were in mourning. When *Munster* lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did, and how he felt; he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, "These are God's gems and jewels with which he decks his best friends, and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world." "Here," as that martyr phrased it, "we are but learning our A B Cs, and our lesson is never past Christ's cross, and our walking is still home by Weeping-Cross."

Usually men are worst in a prosperous condition. In a prosperous condition God speaks to us, and we mind him not: "I spoke to you in your prosperity—but you would not hear: and this has been your manner from your youth upwards," Jer. 2:21. Pope Martin reported of himself that, while he was a monk and lived in the cloister, he had some evidences for heaven; when he was a cardinal, he began to fear and doubt; but after he came to be pope, he utterly despaired. The Lord never shows more of his favorable, special, and eminent presence, than by teaching of his people many gracious and gospel lessons by their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers. But

(3.) Thirdly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, his special, his eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by raising, strengthening, and actuating their suffering graces—namely, their faith, hope, love, patience, prudence, courage, boldness, zeal, constancy.** Thus in the text, "The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me." He put new life, and strength, and vigor into all my graces. Although there are habits of grace always resident in the hearts of the saints—yet those habits are not always in exercise. The habits of grace cannot act of themselves, there must be renewed strength imparted to set them on work. "Make me to go in the path of your commandments, for therein do I delight," Psalm 119:35. Though David had a spirit of new life within him—yet he could not actually walk in the path of God's precepts, until by an additional force he was set agoing.

Cant. 4:16, "Awake, O north wind, and come you south wind, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." [Christ is the different winds, both cold and hot, moist and dry, binding and opening, north and south; and therefore whatever wind blows, it shall blow good to his

people.] By the garden we may safely understand a sanctified soul, and by the spices in this garden we may understand the several graces planted in the soul. Now these spices can never flow out, and send forth their fragrant smell, until the north and south wind blows upon them. Habitual grace cannot operate, and function, and put forth itself into exercise, until by the concurrent presence and assistance of Christ it is empowered into act.

No saint can act that grace he has received, by his own strength, without the presence and assistance of Christ: 1 Cor. 15:10, "But by the grace of God, I am what I am; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain—but I labor more abundantly than they all—yet not I—but the grace of God, which was with me." He does not say, the grace of God which was *in* me, that habitual grace which I had; but the grace of God which was *with* me. So then it is not the strength of habitual grace, which will carry a man through doing or suffering work—but the auxiliary, the assisting, the conquering grace of Jesus Christ. It is his grace *with* us, more than his grace *in* us.

Just so, John 15:5, "Without me you can do nothing." You who are my disciples, you who have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, "Without me you can do nothing." The habits of grace, the actings of grace, and the perfecting of grace—are all from Jesus Christ. It is more emphatic in the original, for there you have two negatives, "cannot do nothing." He does not say, "Without me you cannot do *many* things," but, "Without me you can do *nothing*." Nor he does not say, "Without me you can do no *great* thing," but, "Without me you can do *nothing*." Nor he does not say, "Without me you can do no *difficult* thing," but, "Without me you can do *nothing*." Nor he does not say, "Without me you can do no *spiritual* thing," but, "Without me you can do *nothing*."

Whatever a saint may do by the power of gifts, or habits of grace received—yet he can do nothing in a lively spiritual acceptable way without the presence of Christ, without a constant dependence upon Christ, without a sweet and special communion and fellowship with Christ. If we cannot put forth a *natural* action without him—for in him we live, move, and have our being, Acts 17:28—how much less can we perform a *spiritual* action, in a spiritual manner—without his presence and assistance?

"While the King was at His table, my perfume spread its fragrance." Song of Songs 1:12. That is, let Jesus Christ be but present with us, and then our graces, which are compared to perfume, will send forth its fragrance. Sitting at the table with King Jesus intimates the sweetest friendship and fellowship with Him. It was held a great honor and happiness to stand before Solomon, 1 Kings 10:8; what is it then to sit with Christ at his table? "My spikenard sends forth the smell thereof;" that is, My faith is actuated, and all my other graces are exercised and increased. Christ's presence puts life into all our graces: Isaiah 41:10.

Luke 21:14-15, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." 2 Cor. 12:10, "When I am weak, then am I strong." When I am weak in myself, then am I strong in Christ. If the sun shines upon the flower, how soon does the flower open. Just so, when the Sun of righteousness does but shine upon a Christian's graces, how do they open and act! Mal. 4:2. To show how the presence of Christ has acted the faith, love, courage, boldness, and patience, etc., of the saints in the Old and New Testament, the primitive Christians and the martyrs, in the latter ages of the world, when they have been in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, would take up more than a little time; besides, in my other writings I have opened these things more fully to you, and to them I must refer you. And therefore,

(4.) Fourthly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by laying a law of restraint upon every wicked man, and by bridling and checking their fury and insolency, that they shall not add afflictions to the afflicted**, as otherwise they would; as he did upon *Laban*: Gen. 31:24, "And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that you speak not to Jacob, either good or bad." Verse 29, "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt; but the God of your fathers spoke unto me last night, saying, Take you heed that you speak not to Jacob, either good or bad." See what a law of restraint God laid upon *Esau*, Gen. 33:1-4; and upon *Abimelech*, Gen. 20:6-8, 17-18; and upon *Benhadad*, 1 Kings 20:1, 10, 29-30; and upon *Haman*, as you may see by comparing the 3rd

and 6th chapters of Esther together; and upon *Pharaoh*, Exod. 15:9-10; and upon *Sennacherib*, Isaiah 37:28-29, 33-36; and upon *Herod*, Acts 12.

*Maximinus* set forth a proclamation engraved in brass for the utter abolishing of Christ and his religion: but he was eaten up by lice. *Valens*, about to sign an order for the banishment of godly Basil, was smitten with a sudden trembling of his hand that he could not sign the order; afterwards he was burned to death by the Goths.

*Domitian*, the author of the second persecution against the Christians, having drawn a catalogue of the names of such as he was to kill, in which was the name of his own wife and other friends; upon which he was, by the consent of his wife, slain by his own household servants with daggers in his privy-chamber. His body was buried without honor, his memory cursed to posterity, and his ensigns were thrown down and defaced. *Julian* vowed to make a sacrifice of the Christians upon his return from the wars; but, in a battle against the Persians, he was mortally wounded, and throwing his blood in the air, in a high contempt of Christ, he died with that desperate blasphemous expression in his mouth, "Galilean, you have overcome me!"

*Felix*, Earl of Wurttemberg, was a great persecutor of the saints, and did swear that before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans; but the very same night, wherein he had thus sworn and vowed, he was choked in his own blood.

The judgments of God were so famous and frequent upon the persecutors of the saints in Bohemia, that it was used as a proverb among the adversaries themselves, that if any man were weary of his life, let him but attempt harm against the Christians—and he would not live a year to an end.

By these short hints you may see that all along God has made good that word that is more worth than a world, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; and the remainder of wrath shall you restrain" Hebrew, "Shall you gird," that is, curb, and keep within compass, as with a girdle. "The remainder of wrath shall you restrain," that is, those who are left alive of your wrathful enemies, that have still any malice against your people, you

will curb and restrain, and not allow their wrath to be so great as formerly; or if they go about to recruit their forces, and to set again upon your people, you will set such bounds to their wrath that they shall not accomplish their desires, nor shall they proceed one step further than shall make specially for your glory and your people's good. The more eager and furious the enemies are against God's people, the more honor and glory will God get in protecting and securing his people, and in girding, binding, and tying up their enemies. Were it not for this favorable, special, and eminent presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—wicked men would still be a-multiplying of their sorrows, increasing their troubles, and adding of burden to burden. It is this favorable presence of God, which binds wicked men over to their good behavior, and that chains them up from doing that mischief that they design and intend. But,

(5.) Fifthly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by guiding and leading them into those paths and waves which make most for their own peace and quiet, safety and security, contentment and satisfaction, happiness here, and blessedness hereafter.** Exod. 12:21-22; Isaiah 63:12-14; Psalm 5:8. Deut. 32:10, "He found me in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." [The apple of the eye, or the pupil, is the tenderest piece of the tenderest part. God esteems his people above all the world, Heb. 11:38.] A wilderness-condition is, you know, a condition of straits, needs, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers. Now when his people were in this condition, God instructs them by his words and works, and he takes them by the hand, as I may say, and leads them with all care, tenderness, gentleness, and sweetness, as a man would do a poor helpless infant, which he should find in a desert, in a waste howling wilderness. God never left leading of his people until he had brought them at last through the wilderness to the land of Canaan.

Ah! this leading *presence of God* turns a wilderness into a paradise, a desert into a Canaan. Let a Christian's troubles, distresses, and dangers,

be ever so many and ever so great—yet as long as he has the guiding presence of God with him, he is safe from dangers in the midst of dangers. "The fire shall not burn him, nor the waters overflow him," Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 107:4, "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." verse 5, "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." verse 6, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their troubles, and he delivered them out of their distresses." Here you see their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers; and now God gives them his hand, verse 7, "And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation;" that is, to a state of settlement, say some, to Jerusalem, say others, or to that "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God," says another, Heb. 11:10.

In that 32nd Psalm you may see David's great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers: verse 3, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long." verse 4, "For day and night your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." But will God be his guide now? Oh yes, verse 8, "I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with my eye." Let the hand of the Lord be ever so heavy upon a person—yet the presence of God guiding and instructing of him will keep him from utter fainting and sinking under that hand, Isaiah 30:21; Psalm 73:24. When the people of God are in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—he leads and guides them, Psalm 25:9, 12, and 5:8.

[1.] Into **SUPERNATURAL** ways: Proverbs 15:24, "The way of life is above to the wise." He has his feet where other men's heads are; and, like a heavenly eagle, delights himself in flying high.

[2.] Into **GOOD** ways, Jer. 6:16.

[3.] Into **STRAIT** and **STRICT** ways, Mat. 7:14. Hence they are called right or straight paths which lie between two extremes; or, if you will, which directly lead you to the view of heaven. They are paths which lie level with the rule and with the end. A man may see salvation and heaven at the end of them.

[4.] Into **PLEASANT** ways: Proverbs 3:17, "Her ways are ways of

pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Such as were those of Adam before his fall, strowed with roses and paved with peace. Some degree of comfort, pleasantness, and peace, follows every good action—as heat accompanies fire, as warm beams and influences issue from the sun.

[5.] Into **RIGHT** paths: Proverbs 4:11, "I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths." Hosea 1:9, "The ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous shall walk in them." The ways of his will, the ways of his word, and the ways of his worship—are all right ways, they carry us on in a straight line unto a right end.

[6.] into **OLD** and **ANCIENT** ways: Jer. 6:16, "Ask for the *old* paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest to your souls." Jer. 18:15, "They have caused them to stumble in their way from the ancient paths." The ways of holiness are of the greatest, highest, and ancientest antiquity. The first ways of Adam were ways of holiness. The ways of sin are of a later edition than the ways of holiness. God stamped his image of holiness upon man before ever Satan tried to tempt him. Holiness is of the ancientest house, of the greatest antiquity. Sin is but an upstart, holiness is the firstborn. The way of holiness is the oldest way, the way of holiness is gray-headed and of ancientest institution. All other ways are but of yesterday, they are but new ways, compared to the ways of holiness. The stamp of antiquity upon many things is a praise and an honor to them, as old gold, old friends, old manuscripts, old monuments, old scars, and old holiness. The stamp of antiquity upon the ways of holiness is the praise and honor of the ways of holiness.

[7.] Into paths of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**: Psalm 23:3, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake;" or in plain, smooth, easy paths, or in sheep-tracks, wherein I may walk unweariedly and unblamably. Herein he alludes to the shepherd's care in leading his sheep gently in fair and plain ways, and not through deep mire, brambles, and briars, or over craggy ways—which would be hard and troublesome for them to go in. The word here used is metaphorical; sometimes respecting the *blind*—who cannot walk without a guide; sometimes *little or weak children*—who cannot go without a leader; and here the *weak and wandering sheep*—which stand in need of the shepherd to go in and out before them.

[8.] Into paths of **SALVATION**: Acts 16:17, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."

[9.] Into ways of **TRUTH**: 2 Pet. 2:2, "And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." "The way of truth," that is, the true Christian religion revealed from heaven, which shows the way to true happiness, to eternal salvation.

[10.] Into ways of **UPRIGHTNESS**: Proverbs 2:13, "Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness."

Now when the people of God are in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, the Lord by leading them

[1.] into supernatural ways,

[2.] into good ways,

[3.] into strict and straight ways,

[4.] into pleasant ways,

[5.] into right ways,

[6.] into old and ancient ways,

[7.] into righteous ways,

[8.] into ways of salvation,

[9.] into ways of truth, and

[10.] into ways of uprightness,

does gloriously manifest his favorable, his special, and his eminent presence with them.

There is nothing below a mighty presence of God, which can enable a Christian—especially when he is under great troubles, and in deep

distresses, and most deadly dangers—to do these five things:

[1.] To approve of the ways of God;

[2.] To choose the ways of the Lord;

[3.] To highly prize them;

[4.] To delight and take pleasure in them;

[5.] To walk in them and to keep close to them.

And yet in all these five things the Lord does greatly and graciously help his poor people, when they are, as it were, in the very mouth of the lion. But,

(6.) Sixthly, The Lord does manifest his favorable presence, his special and eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by encouraging, emboldening, animating and heartening up his people in the midst of all their troubles, distresses, and dangers, and by putting new life, spirit, and mettle into them, when they are even in the very mouth of the lion.** Josh. 1:6, "Be strong and of a good courage." Verse 7, "Only be strong and very courageous." Verse 9, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed: for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." 2 Chron. 13:12; Num. 13:32-33, compared with 14:9. Joshua was a sword-man as well as a book-man; he had his name changed from *Oshea* to *Joshua*, from *Let God save*, to *God shall save*, Num. 13:16. Christ will never lack a champion to stand up for his church. If Moses dies, Joshua shall stand up. There shall be a succession of *sword-men* and *book-men*, of *rulers* and *teachers*—to carry on Christ's work in the world until the top-stone is laid with grace unto it, Zech. 4:7; Mal. 2:15.

The giving of the Spirit is with the Lord, and therefore he can and will put such an anointing of his Spirit upon one and another as shall fit them to carry on his works in the world. Joshua was very valiant, and a man of singular good mettle—yet because he was sure to meet with such

troubles, deep distresses, and deadly dangers, as would sink him, therefore he is pressed so frequently to be courageous: verse 6, "Be strong and of good courage." Verse 7, "Only be strong and very courageous." Verse 9, "Be strong and of good courage. Verse 18, "Only be strong and of good courage." Deut. 31:7, "And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of good courage," etc. [Moses had a special command from God to charge Joshua to be courageous, Deut. 1:38, and 3:28. God himself also lays the same command upon him, Deut. 31:23.] And why all this? Not because Joshua had revealed any faintheartedness or cowardice—but because the work he was to undertake was so weighty and perilous, in regard of those many and mighty nations whom he was to destroy, and plant the Israelites in their place. The work that Joshua was to undertake, was attended with many great difficulties and dangers, in respect of the *enemies* he was to encounter, as being men of giant-like statures and strength, and dwelling in cities with high walls and strongly fortified.

Now the main argument to raise his courage and mettle is drawn from God's special presence and assistance: Josh. 1:9, "For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." We are not to understand it of God's general presence in all places—but of his special, favorable, special, and eminent presence—which God would manifest in his preservation, and protection, notwithstanding all the difficulties, schemes, dangers, and enemies which he was to encounter.

Just so, 2 Chron. 32:7, "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there are more with us than with him." Verse 8, "With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles," etc. At this time the king of Assyria was the greatest monarch in the world, and the most formidable enemy Israel had. He had a mighty army, for there were a hundred eighty-five thousand of them slain in one night, verse 21. Now the great thing they were to mind and attend, was the favorable, special, and eminent presence of God with them, which raised all their hearts above all discouragements, fears, and dismayedness. What is the chaff, compared to the whirlwind? What are thorns and briars, compared to a consuming fire? What is an arm of flesh,

compared to the arm, strength, and power of a God? What is weakness, compared to strength; and the nothing-creature, compared to the Lord Almighty

Now if the special special presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles and most deadly dangers won't put singular courage, life, and mettle into them—what will? Acts 23:10-11, "The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks. The following night *the Lord stood near Paul* and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." The favorable, special presence of the Lord with him turned his prison into a palace.

Mr. Philpot, being a prisoner for the testimony of Jesus, writes thus to his friends: "Though I tell you that I am in hell in the judgment of this world—yet assuredly I feel in the same, the consolation of heaven. I praise God; and this loathsome and horrible prison is as pleasant to me as the walks in the king's garden." When Paul was in great danger the Lord stood by him, to cheer, comfort, and encourage him, see Acts 27:23-24. Now God claps him on the back, and puts new life and mettle into him.

When Dionysius was given up by the executioner to be beheaded, he remained constant and courageous, saying, "Come life, come death, I will worship none but the God of heaven and earth."

When Chrysostom had told Eudoxia the empress that for her covetousness she would be called a second Jezebel, she thereupon sent him a threatening message, to which he gave this stout and resolute answer, "Go tell her, I fear nothing but sin."

When the executioner had kindled the fire behind Jerome of Prague, he bade him kindle it before his face; "For," said he, "if I had been afraid of it, I would not have come to this place, having had so many opportunities offered me to escape it." At the giving up of the life, he said, "This soul of mine, in flames of fire, O Christ, I offer you!"

The emperor, coming into Germany, sent for Luther to come to the city of

Worms; but many of his friends, from the danger they apprehended hanging over his head, dissuaded him from going; to whom he gave this prudent, courageous, and resolute answer, "That these discouragements were cast in his way by Satan, who knew that by his profession of the truth in so illustrious a place, his kingdom would be shaken; and that, therefore, if he knew that there were as many devils in Worms as there were tiles on the houses—yet he would go."

The German knight, in his letter for Luther against the pontifical clergy, says, "I will go through with what I have undertaken against you, and will stir up men to seek their freedom. I neither care nor fear what may befall me, being prepared for either event, either to ruin you to the great benefit of my country, or myself to fall with a good conscience," etc.

William Flower the martyr said, "That the heavens should as soon fall as I will forsake my profession, or budge in the least degree from it."

Apollonius being asked, if he did not tremble at the sight of the tyrant, made this answer, "God, who gave him a dreadful countenance, has given also unto me an undaunted heart."

When Gardiner asked Rowland Taylor if he did not know him, etc., to whom he answered, "Yes, I know you, and all your greatness—yet you are but a mortal man; and if I should be afraid of your lordly looks, why don't you fear God, the Lord of us all?"

Basil affirms of the primitive Christians, that they had so much courage and magnanimity of spirit in their sufferings, that many heathens, seeing their heroic zeal, resoluteness, and undauntedness, turned Christians.

When one of the ancient martyrs was terrified with the threatenings of his persecutors, he replied, "There is nothing of visible things, nor anything of invisible things, that I fear; I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, come of it what will."

By these instances, which may be of great use in this trying day, you may clearly see how the Lord has manifested his favorable, special, and

eminent presence to his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—by raising up in them a spirit of courage, magnanimity, and holy gallantry. But,

(7.) Seventhly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence to his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by preserving them from troubles in the midst of troubles; from dangers in the midst of dangers.** Dan. 3:25, "He answered, and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." The presence of the Son of God preserves these three valiant champions from dangers in the midst of dangers. But give me permission to say, that these words, "One like the Son of God," does not argue that in this vision there was not a representation of the Son of God to come afterwards in the flesh—but rather that this great mystery was here showed for the greater comfort of the faithful, that they might courageously bear all their sufferings, having the Prince and Head both of angels and men present with them, herein to mitigate their pains, and carry them through with joy; this being a greater wonder of grace and love than to have the protection of a mere angel, concerning whose power also, whether he can change the nature of fire, that it shall not burn, is very doubtful and questionable, seeing this argues omnipotency, which is in God alone, and not communicable to any creature.

Where, by the way, you may observe a strong and solid argument to prove that Jesus is the Son of God against all gainsayers, thus: he whom Nebuchadnezzar saw in the fiery furnace was the Son of God in a human shape; but he was typically Jesus. The major is proved, because he did that which none but God could do, namely, he nullified the most fierce and raging fire, which burned up some coming but near it, and had no power, at the same instant of time, so much as to singe a hair of the heads of others. The minor is proved also, because God, appearing in a glorious human shape at any time, was not God the Father or Holy Spirit—but God the Son; for "no man has seen God at any time," John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12; but the Son has revealed him, both when in him appearing in a human shape under the law, and when, under the Gospel,

showing himself in the man Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, and hypostatically united unto him: Exod. 3:2, "And the angel of the Lord," that is, Christ, the angel of the covenant, "appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed;" verse 3, "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." [Christ is called the Messenger or Angel of the Covenant, Mal. 3:1.] The Hebrew word *Seneh* which is here used signifies a dry bush, a bramble bush, whence the mount and wilderness is called *Sinai*, because of the great store of brambles which grew there. Now for a bush, a dry bush, a bramble bush, to be all on fire and yet not consumed, this must be a wonder of wonders; but all this is from the good will "of him who dwelt in the bush." Out of these two verses we may briefly observe these few things—

**[1.] First, The low, and weak, and brittle estate of the church, represented by a bush, a dry bush, a bramble bush.** What more brittle, weak, base, low, and despicable than a dry bush, a bramble bush? What is such a bush good for but the fire, or to stop a gap, or some such inferior use? A bush is a black, deformed, and unlovely thing. Corruption and affliction, sin and suffering, renders the saints very unlovely. The church is *not* compared to a strong, sturdy oak—but to a weak, brittle bush; and elsewhere to a vine, a dove, a lamb, a sheep, etc.—all frail, weak creatures. It is good for all saints to have low and humble thoughts of themselves, for here they are resembled to a dry bush, a bramble bush. But,

**[2.] Secondly, A dry bush, a bramble bush, pricks, wounds, and vexes those who handle it roughly.** This bush is in Hebrew called *Seneh*, as I have hinted before, which the Hebrews describe to be a shrub full of prickles, and without fruit, and so thick that a bird cannot enter without the ruffling and pulling off her feathers. Let the proud enemies of the church look to themselves, for this bramble bush will vex, prick, wound, tear, and conquer, when they have done their worst. In all the ages of the world this bramble bush, the church, has been a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, and a burdensome stone; so that all who burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all

the people of the earth be gathered together against it, Zech. 12:2-3. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, Consider the cruelties of the church's enemies is signified and represented by a fire.** The bush burns with fire. In this resemblance is shadowed out the oppressed, afflicted, and persecuted estate of the Israelites in the Egyptian furnace; and by fire here is meant the most painful, terrifying, and tormenting afflictions and miseries which attended them. Great afflictions and persecutions are in Scripture commonly set out by fire, as the fiery trial, the fire of affliction, 1 Pet. 4:12; Lam. 2:3-4; Hab. 2:13. Fire is very painful and tormenting, in which respects hell torments are compared to fire; so are great afflictions, miseries, and sufferings; they are very painful and tormenting; they put people into sore pain and travail. Next to the pangs of conscience, and the pains of hell, there are none compared to these pains and pangs which are bred and fed by sore afflictions, by terrible trials.

It has been the lot and portion of God's dearest children, to be exercised with very great and grievous afflictions; and that in order to the *discovery* of sin, to the *embittering* of sin, to the *preventing* of sin, and to the *purging* away of sin; and in order to the *trial* of grace, the *discovery* of grace, the *exercise* of grace, and the *increase* of grace; and in order to the weaning of them from this world, and to the completing their conformity to Christ, the captain of their salvation, "who was made perfect through sufferings," Heb. 2:10; and to ripen them for heaven, and to work in them more affections of pity and compassion to those who are in misery, and who sigh and groan under their Egyptian taskmasters.

**[4.] Fourthly, Consider the eminence of their preservation, though in the fire—yet unconsumed.** The church of God was hot, yes, all in flames—and yet not consumed. This fire was a supernatural fire,

(1.) It continued without fuel to feed upon.

(2.) It kept below and ascended not.

(3.) It burned and consumed not.

All which shows it to be a supernatural work. Let the fire be ever so hot, so fierce, so furious, so spreading—the church shall have a being, and live and bear up in the midst of the flames. If the church like the sea loses in one place, it gains ground in another. When the worst of men and devils have done their worst, the Lord will have a name among his people on earth. The church, with the lamp in the story, laughs at all those winds, which would blow it out. Well may we stand amazed and wonder, that so flaming and terrible a fire, falling upon so contemptible a bush, and so dry and despicable a shrub, should not presently turn it into ashes; for why, is *the* fire too weak? Oh no! Is the *bush* so strong, as to defend and secure itself against devouring flames? Oh no! Or is the bush not apt to burn and consume by so fierce a fire? Oh no. It is not from the impotency of the fire, nor from the strength or constitution of the bush; for a dry bramble bush, in the matter of it is as combustible as any chaff, and as easily destroyed as any stubble; but because the natural force thereof was restrained by the glorious power of God!

There are two inseparable qualities of fire:

(1.) To give light.

(2.) To burn; and yet divine power divides and separates these two: for this fire gives light—but burns not. Oh, what a mighty, what an astonishing preservation is here! The afflictions and sufferings of the church are not a consuming fire—but a trying fire, as the fire in a furnace consumes the dross—but tries the gold, and puts a new luster, beauty, and glory upon it.

Hesiod speaks of thirty thousand demigods, which were keepers of men; but what are so many thousand gods, compared to that one God who neither slumbers nor sleeps—but day and night keeps his people as his jewels, as the apple of his eye; who keeps them in his pavilion, as a prince his favorite? [Psalm 121:4; Isaiah 27:3; Mal. 3:17; Zech. 2:8; Psalm 31:20.]

There was a dialogue between a heathen and a Jew; after the Jews returned from captivity—all nations round about them being enemies unto them—the heathen asked the Jew, "how he and his countrymen

could hope for any safety, because," says he, "everyone of you is as a silly sheep compassed about with fifty wolves!" "Yes—but," says the Jew, "we are kept by such a shepherd, as can kill all these wolves when he pleases, and by that means preserve his sheep." But,

**[5.] Fifthly, Consider how this eminent preservation of his people from dangers in the midst of dangers is effected and brought about, and that is by the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ,** the great angel of the covenant; for Moses says expressly of this vision, that "The Lord appeared unto Moses, and God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses," etc., verse 4. This calling of Moses by his name, and the doubling of his name, in such a familiar and loving manner—was a sign of God's singular favor to Moses. Choice favorites God frequently called by name, as you may see in those instances of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc., and so our Lord Jesus Christ called Peter by his name, and Nathanael by his name, and Mary by her name, etc. [Scipio by way of favor called his citizens by their names; and so Cyrus upon the same ground called his soldiers by their names.] The same presence of the Son of God, which preserved the three Hebrew *children*, or rather *champions*, in that furious furnace of Nebuchadnezzar from burning or singeing, preserved the bush, though not from burning—yet from consuming, by restraining the natural force of the fire, and strengthening the bush against it. The bush, the church in the fire, came forth from the hottest furnace that ever was kindled, not blacker nor worsen—but brighter and better, and more glorious than the sun in his strength; and all this from the presence of the angel of the covenant who dwelt in the bush. Divine presence can preserve a flaming bush from being consumed.

Witness our preservation to this day, though we have been as a burning bush. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved, God shall help her, and that right early," Psalm 46:5. Heb., "When the morning appears," that is, in the nick of time, when help shall be most seasonable and best welcome. The presence of the Lord in the midst of his church, will secure her from being greatly moved in the midst of all those great dreadful confusions which are abroad in the world.

Hence the church is called, *Jehovah shammah*, "The Lord is there," Ezek.

48:35. His presence in heaven, makes it heaven; and his presence in the church, makes it happy and safe. Nothing shall disturb or harm those who have the presence of God in the midst of them. [*Persecution* is, as Calvin writes, *the black angel which dogs the gospel at the heels.*] The church is built upon a rock, she is invincible, Mat. 16:18. Jer. 1:8, "Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you, to deliver you, says the Lord." Verse 17-19, "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land--against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you—declares the LORD." God's presence with his messengers is a guard, and a safeguard, all-sufficient against all opposition whatever.

Earthly princes and sovereigns are not accustomed to go with those whom they send on embassy—but God always goes along with those whom he sends, and will, by his powerful presence, protect and defend them against opposers, at all times and in all places, when all others fail and forsake us. Christ's presence is security sufficient, for "if he is with us, who can be against us?" They must first prevail against him, before they can prevail against those who withstand and oppose those whom he protects.

How does this come to pass—that Jeremiah, a man, a man alone, should bear up so stoutly, and stand so strong against kings, princes, priests, and people? It is from the special presence of God with him. "I am with you." And what can all the great ones of the world, and all the wicked ones of the world, do against one messenger of the Lord, who is armed with his glorious power? The ambassadors of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, must not be terrified with the multitude of opposers, nor with the grandeur or greatness of opposers; but set the presence of the Lord against them all, and say, "The number of opposers makes the Christian conquests the more illustrious." The more the Pharisees of old, and their successors of late time, have opposed the truth, the more it has prevailed; and it is observable that the reformation in Germany was much furthered by the papists' opposition, yes, when two kings, among many others,

wrote against Luther, namely, Henry the Eighth of England, and Ludovicus of Hungary; this kingly title being entered into the controversy, making men more curious to examine the matter, stirred up a general inclination towards Luther's opinion.

Just so, Jer. 15:20, "And I will make you unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against you—but they shall not prevail against you: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you, says the Lord." When the messengers of the Lord go on constantly and courageously in the faithful discharge of their duties, not relenting, or yielding, or complying with their greatest opposers, then they shall have such a special presence of the Lord with them, as shall sufficiently protect them against all their enemies' might and malice, wrath and rage. Verse 21, "And I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem you out of the hand of the terrible or violent ones." Though you should fall into the hand of the wicked's power, and into the hand of the terrible and violent ones—yet they shall not hurt you, nor harm you; they shall not have their wills upon you. When you are in their hands, I will lay a law of restraint upon their hearts, that they shall not harm you, nor triumph over you; I will be sure to secure you, and rescue you from dangers in the midst of dangers. "A gracious messenger of the Lord in the midst of all oppositions," as Chrysostom said of Peter, "is a man made all of fire walking in stubble—he overcomes and consumes all opposition; all difficulties are but whetstones to his fortitude." The moon will run her course though the dogs bark at it. Just so, will the faithful messengers of the Lord hold on in their way and work, let men and devils bark and do their worst.

Moulin, speaking of the French Protestants, said, "When papists hurt us for reading the Scriptures, we burn with zeal to be reading of them." He is a fool, we say, who will be laughed out of his coat—but he is a fool in folio, who will be laughed out of his skin, out of his profession, out of his religion, out of his principles, out of the ways of God, nay, out of his soul, out of his salvation, because he can't endure to be opposed, derided, or laughed at by lewd and wicked men. The divine presence will make a man set light by such *paper-shot*.

A gracious spirit is raised by opposition. The more opposition it meets

with in a way of duty, the more resolute he is for it. So far is he from being afraid of the threatenings of men, of the frowns of men, or of losing this man's favor, or of incurring such a man's displeasure—that his spirit rises far more because of it. It is with such a man as it is with the fire in winter. The fire burns the hotter because of the coldness of the air; so it is with all the messengers of the Lord, who are inflamed in the way of their duty. Come to David, and tell him, Oh, there is a Goliath, and he has come out with a spear like a weaver's beam, and there is one who bears his shield goes before him! "Where is he?" says David. "I will fight with him," says he, [1 Sam. 17:41, compared with verse 26-27.] Difficulties and dangers do but whet and raise his spirit; he is not afraid of any uncircumcised Philistine.

Ah, my friends, this is a true noble spirit! Holy greatness of mind lies in this, when a man's spirit is borne up upon the greatness of his God, and the goodness of his cause; "and if that will not bear me up," says such a soul, "let me sink in it, I am content to perish." That is a good word, more worth than a world in a faithful minister's eye: Ezek. 3:8-9, "I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house." The flint is the hardest of stones; it preserves itself by its hardness from all injuries; no weather, no violence of hammer or fire will break it or conquer it. God engages himself to give the prophet such undaunted boldness, and invincible courage and constancy, as neither shame nor fear should prevail against.

Divine presence, divine assistance, does always accompany a divine call. Such whom God sends he assists, such whom he calls he encourages against all difficulties and discouragements; such as are called by Christ, and sent by Christ, shall never lack the strengthening, comforting, assisting, animating, and preserving presence of Christ. It is this divine presence which makes them persevere, and show themselves like men—like men of courage, like men of God, and which secures them from dangers in the midst of dangers. In the greatest storms the flint shrinks not, it fears not, it changes not its hue, no, not in the least. Divine presence will keep gracious men from shrinking, fearing, and changing

their way, their work, their Lord, and Master—in the worst of storms that can beat upon them. In all winds and weather the flint is still the same, and so will all the faithful messengers of the Lord be, whatever wind may blow upon them. The special presence of God with them will keep them from fearing, fainting, flying, and preserve them from dangers in the midst of dangers! But,

(8.) Eighthly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by frustrating and disappointing the plots, designs, counsels, and contrivances of their powerful, subtle, secret, and malicious adversaries, who would gladly be multiplying of their troubles, sorrows, sufferings, and miseries upon them.** Neh. 4:8, "They all conspired together, to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it." Verse 11, "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, until we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease." Verse 15, "And it came to pass, when our enemies knew that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsels to nothing," etc. The craft of the church's enemies is always accompanied with cruelty; and their cruelty is seldom without craft. The devil lends them his *seven heads* to plot with, and his seven horns to harm with. But in the things wherein they intend to harm God's people, God is above them, and by his presence with his people he brings all their plots, counsels, and enterprises to nothing.

The enemies of the Jews, in Nehemiah's time, made great brags at first what they would do; but when they saw their plots discovered, and their purposes defeated, they are presently crestfallen, and have no mind nor courage to advance at all. So that to these plotters may be fitly applied that which Guicciardini says of Charles the Eighth, king of France, in his expedition against Naples, "That he came into the field like thunder and lightning—but went out like a snuff; more than a man at first, and less than a woman at last."

In all the ages of the world—the heads, the minds, the hands, the hearts, and the tongues of the wicked have been engaged against the godly; they have been still a-plotting and devising mischief against the favorites of heaven—and yet God's special presence with his people, in point of

affection and protection, has blasted all their designs, and frustrated all their counsels. As the rage of wicked men against the saints have been *endless*, so it has been *fruitless*, because God has been in the midst of them. *Haman* plots against the lives, liberties, and estates of the Jews, Esther 3:8, seq.—but his plot was timely discovered and seasonably prevented, and the *grand plotter* and informer is detected, debased, condemned, and executed! Esther 7:10, "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified." The kings of Persia had absolute and unquestionable power to do whatever they desired. "Whom they would, they slew; and whom they would, they kept alive; whom they would, they set up; and whom they would, they put down," Dan. 5:19; Esther 7:9. So Haman is here, at the king's command, adjudged to be hanged. The truth is, it was a clear case, and the malefactor was self-condemned. "Hang him, therefore," says the king; a short and a just sentence, and soon executed. Ah, how soon is Haman fallen from the *palace*—to the *gallows*; from the highest stage of honor—to the lowest stair of disgrace; from feasting with the king—to be made a feast for crows; and so lies wrapped up in the sheet of perpetual infamy. "So let all your enemies perish, O Lord."

It is a good observation of Josephus upon Esther 7:10: "I cannot," says he, "but admire the Lord's wisdom, and acknowledge his justice, in that he not only punished him for his malice to the church—but, by turning his own mischief upon himself, has made him an example to all posterity; hanging him up in gibbets that others may take warning." Let all plotters and harmers beware of making a match with mischief—for they will have enough of it in the end. Haman was an agent for the devil, who paid him his wages at last, if you will, with a halter. Let all the enemies of the saints tremble at such ends, and be careful to avoid them by flying such like foul and heinous practices.

The bloody plot being thus laid by Haman, the king's minion, behold the footsteps of God's favorable, special, and eminent presence *for* his people and *with* his people in their deadly dangers, and that in raising up in them a very great spirit of faith, prayer, and mourning; and by raising an undaunted courage and resolution in Esther: "And so I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish," Esther 4:16. This she speaks not rashly or

desperately, as wasteful of her life—but as one willing to sacrifice her life for the honor of God, his cause and people. Esther had rather die than shrink from her duty. She thought it better to do worthily and perish *for* a kingdom, than unworthily and perish *with* a kingdom. Here was a mighty preference of God in raising Esther's heroic courage and resolution above all those visible dangers which attended her attempt of going in to the king against the known law of the land. And the king held out to Esther the golden scepter, chapter 5:2. He did not kick her out of his presence, as some Cambyses would have done; neither did he command her to the guillotine, as Henry the Eighth did his Anne Boleyn, upon a mere misapprehension of disloyalty; neither yet did he dismiss her, as he had Vashti for a less offence—but by holding out his scepter, shows his gracious respects unto her. This was the Lord's own work, and a great demonstration of his special presence with her, in giving her favor in the eyes of the great king. "So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the scepter" with her hand, says the Chaldee, with her mouth, says the common translation. This she did either in token of submission, or as a sign of reverence and subjection, or for the avoiding of danger; for, as Josephus says, "He who touched the king's scepter was out of the reach of evil," or, according to the custom of the times. God's favorable presence is transparent, in the king's extended favor to her. "On that night could not the king sleep," Heb., "the king's sleep fled away," Esther 6:1; and like a shadow it fled away so much the faster, as it was more followed. Crowns have their cares. Lo! he who commanded one hundred and twenty-seven provinces cannot command one hour's sleep. Herein appeared the special presence of God in keeping the king awake; for Mordecai might have been hanged before Esther had known anything of it—Haman being come early the next morning, verse 4, to beg this of the king—had not God kept him from sleep, and directed him to read in that place of the Chronicles where Mordecai's service was recorded, and so made way to his advancement and Haman's ruin. God's favorable presence shined upon his people in keeping the king from sleep, for excellent ends, and in putting small thoughts into his heart for great purposes.

God will appear for his poor people, in the nick and opportunity of time, when there is but a step between them and death. And further, the power, providence, presence, and goodness of God was made evident, in the

behalf of his people, in directing the king to that very place where Mordecai's singular service, in discovering the barbarous and murderous plot which was laid against the king's life and crown, was recorded, Esther 6:2. That Mordecai should have no reward at the time of the occurrence—but that it should be deferred until a fitter opportunity, when God might be more glorified in the special preservation of his people, and in the famous overthrow of their enemies—was from that mighty hand of God, which was stretched out for the good of his people.

In this great story we may, as in a mirror, see how the **Lord**, by his wisdom, providence, presence, and grace—brings about and overrules the *wills* of men, the *affairs* of men, the *counsels* of men, the *designs* of men, the *words* and *speeches* of men—to the fulfilling of his own will and decree, and the promoting of his own honor and glory, and the good of his people—when vain men think least of doing his will, or serving his providence.

Here you may see the wisdom, prudence, and courage of **Esther**, striking while the iron was hot, charging the bloody decree upon Haman to his face, and that before the king, that things might the better stick and work, and painting him out in his own proper colors. "This adversary and enemy," that is, the cruel enemy, the bloody enemy, the utter enemy, the worst enemy, this sworn swordman of Satan, from whom Haman has drawn his ancient enmity, Gen. 3:15. "Is this wicked Haman," that is—as wicked a wretch as goes on two legs, a man of blood, a man made up of mischief and malice, a sink of wickedness, a very mystery of iniquity, a breathing devil. And now Queen Esther is plain with him, and calls a spade a spade. Though others styled him noble, great, serene, magnificent, etc., Esther gives him his own picture. "This adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" But what a mighty courage had Esther to speak at this rate before the king, and of his grand favorite, and before his face. Surely all this was from the special presence of God with her soul. This was a great work of faith, and a singular fruit of prayer.

"And now Haman stood up to make request for his life." Oh, what a strange turn of events, is here so suddenly! He who a little before was bowed unto by all men—is now upon his knees before a woman! He who was, the very day before, a professed enemy of the Jews, is now suppliant

to a Jewess! He who a few weeks before had contrived the death and ruin of the Jews, is now begging hard for his own life! He who had provided a gallows for Mordecai, fears nothing more now, than that he himself should be hanged on it! Yesterday, oh the praise and bows that Haman had; and now the same man covers his face, in token of his irrecoverable ruin, Esther 7:8.

The king's indignation being up, the courtiers point at the gallows seventy-five feet high, that Haman had set up for Mordecai. All are now for Mordecai, there is not a courtier that has one good word for Haman. Ah, what a rare hand of God was there in all these things, for the good of his people, and the utter overthrow of their grand enemy! "Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, 'A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.' The king said, 'Hang him on it!' So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided." Esther 7:9-10

To sum all up in a little room, the breaking of the king's sleep, was the breaking of one of the most bloody designs that ever was laid against the people of God. Well, what though the king could not sleep, could he not lie still in his bed? No, he must have a book, and that book must be the Book of Chronicles, and that book must be opened where *accidentally*—not by turning to that place purposely—yet surely by God's providence directing him who read, to that very story concerning Mordecai, where was registered his faithfulness, in discovering and baffling the murder intended against the king; whereupon God sets this act of faithfulness so close upon the king's heart, that he could not rest until Mordecai was nobly rewarded for it! And Mordecai's reward must be Haman's ruin! Mordecai's advancement must be Haman's punishment!

In this famous instance you may run and read the favorable, special, and eminent presence of the Lord, in the miraculous preservation of his church from a total ruin and destruction, and in the disappointing the plots, designs, and counsels of their greatest enemies, and in taking of them in the very snares that they had laid for others; suitable to that of the psalmist, "They dig a pit to trap others and then fall into it themselves. They make trouble, but it backfires on them. They plan

violence for others, but it falls on their own heads," Psalm 7:16-17.

Henry the Third of France was stabbed in the same chamber where he had helped to contrive the French massacre; and his brother, Charles the Ninth, had blood given him to drink, for he was worthy. There are no end of stories of this nature. Just so, Psalm 9:15, "The nations have fallen into the pit they dug for others. They have been caught in their own trap." The wicked are compared to *hunters* for their cruelty, and to *fowlers* for their craft; but see their success, they are sunk down in their own pit, caught in their own net. Thus it befell Pharaoh, Jabin, and Sisera, Sennacherib, Antiochus Epiphanes, Maxentius the tyrant, who fell into the Tiber, from his own false bridge laid for Constantine; the Spanish armada, etc. [Exod. 9:15; Judges 10:4; 2 Chron. 32; Euseb., lib. ix. c. 9.] verse 16, "The wicked have trapped themselves in their own snares." Goliath was killed with his own sword.

I have been the longer a-glancing at this famous story of Esther, because of its seasonableness and suitableness to the days and times wherein we live. The like is not found in all the Scripture, as worthy of present admiration, and of deep and perpetual meditation.

A further proof of this eighth particular, that is under our present consideration, you have in Isaiah 8:9, "Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered! Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Prepare for battle, and be shattered!" Heb.— "And be shattered! And be shattered! And be shattered!" It is thrice repeated, to work it the deeper into the minds and hearts of those, who would either hear or read it; and to give the stronger assurance of the certainty of their being inevitably broken in pieces, who were adversaries and conspirators against the people of God. This speech is directed to the kings of Assyria, and other nations which combined with him against the people of God; but especially against the city of Jerusalem. It is a holy irony, or laughing to scorn the associating enemies of the church. Well says the prophet, Proceed as unanimously, as politically, and as powerfully in your combinations, consultations, and preparations as you can—yet be assured that all your associations shall be dissolved, and your counsels frustrated, and your attempts returned back upon yourselves to your own ruin and confusion: verse 10, "Take counsel together," (namely, about invading

Judah, and surprising Jerusalem,) "and it shall come to nothing; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us." Isaiah 7:5-6.

"The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance." Psalms 33:10-12. Consult, conclude, determine, resolve upon what you please, you shall never be able, by all your power and policy, to prevail against the people of God! For his favorable, special, and eminent presence is constantly with them—to assist, counsel, and protect them against all oppositions and assaults. God brings to nothing the counsel of the nations. Neither the devil nor his imps, nor any of their counsels, or enchantments, shall ever be able to stand before the presence of the Lord with his people! Let men and devils conspire, let them plot, consult, and determine—all shall be in vain, because there is no counsel against the Lord, there is no possibility of prevailing against the presence of the Lord with his people. His special presence will be their greatest safety and security in the midst of all plots, designs, dangers, etc. The special presence of God with his people mars and frustrates all the plots, counsels, and intricate contrivances of the world's wizards, as might be showed in those instances of Balaam, Pharaoh, Saul, Herod, with many others. But I must hasten, and therefore,

(9.) Ninthly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by his sympathizing with them in all their troubles, trials, distresses, dangers**, as you may clearly see by consulting these choice scriptures. [Exod. 2:23-25, and 3:7-10; Isaiah 37:28-29; Ezek. 35:7-10; Mat. 25:4, seq.; Deut. 32:9-11; John 14:9-10; Col. 1:15; Heb. 9:24; Romans 8:34.]

Isaiah 63:9, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and *the angel of his presence* saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old." Christ is here in the Hebrew called "the angel of his face," either because he does exactly resemble God his Father, or because he appears before the face or in the presence of God for us. This angel took to heart their afflictions, he was

himself grieved for them and with them. This angel secured and safeguarded them all the way through the wilderness, from Egypt to Canaan. This angel did not only lead them—but he also lifted them up and took them in his arms, as parents or nurses are accustomed to do with young and weakly children who are in danger. And this angel carried them, as the eagle does her young ones, that are unable yet to fly—on her wings. Oh the pity, the mercifulness, the sympathy, and admirable compassion of Christ to his people in their suffering state!

Zech. 2:8, "Whoever touches you, touches the apple of his eye." The eye is the tenderest piece of the tenderest part. The eye is kept most diligently, and strongly guarded by nature. A man can better bear a *thump* on the back, the *biting* of his finger, the *cutting* of his hand, the *pricking* of his leg, or a *blow* upon his arm—than a *touch* on the eye. Oh, that persecutors would be quiet, and let God's people alone, and take heed how they meddle with *God's eyes*. [It is here called *the daughter of the eye*, because it is as dear to a man as an only daughter. The eye and the good name will endure no jests.] There is no touching of them, to wrong or injure them—but you wrong and injure the Holy One of Israel, who will certainly revenge himself upon you. Those who strike at God's eyes, do through them strike at God himself, which he will never put up with. It is a dangerous thing to molest and trouble, to afflict or annoy the people of God; for God himself is very sensible of it, and accordingly he will certainly requite it. Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute **me**?" Those who persecute the servants of Christ—they persecute Christ himself, who lives in them, and is mystically united to them.

Look! as there is by virtue of the natural union a mutual sympathy between the head and the members, the husband and the wife, so it is here between Christ and his saints, for he is a most sympathizing, compassionate, tender-hearted Savior, Heb. 4:15, and 5:2; Col. 1:24; Heb. 13:13; Isaiah 53:4. Those who shoot at the saints, hit Christ; their sufferings are held his, and their reproaches are counted his. He who bore the saints' griefs when he was on earth, really and properly, he bears them still now he is in heaven, in a way of sympathy. Christ in his glorified state, has a very tender sense of all the evil that is done to his children, his members, his spouse, and looks upon it as done to himself!

A great Lord said to another great Lord of the council, in king Henry the Eighth's days, concerning Cranmer, "Let him alone, for the king will not allow his finger to ache." So I say to the persecutors of the day, "Let the people of God alone, for if you do but make their finger ache, God will make your heads and hearts ache for it before he has done with you!" But,

(10.) Tenthly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by pouring out upon them a greater spirit of prayer and supplication in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, than formerly they have had.** Isaiah 26:16, "Lord, in trouble have they visited you; they poured out a prayer when your chastening was upon them." "They *poured* out their still prayer." *Before* they would say a prayer—but *now* they *poured* out a prayer. The Hebrew word signifies a soft or low kind of muttering which can hardly be heard. The prophet hereby would intimate to us, that in their great troubles and deepest distresses—they sighed or groaned unto God, and prayed in a still and silent manner. Saints never visit God more with their prayers—than when he visits them most with his rod. Saints never pray with that seriousness, that spiritualness, that heavenliness, that humbleness, that brokenness, that fervency, that frequency—as they do when they are under the mighty chastening hand of God; and all this is from that special presence of God, that it is with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, etc.

When it was a day of great trouble, of great distress, of great danger to the people of God in Germany, God poured out a very great spirit of prayer upon Luther; at length he comes out of his closet triumphantly, saying to his fellow-laborers and friends, "We have overcome, we have overcome!" at which time it is observed that there came out a proclamation from Charles the Fifth that none should be further molested for the profession of the gospel. In days of troubles and distress Luther was so warm, zealous, and powerful in prayer, that made one of his best friends say, "That man could have from God whatever he pleased." Being once very warm in prayer, he let fall this transcendent rapture of a daring faith, "Let my will be done;" and then falls off sweetly, "My will, Lord, because it is your will." It is reported in the life of Luther, that when he prayed it was

with so much *reverence* as if he were praying to God, and with so much *boldness* as if he had been speaking to his friend.

I have read of a fountain that at noonday is cold, and at midnight it grows warm; so many Christians are cold in praying, in hearing, etc., in the day of prosperity—but yet are warm and lively in praying and wrestling with God in the day of adversity. [2 Chron. 33:11-13, Jonah 2; Dan. 6; Psalm 8:4; Luke 23:42; 2 Chron 20:1-13; Isaiah 37:14-22; Gen. 32:6-13, and verse 24-31. Now, under affliction, he oils the key of prayers with tears, Hosea 12:4.] Manasseh got more by prayer in his iron chains, than ever he got by his golden crown. Afflictions are like the pick at the nightingale's bosom—which awakens her, and which puts her upon her sweet and delightful singing. A sincere Christian never prays so sweetly—as when under God's rod.

One reports of Joachim, the father of the Virgin Mary, that he would often say, Prayer is my food and drink. When a Christian is in trouble, then prayer is his food and drink. Oh, what a spirit of prayer was upon Jonah—when he was in the whale's belly; and upon Daniel—when he was among the lions; and upon David—when fleeing in the wilderness; and upon the dying thief—when he was on the cross; and upon Jehoshaphat, when Moab and Ammon and others came against him to battle; and upon Hezekiah, when Sennacherib had invaded Judah; and upon Jacob, when his brother Esau came to meet him with four hundred bloody cut-throats at his heels! As there are two kinds of antidotes against poison—namely, hot and cold; so there are two kinds of antidotes against all the troubles of this life—namely, fervent prayer and holy patience, the one hot, the other cold; the one quenching, the other quickening. When a Christian under great troubles, deep distresses, and most extreme dangers, prays more for the sanctification of affliction than the removal of affliction; when he prays more to get off his sins than to get off his chains; when he prays more to get good by the rod than to get free from the rod; when he prays more that his afflictions may be a refining fire than a consuming fire, and that his heart may be low and his graces high, and that all his troubles may wean him more from this world, and ripen him the more for the glory of that upper world—it is a great demonstration of the special presence of God with him in all his troubles and deep distresses. But,

(11.) Eleventhly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by drawing the hearts of his people nearer and closer to himself, by all the afflictions, troubles, distresses, and dangers which attend them in this world.** Psalm 119:67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word." God brought David nearer to himself by *Weeping-Cross*, (Chrysostom.) Affliction is a fire to purge out our dross, and to make our graces shine. Affliction is the remedy which cures all our spiritual diseases.

By afflictions God humbles the hearts of his people, and betters the hearts of his people, and draws the hearts of his people nearer and closer to himself verse 71, "It was good for me to be afflicted." The saints gain by their crosses, troubles, and distresses. Their graces are more raised, their experiences are more multiplied, and their comforts are more augmented, and their communion with God is more heightened, Romans 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 1:3-5; Hosea 2:14. The waves did but lift Noah's ark nearer to heaven, and the higher the waters grew the more the ark was lifted up to heaven. The troubles and distresses which the saints meet with do but raise them in their fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit, Psalm 73:13-14, 28.

When Tiribazus, a noble Persian, was arrested, at first he drew out his sword to defend himself; but when they charged him in the king's name, and informed him that they came from the king to carry him to the king, he yielded willingly. So when afflictions arrest a noble Christian, he may murmur and struggle at the first; but when he considers it is sent from God, to bring him to the sight of God, the King of glory, he willingly and readily submits to the rod, and kisses the rod. All the stones that came thick about Stephen's ears did but knock him the closer to Christ the corner-stone, Acts 7:55, 60. Tiburtius saw paradise when he walked upon burning coals. "If there be any way to heaven on horseback, it is by the cross," said Bradford.

Hosea 2:6, "Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way." By afflictions, difficulties, and distresses, God hedges up his people's way. Well, what then? Mark, verse

7, "Then she will say—I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now." That is, I will go back to to God: I have run away from him by my sins, and now I will return to him again by repentance. The grand design of God in all the afflictions which befall his people, is to bring them nearer and closer to himself. The church could have no rest at home, nor no comfort abroad, until by affliction she was brought into the presence and company of her first husband: Hosea 6:1, "Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he has torn, and he will heal us; he has smitten, and he will bind us up."

The great design of God in playing the lion's part with his people, Hosea 5:14, is to bring them nearer and closer to himself. And, behold, how sweetly this blessed design of God did take: "Come and let us return unto the Lord," etc. The power of God, the love of God, and the grace of God, are most gloriously manifested by bringing the hearts of his people nearer and closer to himself by all the troubles, distresses, and dangers which attend them. In the *winter* season all the sap of the tree runs down to the root, and when a man is sick all the blood goes to the heart; so in the winter of affliction, when the soul is running out more and more to God, and a-getting closer and nearer to God, it is a most sure evidence of the special presence of God with that soul. But,

(12.) Twelfthly and lastly, The Lord does manifest his favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—**by rendering them invincible and unconquerable under all their troubles, distresses, and dangers.** Rev. 12:11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." Rev. 14:1-4; 2 Chron. 32:7, 8, 21-22. By virtue of Christ's blood the saints are made victorious both over Satan and all his instruments; they little value their lives—in respect of Christ and his truth; yes, they despised them in comparison of God's glory and the great things of the gospel. They made so little account of them, that they exposed them to all hazards and dangers for the cause of Christ. In the days of that bloody persecutor, Diocletian, the Christians showed glorious power in the faith of *martyrdom*. [Rupertus says that God did more gloriously triumph in Lawrence's patience and constancy, when he was broiled on the gridiron,

than if he had saved his body from burning by a miracle. His faith and patience made him invincible.]

The valor of the martyrs, and the savageness of the persecutors, striving together, until both exceeding nature and belief, bred wonder and astonishment in beholders and readers. It was a good saying of Cyprian, speaking of the saints and martyrs in those days, They may kill them—but they cannot overcome them. Rev. 17:14, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings; and those who are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." The presence of the Lamb has and will make the saints victorious in all the ages of the world. Modestus, lieutenant to Julian the emperor, said to Julian, "While they suffer they deride us," says he; "and the torments are more fearful to those who stand by, than to the tormented." There is no end in instances of this nature. There is nothing more clear in Scripture and in history than this—that the special presence of the Lord with his people, in all their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, has made them invincible and unconquerable.

But now others, who have been destitute of this favorable, special, and eminent presence of the Lord, in times of great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, how have they fled when none have pursued them! How faint-hearted, how greatly daunted, and how sadly discouraged have they been! How have they turned their backs, and left the field, and run from their colors, without striking one stroke! Many in Cyprian's time were overcome before the encounter, for they revolted to idolatry before any persecution once assailed them. In the Palatinate, when there was a hot persecution, scarcely one professor of twenty stood out—but fell to popery as fast as leaves fall from the trees in autumn. And so in the persecution under Decius many professors that were rich and great in the world, they soon shrunk from Christ, and turned their backs upon his ways.

It is God's favorable, special, and eminent presence with his people, which makes them persevere in an evil day: Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" that is, none; but this is a more forcible denying, "Who can?" Do you Paul ask, "Who can?" I will tell you. The devil can, and tyrants can, and persecutors can, and the whole world can;

but they are as nothing, and can do nothing against us. Wicked men may set themselves against the saints—but they shall not prevail against the saints. What if all the world should strive to hinder the sun from rising or shining, or the wind from blowing, or the rain from falling; or, like those pygmies who went with their arrows and bows to repress the flowing of the sea. Ridiculous acts! Mere follies! All that wicked men can do against the people of God will be but as throwing stones against the wind. "If God is with us, who can be against us?" Methinks these are words of great resolution; as if he should say, "We have *many* enemies, and *powerful* enemies, and *daring* enemies, and *malicious* enemies, and *designing* enemies, and *enraged* enemies—yet let the proudest of them show their faces, and lift up their banners, I fear them not, I regard them not: Who can?" who dare be against us? Let me give a little light into this precious scripture, "If God be for us—who can be against us?" That is, none!

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**[1.] First, None can be so against us—so as to HURT us or HARM us.** Therefore Aquinas well expounds that "Who can be against us—so as to *hurt* us?" Dan. 25, 27, and 6:22. [Justin Martyr said to his murderers in the behalf of himself and his fellow-martyrs, "You may kill us—but you can never hurt us!"]

Acts 18:9-10, "One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision—Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and *no one is going to attack and harm you*, because I have many people in this city." God had many souls in this city to convert and to bring in to Christ, and therefore he animates and encourages Paul to preach boldly, and to go on in his work undauntedly. "Ay—but, Lord, there are many in the city, who will set themselves against me!" "Ay—but I am with you!" "Ay—but, Lord, there are many in the city who hate me!" "Ay—but there is no man who shall set on you to hurt you!"

Though there were many in the city of Corinth that would be *ready* furiously to harm Paul—yet there would not be a man who would be *able* to hurt Paul. God would be his lifeguard to protect him, and he would make void all the mischievous designs and endeavors of his adversaries against him. When in a city the Lord has those who are ordained to salvation, he will bless the labors of his faithful servants with happy success; so that faithful ministers may not, yes, must not, for fear of the invincible malice of some, neglect the salvation of others. All the arrows that men of might and malice should shoot at Paul in the city of Corinth, would never reach him, they would never hurt him, nor harm him!

1 Pet. 3:13, "And who is he who will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good?" They may *oppose* you—but they cannot harm you; they may *hate* you—but they cannot harm you; they may *plot* and devise mischief against you—but they cannot harm you; they may *persecute* you—but they cannot harm you. Caesar told Metellus that he could as easily take away his life; but this was only bravado, for death is a royal prerogative which belongs to God alone, "to whom belong the issues of death," Psalm 68:20, or the goings out from death; that is, deliverances from death and deadly dangers. It is an allusion to one who keeps a passage or a door; that is, God has all the ways which lead out from death

in his own keeping. Christ has the *keys of death*, the sole dominion and disposal of it, Rev. 1:18; 2 Pet. 2:9. The Lord knows how to deliver his people from the most desperate and deadly dangers; he can deliver them out of the mouth of the lion, he can pull them out of the jaws of death, and so secure them from all harm or hurt. None can be so against the people of God as to harm their souls, as to hurt their happiness. But, "If God is for us—who can be against us?" I answer,

**[2.] Secondly, None can be so against us—so as to PREVAIL over us.** The gates of hell may *fight* against us—but the gates of hell cannot *prevail* against us. Christ is the captain of your salvation, God has made him general of the field, and therefore you may be sure that he will stand by you and bring you off with honor, Mat 16:18; Heb. 2:10; Jer. 1:19, and 20:11. You need never fear winning the day, who have Christ as your captain. Though your persecutors are as so many roaring lions—yet Christ, who is the lion of the tribe of Judah, will make you victorious over them all, Rev. 5:5. In all storms and tempests the church will stand fast, because it stands upon a rock, Psalm 129:2. God is on Zion's side, and the enemies of Zion must first prevail against Zion's God—before they can prevail over Zion herself. Zion's God will be a wall of fire about her, and therefore Zion's enemies shall never prevail over her, Zech. 2:5; Deut. 33:26-29. Were Zion's shelter stones, these might be battered; were it walls of lead, these might be melted; were it a defense of waters, these might be dried up; were it garrisons of mighty men, these might be scattered; were it engines of war, these might be defeated; were it trenches, these might be stopped; were it bulwarks, these might be overthrown; but Zion is guarded with a wall of fire round about her, and therefore all her opposers can never prevail over her.

The enemies of Zion are *weak* enemies, they are *smitten* enemies, they are *conquered* enemies, they are *limited* enemies, they are *chained* enemies, they are *cursed* enemies, and they are *naked* enemies—and therefore they shall never be prevalent enemies over Zion, 2 Chron. 32:7-8; Romans 8:37; Gen. 3:12; Num. 14:9. *Pharaoh* followed the Israelites—but he and his mighty men were drowned, and Israel delivered—for God was with them, Exod. 14. *Saul* hunted David as a partridge in the mountains, 1 Sam. 26:20—but Saul perishes, and David was crowned—

for God was with him. *Haman* hated Mordecai and plotted against Mordecai—but Haman is hanged and Mordecai advanced—for God was with him, Esther 6:7. The *Babylonian princes* inform against Daniel and plot against Daniel—but they themselves are torn and devoured by the lions, and Daniel is delivered and exalted—for God was with him, Dan. 6. *Herod* kills James with the sword and imprisons Peter—but Herod is devoured by worms, and Peter is delivered out of prison by an angel—for God was with him, Acts 12.

Let atheists, papists, and persecutors cease from plotting against Zion, from persecuting of Zion, for it is utterly impossible to prevail against Zion. Let all Zion's adversaries remember once for all, what if any policy, counsel, lying, cursing, strength, or cruelty could have prevailed against Zion; Zion would have been rooted out of the world long ago. If Balaam was at our enemies' elbows he would tell them roundly and plainly, that it is "in vain to curse those whom God blesses," Num. 23:8. "It is hard to kick against the goads," Acts 9:5. It is high madness for men to run their naked bodies against a sword's point. Let Zion's enemies remember that God, who takes pleasure in Zion, sits upon the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants are as grasshoppers; yes, all the nations as a drop of a bucket, and less than the dust of the balance, Isaiah 40:12, 15, 17, and therefore he can easily revenge all the wrongs and injuries which are done to Zion by those who would gladly prevail over her, and triumph in her ruin. [Some observe that Paul's style is so beautified with wonderful eloquence and rhetoric, that not Tully nor Demosthenes could ever have so spoken. Some report of Augustine that he wished for three things: (1.) To see Christ in the flesh; (2.) To see Rome in the pride of it; (3.) To have heard Paul preach. But,

**[3.] Thirdly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer, None can be so against us—so as to be able to separate us from the love of God and the love of Christ.** "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all

creation—will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39.

It is neither the pleasures of life, nor the pains of death; it is neither evils felt, nor evils feared; it is neither the height of prosperity, nor the depth of adversity; it is neither bonds, nor banishment; it is neither power, nor policy; it is neither honor, nor baseness; it is neither violent persecutions, nor multiplied tribulations; it is neither the scorns of men, nor reproaches of men, nor revilings of men, nor designs of men, nor anything else—which can separate us from the love of the Father or the love of the Son!

In the 35th verse Paul states that neither crosses nor creatures can deprive us of the love of God, which is set down in a double interrogation, that he might add the more force and life to it and ravish the readers: "Who shall separate us?" That is, none can. But he speaks with contempt; "Who shall? shall tribulation?" as if he should say, I scorn it. As Goliath defied David, saying, "Do you come to me with a stick?" just so, Paul defies all crosses, sufferings, trials, etc., as things not able to deprive sincere Christians of Christ's love! "Shall tribulation," etc. He had before spoken of *people*, now here he speaks of *things*, because Satan and his sworn slaves think by such things to separate between God and his people. Chrysostom observes Paul's wisdom in three things.

(1.) That he says not, Shall the love of riches, pleasures, honors, etc., which have a mighty force in them to bewitch us; but "shall tribulation, distress," etc.

(2.) That he begins with the lighter, and so rises to greater troubles, placing them in this order, not casually—but by design.

(3.) That though these which he here rehearses consist of a certain number—yet every one as a general has special troops under it: as when he says tribulation, he says imprisonments, bonds, slanders, banishments, etc. "Shall tribulation, distress, persecution," etc.? No! They are "blessed, who endure these things," Mat. 5:10-11. Shall famine? He who feeds on Christ shall never perish for hunger. Shall nakedness? Christ's righteousness is my clothing; I shall willingly follow him even

naked; who when he was clothed with infinite glory as with a garment was content to be born naked and to be stripped on the cross for my sake. Shall peril? I know the hardest. Shall the sword? Christ is to me in life and death advantage. But,

**[4.] Fourthly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer, None can be against us so—so as to bring us under submission to their beck, their will, their desires, their lusts.** 1 Kings 19:18, "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." 1 Kings 19:18. That is, I have many thousands who have not worshiped Baal. Here a set number is put for an indefinite number; he means a very great number. Idolaters used not only to bow and kneel before their idols—but also to kiss them, according to that Hosea 13:2, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves." *Kissing* was an outward token—

(1.) Of great and entire affection;

(2.) Of submissive reverence;

(3.) Of willing and ready subjection. Cicero says that the chin of the statue of Hercules was much worn with the kisses of those who adored him. Now God had several thousands of true Israelites indeed that had not in the least kind polluted themselves with the idolatry of Baal. The denial of bowing the knee and kissing with the mouth shows that God's faithful servants were so far from setting their hearts upon Baal, as that they would not make the least show of any affection or subjection to him. These good souls had too great spirits to be conformable to the idolatry of the times. Jeroboam with his eight hundred thousand chosen men, his popish priests, and his golden calves, could not bring Judah to bow to him, 2 Chron. 13:3, 20. Nebuchadnezzar, nor his fiery furnace, could never bring the three Hebrew children to bow to him; the three champions would be Nonconformists, though court, city, and country were violent for conformity, Dan. 3. Neither Darius, his presidents, nor princes, could ever bring Daniel to bow, Dan. 6; Daniel would keep off from idolatry, and keep close to his God, and close to his duty, let all his enemies do their worst.

The rulers and elders of Israel *charged* the apostles, and *threatened* the apostles, and *beat* the apostles, and *commanded* the apostles, that they should not speak in the name of Jesus; but they could never bring them to bow to them, Acts 3, 4, 5. For "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, and daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ," Acts 5:41-42. Pharaoh by all his oppressions could never bring Israel to submit; nor Saul by all his persecutions could never bring David to bow to him; nor could Haman by all his plots and designs ever bring Mordecai to bow to him; and Paul will rather die upon the spot than be brought bow to his enemies', Acts 20:21-24, and 21:13. The ten persecuting emperors could never bring the primitive Christians to bow to them; nor could the bloody, fierce, and fiery papists ever bring the martyrs to bow to them, as you may see throughout the books of martyrs. Among the many hundred instances that are there, I shall only refresh your memory with this one: There were endeavors to bring Hawkes to bow to them—but all in vain. At last some of his Christian friends desired him, for their encouragement and confirmation, to give some token when he was in the flames; a strange time one would think to attend upon signs by friends, whether the pains were tolerable or not. He was bound to the stake, fire put to the wood, it burns, it flames, it consumes his flesh, his eyes start out of his head, his fingers are consumed with the fire; and when everyone thought him dead, expecting the fall of his body—lo, suddenly he lifts up his stumps, and thrice as a famous conqueror he claps them over his head. In this he was more than conqueror.

In former times the sense of the love of God made the martyrs esteem tyrants as gnats and fleas; and torments as flea-bitings. Tertullian, speaking of his times, says, That to be accused was the wish of Christians, and punishment for Christ they counted felicity. A certain woman, running in all haste with her child in her arms, being asked the cause, "Oh," says she, "I hear a great sort of Christians are appointed to be martyred, and I am afraid lest I and my little one will come too late." When the Emperor Valens banished Basil, and the tribune threatened his death, "I wish," said Basil, "I had anything of worth, I would bestow it on him who should cut Basil's windpipe." And when he had that night given

him to deliberate, he answered, that "he would be the same man tomorrow, and wished that the punishment should not be changed."

Chrysostom, being in banishment by the means of Eudoxia the empress, wrote and tells of his resolution before he was banished: "I thought with myself," says he, "that if she banishes me—the earth is the Lord's; if she will saw me asunder—I remembered the prophet Isaiah; if she drowns me—Jonah came to my mind; if she stones me—I thought of Stephen; if she beheads me, John Baptist came to my mind; if she takes away my goods, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb." By all which you may clearly see, that let the wicked do their worst, they can never bring the saints to bow to them. But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer—None, so as to hinder the operation of all things for our good.** When men and devils have done their worst, all the great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, which attend the saints, shall work for their good: Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." In this verse there are two things observable:

**First,** A proposition, or a glorious privilege. "All things work together for good." This word, "work together," is a physical expression. Several poisonous ingredients put together, being tempered by the skillful apothecary, make a sovereign medicine, and work together for the good of the patient. They work together, not between themselves—but together with God; not of their own nature, for so they do not co-operate—but contra-operate. But being sanctified by God, they work together for our good. Indeed, take away God, and afflictions work for our hurt; but all God's providences, being divinely tempered and sanctified, do work together for the best, to the people of God. When the worst of men have done their worst against the saints, all things shall sweetly concur, yes, conspire for their good.

**Second,** The proof, which is double.

**(1.) From the experience of all saints,** "We know;" it is not a doubtful matter. The apostle does not say, "We *think*," but "We *know*."

Nor does he say, "We *hope*," but "We *know*." Nor does he say, "We *guess*," "we *conjecture*," but "We *know*." Nor does he say, "We *desire* that all things may work together for good," but "We *know* all things work together for good." Nor does he say, "We *pray*" that all things may work together for good—but "We *know* all things work together for good." The wicked do not know this secret, as the Philistines did not understand Samson's riddles, Judg. 14:12-14; but we know that all the world shall not hinder the cross from working for our good.

**(2.) From a description of those who love God,** they are "called according to God's purpose;" that is, God has purposed the salvation of his people, he has chosen them to salvation, and called them to it; and therefore it must needs be, that all these afflictions which befall his people, must work together for their spiritual and eternal good, otherwise God should do that which should cross his own purpose, which wise men will not do; and oh, how much less will the most wise God act counter-cross to his own purpose! So Jer. 24:5-6, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians. *My eyes will watch over them for their good*, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them.'" To be carried captive to Babylon was doubtless a very sore and matchless affliction: Dan. 9:12, "You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem."

This may be the abridgment of Jeremiah's Lamentations: Lam. 1:12, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see if there is any suffering like mine, which the LORD brought on me in the day of his fierce anger." Chapter 4:16, "The punishment of my people is greater than that of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand turned to help her." Sodom sustained not any siege from foreign forces, they were not vexed and plagued with the armies of the Chaldeans; there was no hand of man in the destruction of Sodom—but a hand of heaven only. Sodom was not kept long in pains and misery as I and my people have been—but was suddenly overwhelmed, and in an instant

despatched; all which shows that their miseries and sufferings were incomparable and matchless; and that they were so indeed will evidently appear, if you please but seriously to consider either the antecedents of it, or the consequences of it. The **antecedents** of it—what went *before* their captivity—namely, blood, and slaughter, and dreadful devastations. Or if you consider the **consequences** of it—what went *after* their captivity—namely:

(1.) The enslaving of their persons under a fierce and most cruel enemy;

(2.) The loss of their estates;

(3.) The leaving of their country and the land of their nativity;

(4.) A deprivation of the ordinances and worship of God;

(5.) The scorns and reproaches, the exultations and triumphs of their adversaries, who pleased and delighted themselves in their captivity and misery. [See Psalm 137:7; Obad. 12:13-16; Ezek. 25:6; Psalm 44:13-14.] These were the woeful consequences of that captivity—and yet all the power and malice of men in the world could not hinder these amazing and astonishing trials from working together for the spiritual and everlasting good of his captive people. That God will do his people good by the most terrible dispensations that they are under, you may see more and more evident by comparing these scriptures together. [Deut. 8:15-16; Psalm 119:71, 75; Heb. 12:10.]

As the apothecary makes one poison to drive out another poison, so can God make the poison of afflictions, which in themselves are the curse of the law, to drive out the poison of sin. All the world can never hinder the affliction, troubles, and evils which befall the people of God, from working for their good; for God does and will by these means,

(1.) Discover sin;

(2.) Prevent sin;

(3.) Embitter sin;

(4.) Mortify sin.

And God will by afflictions, troubles, etc.,

(1.) Revive, quicken, and recover his children's decayed graces;

(2.) Exercise his children's graces;

(3.) Increase his children's graces;

(4.) Make a further trial and discovery of his children's graces.

Let the enemies of Zion storm and rage, plot and combine, etc.—yet they shall never be able to hinder the greatest troubles, the deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—from working for the spiritual and eternal good of all the sincere lovers of God. I have read a story of Pereus, who, attempting to kill another with a thrust of a sword; only pierced and opened his abscess; and so he was instrumental to save him, whom he designed to have killed! Just so, all the afflictions and troubles which the righteous meet with, they do but serve to cure them of the abscess of pride, or of the abscess of earthly-mindedness, or of the abscess of self-love, or of the abscess of hypocrisy.

The people of God have many enemies in the world, whose course and scope, whose aims and ends and actions are not the same, yes diverse, nay adverse, one thwarting and crossing the other—yet the overruling providence so sways all subordinate and inferior instruments and enemies, that in the midst of their mutual jars they conspire in a sacred harmony, as if they were entered into a holy league, or some sacred combination for the good of his chosen people. *Wherever* our enemies be in respect of their places, *whoever* they be in regard of their persons, and *however* they are disjoined in regard of their affections—yet all their projects and practices shall tend and end in the good of those who love God. But,

**[6] Sixthly**, "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer, None—so as to hinder our communion and fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit.** 1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and

heard, we declare unto you, that you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Man's *summum bonum* stands in his communion with God, as Scripture and experience both evidence. A man whose soul is conversant with God, shall find more pleasure in a desert, in a den, in a dungeon, in a fiery furnace, yes, and in the valley of the shadow of death—than in the palace of a prince! [Never less alone than when alone, said the heathen; and may not a saint say so much more, who has communion with Father, Son, and Spirit? "My God and I are good company," said famous Dr. Sibbes.]

There is a sweet and intimate communion which believers have with **God the Father**; hence they are said to "*walk* with God," Gen. 5:24, and 6:9; and to "*talk* with God," as Moses frequently did; and to " *dwell* in God," 1 John 4:15; and to "*sup* with God," Rev. 3:20; and to "*lodge* with God," Cant. 7:11. The nearness of this fellowship which we have with the Father, is represented by a gradation of allusions in Scripture, all which excellently illustrate this truth. There is some kind of participation that a *servant* has with his master; yet greater is that which one *friend* has with another; but yet greater is that which a *son* has with the father; but greatest of all is that which the *bride* has with the bridegroom. Now in all these relations we stand to the Father; we are his *servants* and he is our Lord, Exod. 12:7; we are his *friends*, John 15:14-15; James 2:23; and he is our friend, Cant. 5:1; an able friend, a sure friend, a faithful friend, a close friend, a constant friend. Plutarch's reasoning is good, "Friends have all things in common." But God is our friend: consequently we cannot lack! He is our Father, Isaiah 63:16, and 64:8; and we are his *children*, Isaiah 63:8. He is our bridegroom, and we are his *bride*, Isaiah 61:10; Hosea 2:19-20; Isaiah 62:5. And therefore it is no pride nor presumption for believers to say, "Our fellowship is with the Father."

Our fellowship with **Jesus Christ** is set forth by the parable of the wedding-feast, and by the entertainment of the prodigal son; and by such relations or various similitudes, as carry communion in their bosoms, as of the head and the members, root and branches, foundation and building, husband and wife, Mat. 22:1-3; Luke 15. The *head* has communion with the body by sense, influence, motion. The *root* has communion with the branches, by leaf, sap, and juice. The *foundation*

has communion with the building, by support and strength. The *husband* has communion with the wife, by love and consent. Thus it is between Christ and the believers: 1 Cor. 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom you are called to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ." All believers have fellowship with Christ, whether they are strong—or weak, rich—or poor, high—or low, ripe and well grown—or new-born babes, and very tender, Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 2:2; John 17:20-23.

The *head* has conjunction with all the members, and an influence into all the members, even the little toes, as well as into the strongest arms. The *root*, in the virtue of it, extends to the weakest branches, as well as to the strongest limbs of the tree. *Communion* with Christ is as large as *union* with Christ. All believers are *united* to Christ, and all believers have *communion* with Christ. Though one star exceeds another in magnitude—yet all are alike seated in the heavenly orb; and though one member is larger in the body than another—yet each one has an equal conjunction with the head.

And as believers have fellowship with the Father and the Son, so they have fellowship with the **Spirit** also. Every believer's communion extends to all the persons in the Trinity: 2 Cor. 13:14, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." Now no men, no devils, no wrath, no rage, no malice, no enmity, no afflictions, no oppositions, no persecutions, no troubles, no trials, no bonds, no banishment—can interrupt or hinder a believer's communion with the three persons in Trinity. But,

**[7.] Seventhly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer, None—so as to hinder our private trade to heaven.** All the world can never hinder a sincere Christian from driving a secret trade with heaven, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Psalm 3:2-4; Psalm 6:8-10; Psalm 138:3; Lam. 3:55-59.] A Christian can as well *hear* without ears, and *live* without food, and *fight* without hands, and *walk* without feet—as he is able to live without secret prayer. Secret prayer is the life of our lives, the soul, the sweet, the heaven of all our earthly enjoyments. Of all the duties of piety, secret prayer is the most soul-sweetening, soul-strengthening, soul-nourishing, soul-fattening, soul-refreshing, soul-satisfying, and soul-encouraging duty. In all the

ages of the world, the saints have kept the trade. In spite of all opposers and persecutors, in prisons, in dungeons, in dens, in bonds, in banishments, on racks, and in the very flames, the saints have still kept up this secret trade; as you may see at large in my treatise on closet prayer, called "The Privy Key of Heaven," to which I refer you. But,

**[8.] Eighthly, "If God is for us—who can be against us?" I answer, None—so as to deprive us of the sweet testimony of our renewed consciences.** 2 Cor. 1:12, "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." They were in great and pressing troubles in Asia, verse 8—and yet they boasted in the testimony of their consciences; they were under a sentence of death in themselves, verse 9—and yet gloried in the testimony of their consciences. *Joy* of conscience is the greatest joy, as *trouble* of conscience is the greatest trouble! When conscience bears its testimony with us, and for us, how full of joy is the soul, even in the midst of the deepest sorrows and greatest sufferings! A good conscience has sure confidence, and he who has it, sits Noah-like—quiet in the greatest upheavals; freed, if not from the common destruction—yet from the common distraction.

A good conscience is an impregnable fort. It fears no opponent; it will enable a man to stand against the fiercest batteries of men and devils. A good conscience will fill a man with courage and comfort in the midst of all his troubles and distresses. Paul had enough to say for himself when standing before the council; he could say, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day," Acts 23:1-2. And though as soon as he had said so, Ananias commanded to smite him on the mouth—yet he bears up bravely, because his conscience did not smite him—but acquit him. That man can never lack music, whose conscience speaks in consort, and is harmonious with himself. A good conscience is a paradise in a wilderness, it is riches in poverty, and health in sickness, and strength in weakness, and liberty in bonds, and life in death, Isaiah 38:3. A good conscience will enable a man to triumph over innumerable evils, yes, over death itself. Death to such a person is not the king of

*terrors*—but the king of *desires*, Phil. 1:23.

A good conscience will be a Christian's best friend in the worst times; it will be a sword to defend him, a staff to support him, a pillar of fire to lead him, a Joseph to nourish him, a Dorcas to clothe him, a Canaan to refresh him, and a feast to delight him: "He who is of a merry heart has a continual feast," Proverbs 15:15. Now there is nothing which can make a man divinely merry, below a good conscience. "A good conscience," says one, "is the bed of God, the palace of Christ, the habitation of the Holy Spirit, the paradise of delights, and wherein every tree yields a feast."

The tranquility of conscience, and the security of innocence, excel all the things which the world counts good. He who has a good conscience enjoys a continual serenity, and sits continually at that blessed feast, whereat the blessed angels are cooks and butlers, as Luther has it, and the three persons in Trinity glad guests. All other feasts, compared to this of a good conscience, are stark hunger. The feast of a good conscience is a full feast, a noble feast, a lasting feast; not for a day, as that of Nabal's; nor for seven days, as that of Samson's; nor of nine score days, as that of Ahasuerus; but a durable, continual feast, without intermission of solace, or interruption of society. The best way in this world for a man to turn his whole life into a merry festival, is to get and keep a good conscience. "A godly man keeps holiday all the year around." It was the testimony of a good conscience which made the apostles rejoice when they were beaten and abused by the council. It was the testimony of a good conscience which made Paul and Silas to sing in the prison, Acts 5:40-42, and 16:25-26. It was the testimony of a good conscience which made Moses prefer Christ's cross before Egypt's crown, and Christ's reproaches before Egypt's treasures. It was the testimony of a good conscience which made those worthies in that 11th chapter of the Hebrews more willing to die than to live, to die than to dine, Heb. 11:35. It was the testimony of a good conscience which made the martyrs to kiss the stake, to hug their executioners, to clap their hands in the flames, and to tread upon burning coals as upon beds of roses! Now it is not in the power or policy of men or devils to deprive a Christian of the testimony of his conscience; and as long as that *bird in the bosom* sings—no troubles, no trials, no oppositions, no persecutions, no dangers, no death can make a Christian

miserable. The testimony of a good conscience will make a man triumph over the worst of men, and the worst of sufferings. But,

**[9.] Ninthly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer, None—so as to hinder the help, assistance, and support of God.** Heb. 13:5, "Let your way of life be without covetousness,"—or "without the love of silver," as the Greek word signifies—"and be content with such things as you have." So Beza, "Be content with present things." These Hebrew Christians had been plundered of all they had; though they had nothing they must be content, Heb. 10:34. If men cannot bring their means to their minds, let them bring their minds to their means; **a little will serve our turn until we get to heaven, until we come to our Father's house:** "For he has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." There are five negatives in the Greek; I read not the like throughout the New Testament. In that this promise is set down negatively, "I will never leave you," this makes the promise to be of a larger extent; for it includes all times, all places, all estates, all dangers, all needs, all distresses whatever; as if he had more largely said, you shall never stand in need of any of my help and protection—but you shall be sure to find it. *Affirmative* promises are not of that extent as *negative* promises are; for if a man should promise to assist, help, support, or counsel me, if he does it now and then, or upon some special occasions, he has kept his promise; but negatively for a man to say, "I will not fail you, I will *never* leave you," though he should help, assist, support, or stand by me, a hundred, yes, a thousand times—and yet fail me but once, that negative promise is not punctually kept, it is not perfectly kept.

It is further considerable that there is a great emphasis in doubling and trebling a negative particle in Greek. Doubling and trebling negatives in Greek makes them much the stronger. The doubling of the negative particle does in this place carry the greater emphasis, because, in setting down the same thing, it is not only twice doubled—but in the latter place it is trebled; so as there are in all five negatives, as I have already hinted. These two phrases, "Never leave nor forsake," are so general as they include all the needs, all dangers, all distresses, all necessities, all calamities, all miseries, which can befall us in this world. [A general promise comprises all particulars of that kind.]

These two phrases, "God's not leaving, God's not forsaking," imply all needful assistance. It is more than if he had said, I will supply all your needs, I will heal all your diseases, I will secure you against all sorts of dangers, I will ease you of all your pains, I will free you of all your oppressors, I will break all your bonds, I will bring you out of prison, I will vanquish all your enemies, I will knock off all your chains, and I will make you triumph over all your sufferings; for these generals comprise all manner of particulars under them.

Heb. 13:6, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." In this verse there is an inference made upon the former promise of God's not leaving nor forsaking his people; the conjunction, "so that," implies an inference, and such an inference in this place as teaches us to make a good use of the forenamed promise. The use here set down is double: the first is **confidence in God**, "The Lord is my helper;" secondly, **courage against man**, "I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Assurance of God's presence to help at all times and circumstances, should raise us up above all base and slavish fears of the power of men, of the harmings of men, of the evil designs of men, etc. God being with us, and for us, and on our side, we may boldly, safely, and confidently, rest upon it, that he will freely, readily, graciously, afford all needful help, assistance, and support, when we are in the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers.

The Greek word "helper," according to the notation of it, signifies one who is ready to run at the cry of another. This notation implies a willing readiness, and a ready willingness in God, to help and support his people when they are in deep distress. You know the tender father, the indulgent mother--they immediately run when they hear the child cry, or see the child in any danger or distress. Just so, when God sees his poor children in any danger or distress, when he hears them complain and cry out of their sufferings, their bonds, their burdens, their oppressions, their dangers, etc., he immediately runs to their relief and support, Exod. 2:23-25, and 3:7-10. Psalm 33:20, "Our soul waits for the Lord: he is our help and our shield." Psalm 49:17, "You are my deliverer: God is the Lord Almighty, with him alone is strength and power to deliver Israel out of all

his troubles." He *may* do it, he *can* do it, he *will* do it—he is wise in heart and mighty in strength; besides him there is no Savior, no deliverer; he is a shield to the righteous, strength to the weak, a refuge to the oppressed; he is *Instar omnium*, all in all. [Psalm 9:7, 8; Isaiah 43:11; Psalm 5:12, and 22:12; 2 Kings 6:26-27.]

Who is like him in all the world—to help his people in each and every direful circumstance? When friends cannot help, when power cannot help, when human wisdom cannot help, when riches cannot help, when princes cannot help, when governments cannot help—yet then God can and will help his people—when all human help fails. "The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left," Deut. 32:36. When God's people are at the very brink of ruin, then God will come in seasonably to their help; their extremity shall be his opportunity, to support his people, and to judge their enemies. No men, no devils, no power, no policy, can hinder God from helping, aiding, assisting, and supporting of his people in any needful circumstance. But,

**[10.] Tenthly**, "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer, None—so as to hinder the springs of joy and comfort from rising and flowing in their souls.** Psalm 71:20-21, "Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again." The psalmist was in those desperate dangers, that he seemed to be as a man who was dead and buried—and yet he had faith enough to believe that God would surround him with cordials, and supply him with comforts from all sides. There is no true comfort to be drawn out of *the stagnant pools of creature sufficiencies*—but only out of the living fountains of the all-sufficiencies of the Lord Almighty.

"You shall comfort me on every side." Psalm 94:19, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me," or of my careful, troubled, perplexed thoughts, as the word properly signifies, "your comforts delight my soul." As the psalmist always found God a present *help*, so he always found him a present *comfort* in the day of troubles. God never did, nor ever will lack a cordial to revive and keep up the spirits of his people from fainting and

sinking in an evil day. When the psalmist was under many griefs, cares, fears, and perplexities of spirit, God came in with those comforts which delighted his soul, and cheered up his spirits, Psalm 119:49-50. The word of the Lord is never more a word of comfort, nor the Spirit of the Lord is never more a Spirit of comfort—than when the saints are in their deepest distresses and sorest perplexities.

John 14:16, "And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever;" verse 26, "But the comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name." Hudson, the martyr, being at the stake, he went from under his chain, and having prayed earnestly, he was so comforted and refreshed by the Holy Spirit, that he suffered valiantly and cheerfully. The Holy Spirit is called again and again *the comforter*, because his office is to work consolation in the hearts of God's people in all their troubles and distresses. Spiritual comfort is therefore called "joy in the Holy Spirit," because the Holy Spirit creates it in the soul, Romans 14:17. When a man suffers for righteousness' sake, God comes with his cordials in the very nick of time, 1 Pet. 4:13. When a man's suffering is upon the account of Christ, God seldom fails to send the Comforter for the refreshing and relieving of his heart. When a man is under bodily confinement for the cause of Christ, God will never fail to be a spring of life, a well of salvation, and breast of consolation to him, Isaiah 12:3, and 66:11. When a Christian is brought down to his last "piece of bread," then is the season for God to feed him with heavenly manna.

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior." Habakkuk 3:17-18. In these words you have these two parts:

- (1.) A sad supposition, "Though the fig tree does not bud," etc.;
- (2.) A noble and comfortable resolution, "Yet I will be joyful in God my Savior."

Let me first hint a little at **the sad supposition**, "Though the fig tree

does not bud," etc.

[1.] **First**, Though there should be a famine in that land, that of all lands was the most plentiful and fruitful land—yet Habakkuk "will be joyful in God my Savior." The land of Canaan, of all lands, was the most fruitful. It was as the garden of God. It was a land which "flowed with milk and honey," a land of vineyards, the best of all lands, as Moses describes it; a land that brought forth to Isaac no less than a hundredfold. It was so rich a land that it was the granary of other neighboring cities and countries. It had not only plenty for itself—but bounty for others. Yet now, when God shall turn a paradise into a wilderness, Habakkuk will rejoice in the God of his salvation, Deut. 8:7-9, and 32:13-14; Gen. 26:12; 1 Kings 5:11; Acts 12:20. But,

[2.] **Secondly**, When the anger and wrath of God shall cause a dearth in those fruits which naturally are most yielding and pleasant—yet then Habakkuk would rejoice in the God of his salvation. The fig-tree, of all trees, is most fruitful, bringing forth of its own accord, with the least care and culture, fructifying in the most barren and stony places, bearing twice a year, soonest ripening, and rarely failing. Just so, the vine, that is a fruitful plant, is made the emblem of plenty and fruitfulness. Now when there shall be a dearth upon these pleasant fruits—yet then Habakkuk will "rejoice in the God of his salvation." But,

[3.] **Thirdly**, Another print of divine displeasure in the scarcity threatened is, that it is a national famine, a general famine, an overspreading famine. Usually, if one part of the land suffers scarcity, other parts abound with plenty; but when God calls for a famine, he turns a whole land into a desert, into a barren wilderness. "Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languishes," Psalm 107:33-34; Nah. 1:4. These were the richest soil of all the country—yet these were parched up and fruitless by God's displeasure. And yet for all this Habakkuk "will rejoice in the God of his salvation." But,

[4.] **Fourthly**, Another print of divine displeasure is this, that the Lord makes it a universal scarcity upon all kind of foods and supports of life. Here is the "staff of bread" broken, and "the herds and flocks fail," and the refreshing of the wine-press, "the seed and the vine, and the fig-tree

and the olive-tree," all become fruitless. Such a desolation is more than ordinary. Usually, when one commodity fails, another abounds. If corn be costly, cattle will be cheap. That weather which oftentimes hinders one kind of grain, helps another; but here God blasts all the helps of nature. Therefore God compares his judgments to a fire which burns all before it: Joel 2:3, "The land is as the garden of Eden before it, and behind it a desolate wilderness," and this the Lord points at as a wonder: Joel 1:2, "Hear this, you old men"—who can talk of many years—"has this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? that which the palmer-worm has left, has the caterpillars eaten." When God begins in a way of judgment, he makes an end, he makes the decays of nature excessive and violent; and yet Habakkuk will "rejoice in the God of his salvation."

In his resolution you have the first particle, "although," verse 17. Now this particle is an act of forecast; these miseries may befall us; and in the 18th verse you have the particle "yet," and that is an act of preparation against these miseries. That particle "although" forecasts the misery, and that particle "yet" foresees the remedy. He foresees sorrows in the first, and he provides against them in the second, "Yet I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."

Just so, Paul comes with a benediction in his mouth—and surely it was in his heart before it was in his mouth: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. The apostle begins here with praise and thanksgiving, according to his accustomed manner in all his epistles; but contrary to his custom does he apply this thanksgiving wholly to himself. "The reason was," says Beza, "because the Corinthians began to despise him for his afflictions—it being the common course of the world to despise the people of God when they are under sufferings;" therefore he answered confidently for himself, that though he had been much afflicted—yet he had been much comforted; and rejoiced the more in his comforts, because God had comforted him for that very cause, that he might be able and willing to comfort others.

God is the God of all sorts and degrees of comfort. He has all comforts at his disposal. This phrase, "The God of all comforts," intimates to us;

(1.) That no comfort can be found anywhere else; God has the sole gift of comfort.

(2.) Not only some—but all comfort; no imaginable comfort is lacking in him, nor to be found outside of him. Look! as the air lights not without the sun, and as fuel heats not without fire, so neither can anything soundly comfort us without God.

(3.) All degrees of comfort are to be found in him, in our greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. The lower the ebb—the higher the tide; the deeper the distress—the greater the comforts. Though the apostle was greatly afflicted—yet his comforts did exceed his afflictions: 2 Cor. 7:6, "God, who comforts the downcast." When the Corinthians were in a very low condition, when they were even spent with grief and swallowed up in sorrows, when they were destitute of all relief and comfort, then the God of all comforts did comfort them. *The comfort of God is his most sweet attribute; it is a breast which we should be always sucking at.* No tribulations, no persecutions, no grievances, no prison doors, no bolts, no bars, can keep out the consolations of God from flowing in upon his people. God loves to comfort his people when all their outward comforts fail them. God's comforts are not only *sweet*—but *seasonable*; he never comes too soon, nor ever stays too long.

"If one drop of the joy of the Holy Spirit should fall into hell, it would swallow up all the torments of hell," says Austin. "The joy of the Holy Spirit" will certainly swallow up all the troubles and sufferings that we meet with in a way of righteousness. None have been more divinely cheerful and merry than the saints have been under their greatest sufferings, 1 Pet. 4:12-14. John Noyes took up a faggot at the fire and kissed it, saying, "Blessed be the time that ever I was born to come to this preferment." When they fastened Alice Driver to the stake to be burnt, "Never did any necklace," said she, with a cheerful countenance, "suit me so well as this chain." Mr. Bradford took off his cap and thanked God when he was brought word that he was to be burnt on the morrow. Mr. Taylor began to dance when he had come near the place where he was to

suffer. Thus you see that it is not the greatest troubles, nor the deepest distresses, nor the most deadly dangers, that can hinder the joy of the Lord from overflowing the soul. But,

**[11.] Eleventhly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us? **I answer, None—so as to deprive us of our graces, which next to Christ are our choicest jewels.** 1 John 3:9, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin." That is, he does not give himself over to a voluntary serving of sin; he does not make a trade of sin; he sins not totally, finally, maliciously, habitually, studiously, resolutely, willfully, delightfully, deadly. "He does not make it his work to sin," he cannot follow his lusts, as a workman follows his trade, "because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." "God's seed," the seed of grace, is an abiding seed. Grace in itself is certain and unchangeable, though the *feeling* of grace, is uncertain. Grace has an abiding excellency in it; grace has eternity stamped upon it. It is durable riches. Other riches "make themselves wings, and fly from us," Proverbs 8:18, and 27:24; but grace will keep us company until we get to heaven. Our last step in holiness, will be into happiness. Grace is a blossom of eternity.

Grace is an anointing which abides, 1 John 2:27; John 4:14, and 7:38. That is, the principle of grace infused into you, which was typified by the unctions or anointings in the ceremonial law, which was signified by the precious ointment poured upon the head of Aaron, that ran down to the skirts of his garments—this principle will prove durable and lasting. Grace is "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Grace is a river of living water. Now this river can never be dried up, because the Spirit of God is the constant spring that feeds it and maintains it. Grace is not a *stream* or a pond which may run dry—but a *well*, yes, a springing well of inexhaustible fullness, sweetness, virtue, and refreshment.

Grace will still be springing up and flowing out in all the departments of a Christian. Grace will be flowing out in all a Christian's duties and services, in his outward calling and employments, in his trials and sufferings. Grace will break out at a Christian's eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet. Where grace is a well of water, a river of living water, there that Christian will *see* for Christ, and *hear* for Christ, and *talk* for Christ, and

*do* for Christ, and *walk* with Christ. Grace is a well, a river, which will be springing up to everlasting life.

*Grace* and *glory* differ in degree, not in kind. Grace differs very little from glory. The one is the seed, the other the flower. Grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant. Grace is a beginning of glory. It may be compared to the golden chain in Homer, whose top was fastened to the chair of Jupiter. Grace and glory are individual, yet inseparable. The psalmist joins them together, "The Lord will give grace and glory," Psalm 84:11. Grace is a living spring which never fails, a seed which never dies, a jewel which never consumes, a sun which never sets. All other gifts of whatever kind, worth, or excellency, are but like a cloud soon dispelled, a vessel of clay soon broken, a sandy foundation soon sunk. Grace is more excellent than gold. Gold draws the heart from God, grace draws the heart to God; gold does but enrich the mortal part, the ignoble part—but grace enriches the angelical part, the noble part; gold perishes—but grace perseveres, 1 Peter 1:7. If grace were not permanent, it could not be excellent; if grace were not durable, it could not be pleasurable; if grace were not lasting, yes everlasting, it could not be a Christian's comfort in life, his support in death, and his glorious crown in the great day of account. Grace in itself is permanent, incorruptible; it never fades away; it is a birth which shall never die; it is a plant of renown which shall never wither—but grow up more and more until grace is turned into glory. Upon which account, Jerome would rather have Paul's poor coat with his heavenly graces—than the purple of kings with their kingdoms. No troubles, no distresses, no dangers can deprive us of our graces, can rob us of our spiritual treasure. But,

**[12.] Twelfthly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer, None, so as to deprive us of our inward peace, rest, and quiet.** Though it thunders, and lightnings, and rains, and blows abroad—yet a man may be at peace and rest and quiet at home. A man may have much trouble in the world—and yet rest and quiet in his own spirit: John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world gives give I unto you," "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." No men nor devils, no troubles nor distresses, can deprive a Christian of that inward and blessed peace which Christ has purchased and paid so

dear for. Peace with God, and peace of conscience, are rare jewels, which none can strip us of.

The world may *wish* you peace—but it is only Christ, who can *give* you peace, Romans 5:1, and 2 Cor. 1:12. The world's peace is commonly a dearly-bought peace; but Christ's peace is a cheap peace, a free peace. "My peace I *give* unto you." The world's peace is commonly a *sinful* peace—but Christ's peace is a *holy* peace. The world's peace is a *cursed* peace—but Christ's peace is a *blessed* peace. The world's peace is but an *earthly* peace—but Christ's peace is a *heavenly* peace, Romans 14:17; Heb. 12:14, and Psalm 29:11. The kingdom of God consists not in food or drink—but "in righteousness, and peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit." The world's peace is but an *imaginary* peace—but Christ's peace is a *real* peace. The world's peace is but a *superficial* peace—but Christ's peace is a *solid* and *substantial* peace. The world's peace is but a *transient* peace—but Christ's peace is a *permanent* peace. The world's peace is but a *temporary* peace—but Christ's peace is an *eternal* peace. It is a peace which all the world can't *give* to a Christian, and it is a peace which all the world can't *take* from a Christian, 1 Thes. 5:3; 1 Pet. 3:11; James 3:21; Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 37; Isaiah 26:3, and 27:5.

When the tyrant threatened one of the ancients that he would "take away his house," he answered, "But you cannot take away my peace." "I will break up your school;" "But I shall I keep whole my peace." "I will confiscate all your goods;" "But you cannot take away my peace." "I will banish you your country." "Yet I shall carry my peace with me."

All *above* a believer is at peace; the controversy between God and him is ended. Christ takes up the quarrel between God and a believer. "We have peace with God," Romans 5:1.

All *within* a believer is at peace. A peaceable God makes all at peace. When our peace is made in the court of heaven, which is upon the first act of believing, then follows peace in the court of conscience, "peace which passes all understanding," Phil. 4:7.

And all *below* a believer is at peace with him. He has peace with all the creatures. When we are friends with God, then all the creatures are our

friends. "The stones of the field shall be at league with you, the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you," etc., Job 5:23.

The peace which Christ gives is the inheritance of saints only. It was all the legacy which the *Prince of peace* left to his subjects, and this legacy none can take from them. Persecutors may take away my *goods*—but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my *estate*—but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my *liberty*—but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my *good name*—but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my *family*—but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my *life*—but they cannot take away my peace.

I grant that the best Christians have no *perfection* of peace, because they have no perfection of grace. If there were a perfection of grace, then there might be a perfection of peace; but the perfection of both is reserved for the eternal world; and it must be granted that though sometimes a believer may lack the sense of peace, the sweet of peace—yet the grounds of his peace are still fixed, certain, and constant; they are "like mount Zion, which cannot be moved."

Now the **grounds** of a Christian's peace are these—namely, a saving interest in Christ, reconciliation with God, justification, remission of sin, adoption, the covenant of grace and peace, etc. Now these are always sure and everlasting, though the *sense* of peace may ebb and flow, rise and fall, in a believer's bosom, especially when he is a-combating with strong corruptions, or high temptations, or under sad desertions, or when unbelief has got the throne, or when their hearts are quarrelsome—for commonly a quarrelsome heart is a troublesome heart, or when they have blotted their evidences for heaven, or when they are fallen from their first love, or when they have contracted eminent guilt upon their souls, or when they are declined in their communion with God, etc.

Now in these cases, though a believer may lose the *sense* of peace—yet the *grounds* of his peace remain firm and sure. And though he may lose the sense of his peace—yet in all these sad and dark conditions, his soul is day and night in the pursuit of peace, and he will never leave the chase until he has recovered his peace, knowing that God will sooner or later speak

peace to his soul. Yes, though he has lost the sense of peace—yet he has that abiding seed of grace in his soul, which will in time recover his peace, Psalm 85:8.

Do your enemies threaten to take away this or that from you? You may bid them do their worst, for they can never take that peace from you, which Christ has given as a legacy to you, 1 John 3:9. When there are ever so great storms within or without—yet then a believer may find peace in the prince of peace, Isaiah 9:6. When his imperfections are many, a perfect Savior can keep him in perfect peace in the midst of them all, Isaiah 26:3-4. Though his sacrifices are imperfect—yet Christ a perfect priest can speak peace to his soul, Heb. 7.

Peace is that never-fading garland which Christ will so set and settle upon the heads of the upright, that none shall be able to take it off. A Christian can never lose his inward peace—either totally or finally. It is true by sin, Satan, and the world—a Christian's peace may be somewhat *interrupted*—but it can never be *finally lost*. The greatest storms in this world which beat upon a believer will in time blow over, and the Sun of righteousness, the prince of peace, will shine as gloriously upon him as ever.

Under this word *Shalom*, the Jews comprehend all peace, prosperity, and happy success. When the worst of men have done their worst against the people of God—yet the outcome shall be peace, prosperity, and happy success. "My peace I give unto you;" that is, that "peace with God, and peace with conscience, which I have purchased with my blood—I give unto you." And what power or policy is there, which can deprive us of this legacy? surely none! The peace which Christ gives is founded upon his blood, upon his righteousness, upon his atoning sacrifice, upon his intercession, and upon a covenant of peace—and therefore it must needs be a lasting peace, an abiding peace. But,

**[13.] Thirteenthly**, "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer—None, so as to hinder us from being hidden, secured, guarded, and protected by God in an evil day, or in a day of greatest trouble, distress, or danger.** "Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given these orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard—Take him and look after him; don't

harm him but do for him whatever he asks." Jeremiah 39:11-12. Here you shall see the admirable power, wisdom, and goodness of God, in inclining the heart of this great monarch and conqueror to provide for the prophet's safety and security. He who was a dreadful scourge to punish the wicked—is made by God the deliverer and preserver of the prophet. In the 12th verse you have the king's royal commission to the captain of his guard to be as kind to him, as tender of him, and to behave as courteously to him even as the prophet himself should desire: "Take him and look after him; don't harm him but do for him whatever he asks." Let him have all the contentment, all the satisfaction, and all the accommodations which he himself shall require.

Jer. 15:11, "The Lord said—All will be well with you, Jeremiah." A speech in the nature of an oath, as if God had said, "Let me not be deemed a God of my word, let me not be accounted true, let none reckon me faithful in my promise—if I don't turn his sufferings into his advantage, and save him from danger in the midst of danger." If in the time of the enemies' invasion, I be not "a wall of fire about him," Zech. 2:5, if in the time of public calamity I don't secure him—never more trust me for a God. If he doesn't find more favor at the hand of his enemies than he has formerly found among his own people, never more own me for a God. Verse 20, "I am with you to save you, and to deliver you—says the Lord;" verse 21. "And I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem you out of the hand of the terrible," Jer. 40:1-5, 26:23-24, and 45:4. God engages himself to protect him against all the might and malice of his most terrible enemies; and though he should fall into their hands—yet he would deliver him out of their hands.

Psalm 33:3, "They have consulted against your hidden ones." The saints are:

- (1.) hidden in God's decree,
- (2.) hidden in Christ's wounds,
- (3.) hidden in the chambers of divine providence,
- (4.) hidden in common dangers, as Noah was hid in his ark, and as Lot

was hid in Zoar, and as Daniel was hid in the lions' den, and as the three Hebrew children were hidden in the fiery furnace, and as Jonah was hidden in the whale's belly, Isaiah 26:20;

(5.) hidden "with Christ in God," Col. 3:3.

In times of greatest trouble the saints are hidden under the hollow of God's hand, under the shadow of God's wing, Psalm 91:1, 4. Psalm 27:5, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion." A little pavilion or cottage where God is—shall be sufficient to safeguard the saints in the day of adversity. "He shall hide me in his hut, as a shepherd does his sheep in a stormy day." In the secret of his tabernacle, shall he hide me. I shall be as safe as if I were shut up in his holy ark, tabernacle, or temple—where they use to flee for shelter to the horns of the altar, yes, as if a man were hidden in the most holy place, where none might enter but only the high-priest once a year, which is therefore called "God's secret place." A *shepherd* could not be more careful to shelter his sheep in a tent or tabernacle from the heat of the sun, nor could a *king* not be more ready to protect a favorite in his pavilion, whence none dared venture to take him—than God would be careful and ready to shroud and shelter his people from the rage, madness, and malice of their enemies, Ezek. 7:22.

How did God hide his church in Egypt? the bush was still burning—and yet was not consumed, Exod. 3:2-3. And how did he hide seven thousand in Elijah's time, who had not bowed their knees to Baal? 1 Kings 19:18. Though "the woman," the church, "is driven to flee into the wilderness—yet there she is hidden, and there she had a place prepared of God, that they give her care for 1,260 days," Rev. 12:6. Let our enemies do their worst, they shall not hinder us of divine protection. No power nor policy can hinder our being preserved and secured by God in the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers which can attend us. But,

**[14.] Fourteenthly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer—None, so as to deprive us of our union with Christ, as to dissolve that blessed union which is between Christ and our souls,** John 15:1-5. When men and devils have done their worst, our

marriage-union with Christ holds good. This union is indissoluble. This union between Christ and believers is not capable of any separation. They are so *one*, that all the violence of the world, nor all the power of darkness, can never be able to make them *two* again. Hence the apostle's triumphant challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Romans 8:35. If the question did not imply a strong negation, the apostle himself does give us a negation in words at length, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." verse 38-39.

Here you have a long catalogue, consisting of a large induction of various particulars; but none of all these can dissolve the union between Christ and believers. None can untie that knot which is tied by the Spirit on Christ's part, and by faith on ours. Christ and believers are so firmly joined together, that all the powers on earth, and all the united strength of hell—shall never be able to put them asunder, or to separate them one from another! Look! as no distance of place can hinder this union, so no force or violence from devils or men shall ever be able to dissolve this union; and herein lies the peculiar transcendent blessedness of this union above all other unions. They all may cease, be broken, and come to nothing; everyone of them must be broken. The head must be separated from the members, and the members from the head; the husband must be separated from the wife, and the wife from the husband; the parents must be separated from the children, and the children from the parents, and bosom friends must be separated one from another. The foundation and the house may be separated, and the branches may be cut off from the vine—yes, the soul and body must be disunited by death—but the mystical union stands fast forever. Christ and a gracious soul can never be separated; God has joined them together, and no mortal shall ever be able to put them asunder, Mat. 19:6.

There is not only a continuation of our union with Christ all our life—but also in death itself. Our very bodies sleeping in the dust are even then in union with Christ. There are two abiding things in the saints, their *unction* and their *union*. Their unction abides, "But the anointing which

you have received of him abides in you," 1 John 2:27; and their union abides, for it follows, "and you shall abide in him." Christ earnestly prays that we might be one, as he and his Father are one, John 17:20-23; not essentially, nor personally—but spiritually, so as no other creature is united to Christ. There can be no divorce between Christ and the believing soul. Christ hates divorce, Mal. 2:16. Sin may for a time seemingly separate between Christ and the believer—but it can never finally separate between Christ and the believer. Look! as it is impossible for the leaven that is in the dough to be separated from the dough after it is once mixed, for it turns the nature of the dough into itself; so it is impossible for the saints ever to be separated from Christ: for Christ is in the saints as nearly and as really as the leaven is in the dough. Christ and believers are so incorporated, as if Christ and they were one lump, Romans 8:10; Col. 1:27; 1 John 3:21; John 17:23.

Our nature is now joined to God by the indissoluble tie of the hypostatic union in the second person; and we in our persons are joined to God by the mystical indissoluble bond of the Spirit, the third person. Our union with the Lord Jesus is so near, so close, and so glorious—that it makes us one spirit with him. In this blessed union the saints are not only joined to the *graces* and *benefits* which flow from Christ—but to the *person* of Christ, to Christ *himself!* 1 Cor. 6:17. All the powers on earth, and all the powers in hell, can never separate Christ from the believer, nor the believer from Christ. When all other unions are dissolved, this union holds good, John 1:16; Romans 8:32; 1 Cor. 3:21-23.

I readily grant that the *sense* and *apprehension* of this union may in this life be much interrupted, and many times greatly darkened—but the *substance* of the union still remains. And I readily grant that a believer may be much assaulted and tempted to doubt of his union with Christ, and to question his union with Christ—and yet nevertheless a believer's union with Christ continues and abides forever. And I readily grant that the *influences* of it for some time may be suspended—but yet the union itself is not—nay, *cannot* be dissolved! As it was in the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ; for a time there was a suspending of the comforting influences of the divine nature in the human, insomuch that our Savior cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mat.

27:46; yet for all this the union between the two natures was not in the least abolished. Just so, here in the mystical union the sensible effects, comforts, and benefits of our union with Christ may sometimes be kept hidden and not appear—but yet the union itself abides, and shall abide firm and inviolable forever; it is an inseparable and insuperable union.

Look! as no power on earth is sufficient to overpower the Spirit of Christ, which on Christ's part makes the union, so no power on earth shall be able to conquer faith, which on our part also makes the union, John 10:27-31; 1 John 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:5; Luke 22:31-32. Satan and the world may make attempts upon this union—but they will never be able to break this union, to dissolve this union; yes, though *death* is the bane of all natural unions—yet death can never be the bane of this mystical union. Though death puts an end to all other unions—yet death can never put a period to this union. When the believer is in his grave, his union with Christ holds good. But,

**[15.] Fifteenthly,** "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer—None, so as to deprive us of our crowns.** There is no power nor policy on earth or in hell, which can deprive a Christian of his eternal crowns.

**First, Of his crown of RIGHTEOUSNESS.** 2 Tim. 4:8, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." It is a metaphor, say several commentators, from the custom in war, that the conquerors were crowned with honor, etc. It is a similitude taken from fighters or combatants, who for a prize received a crown when they had conquered their opponent. The reward of eternal life here is called "a crown of **righteousness**":

**(1.) Because it is purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ.** By his perfect and complete righteousness and obedience, dear Jesus has merited this for us; and so in *Christ*—it is due to us by way of merit; though in respect of *us*—it is of mere grace, of rich grace, of sovereign grace, of infinite grace, of glorious grace!

**(2.) Because he is righteous, who has promised this crown.**

Though every promise that God makes is of free and rich grace—yet when once they are made, the truth and justice of God obliges him to keep his promise; for as he cannot deny himself, so he cannot do anything unworthy of himself, Rev. 2:10, and 21; 1 John 2:25; 2 Thes. 1:5-7, 10. Men say and unsay, they promise one thing and mean another. Men many times eat their words as soon as they have spoken them; but God never *can*, and God never *will* break any of his promises. God can never repent of his promises; he can never waver, he can never go back from his word: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: "has he said, and shall he not do it? or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Num. 23:19.

All the promises of God are sure, firm, faithful, unchangeable, immutable. All the promises are the word of a God, and given upon the honor of a God, that they shall be made good. O my friends, the all-sufficiency of God, the omniscience of God, the omnipotence of God, the loving-kindness and faithfulness of God, yes, and the oath of God—may fully, yes, abundantly, satisfy us, and secure us—that God will certainly make good all his precious promises to us. We commonly say, when an honest man pledges his word to give us some money, "Oh, it is as sure as if it were in our purse!" But God's word of promise is abundantly more sure, for as his nature is eternal, so his word of promise is unchangeable. The promises are a firm foundation to build our hopes and happiness upon; they are an anchor both sure and steadfast, Hab. 2:3; Jer. 32:41; Psalm 89:34. Memorable is that saying of David, Psalm 138:2, "For you have magnified your word above all your name;" which is to be understood—that you have by your word, that is, by performing your word and promises, magnified your name above all things.

**(3.) Because it is a just and righteous thing with God to crown them with glory at last—who have been crowned with shame, reproach, and dishonor for his name and interest in this world;** so that eternal life is a crown of righteousness. God has promised it to such as overcome; and it is just with God to give unto his suffering servants rest and peace.

**(4.) Because it is given only to righteous men.** All who wear this

crown come to it in a way of righteousness. A righteous crown cannot be had but in the use of righteous means. The Chaldean, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman princes commonly gained their crowns by fraud, flattery, policy, blood, etc.; so that their crowns were bloody crowns, and not righteous crowns.

**(5.)** And lastly, the apostle calls it "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him," the more fitly to follow the metaphor taken from runners and wrestlers for prizes at their solemn exercises or games in Greece, in which there were certain judges appointed to observe the games, and gave just sentence on the conqueror's side, if he strove lawfully, and fairly won the prize.

Now this crown is "laid up;" or "in store". The Greek word imports two things:

(1.) A designation of that which is laid up, is for some peculiar person;

(2.) A reservation and safe keeping of it, to the use of those it is designed for. Earthly crowns have been often pulled off from princes' heads—but this crown of righteousness is so safely laid up, that none can reach it, none can touch it, none can pull it from a believer's head. Xerxes crowned his steersman in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening of the same day. And Andronicus the Greek emperor crowned his admiral in the morning, and then took off his head in the afternoon. Roffensis had a cardinal's hat sent him—but his head was cut off before it came to him. "Does the crown," says Solomon, "endure to every generation?" Proverbs 27:24. It is a question which implies a strong negation: oh, no! there is nothing more uncertain than earthly crowns. Henry the Sixth was honored with the crowns of two kingdoms, France and England; the first was lost by the faction of his nobles, the other was twice pulled from his head. Princes' crowns are withering things. Earthly crowns may be soon put on, and as soon be pulled off. Most princes' crowns do but hang on one side of their heads.

But neither all the powers on earth, nor all the devils in hell, can ever reach this crown of righteousness. Though wicked men have long reaches—yet they can never reach a believer's crown, which is his joy and comfort in the midst of all his sorrows and sufferings. Thus Basil speaks of some martyrs who were cast out all night naked in a bitter cold frosty season, and were to be burned the next day, how they comforted themselves in this manner: "The winter is sharp—but paradise is sweet; here we shiver for cold—but the bosom of Abraham will make amends for all." One said to the tyrant's face: "You may kill me—but you cannot hurt me; you may take away my head—but you cannot take away my crown." O Christians! let this be your joy and triumph—that the crown of righteousness is laid up safe for you; no tyrant's arm is long enough to reach that crown. But,

**Secondly,** There is no power nor policy on earth or in hell, which can deprive a Christian of his **crown of LIFE**: James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him." "The crown of life," that is eternal life, whereby after the fight and conquest, he shall be glorified as with a crown; just as there was a crown for him who overcame in their games among the Grecians, (Piscator.) Blessedness is

the *general* reward, the crown of life is the *particular* reward. In these words, as Chrysostom observes, there is a great emphasis, they are both emphatic; for *life* is the best of all natural things, and a *crown* is the best of all civil things. Here is the best and the best. Words are too weak to express what a rare blessing a crown of life is. "The crown of life is for the eternal world," says Gregory. This life is the life of conflict; eternity is for crowns and wreaths. But you will say, What does this crown of life signify? I answer,

**(1.) First, The crown of life signifies solid and substantial honor and glory;** as a crown is a solid and substantial thing. Heaven admits of no honor and glory, but what is solid and substantial. The crown of life is a massive crown, a ponderous crown—to show that the glory above is a massive glory, substantial glory. That you may see it is massive and substantial, observe how the apostle describes: "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all!" 2 Cor. 4:17. Such a weight as infinitely over-poses all afflictions. The apostle alludes to words, which signify both weight and glory. The Arabic version renders it, "Works for us a weight of glory in the most eminent and largest degree and measure." The Syriac reads it, "An infinite glory." Haymo reads it, "A greatness of glory, beyond all bounds and measure." Beza reads it, "Exceedingly excellent." Yet none of these reach the height of the apostle's rhetoric, neither is any translation able to express it. Glory is so great a weight that if the saints were not upheld by the infinite power and strength of God—it would be impossible they should be able to bear it.

To gold and precious things, the weight adds to the value; as the more massive and weighty a crown is, the more it is worth. The glory of heaven is not only eternal glory—but it is "an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." Yes, such a weight as exceeds all expressions, all comparisons. The honor and glory of this present world is but like the crackling of thorns under a pot; it is but like a blaze, a shadow, a dream, a vapor; it is but like a fading flower, or the picture of a prince drawn upon the ice, with his purple robes and his glorious crown, etc., which melts away as soon as the sun rises! The consideration of which made one prince say of his crown: "O crown more noble than happy!"

A crown is the choicest and chief of all human rewards. Among all earthly gifts, none more honorable and glorious than a crown. This is the height of human excellencies, and for the attainment of which many have made most sad, desperate, and dangerous adventures. But, alas what are all earthly crowns, for honor and dignity, compared to the crown of life? No more than shadows compared to substances; pebbles compared to pearls; or dross compared to gold! But,

**(2.) Secondly, The crown of life signifies the greatest honor and glory.** There is nothing higher in the estimation and in the admiration of men, than a crown. A crown is the highest emblem of majesty, and so it notes that imperial and kingly dignity to which believers are advanced by Christ, Psalm 8:7. There is nothing that men esteem of above a crown, or admire than a crown, or are ambitious of than a crown, Eph. 1:3. The crown is the top of royalty. All earthly crowns have *crosses* hanging upon them; all earthly crowns are stuffed with *thorns*. Which made the great Xerxes say, "You look upon my crown and my purple robes—but did you but know how they are lined with thorns, you would not stoop to take them up!" Queen Elizabeth is said to swim to her crown through a sea of sorrow. And so many of the princes of this world have swam to their crowns through a sea of *sin*, a sea of *trouble*, a sea of *sorrow*, and a sea of *blood*.

But the crown of life is an *honorable* crown, and that is the reason why the heavenly glory is expressed by a crown, Rev. 3:21. The saints are heirs, not only of Christ's *cross* in this life—but also of his *eternal crown*; that is, of his honor and glory. The honor and glory of all earthly crowns are greatly darkened and obscured by the cares and troubles, the temptations and dangers which are inseparably annexed to them; but no cares, no troubles, attend the crown of life, the crown of glory! Eternal life is a coronation day! But,

**(3.) Thirdly, The crown of life signifies the reward of victory.** A crown is the honor of those who strive; crowns were always the rewards of conquerors: Rev. 2:10, "Be faithful to the death, and I will give you a crown of life." That is, a crown without cares, rivals, competition, envy, or end—a crown not of gold, silver, pearls, laurels, or such like fading, perishing, corruptible things—but a crown of life, an ever-living crown,

an everlasting crown, a never-fading crown. It is an allusion to a custom that was among the Grecians, for such as got the mastery in their games of wrestling, or running, or the like, were crowned with a garland in token of victory. It is not he who *fights*—but he who *conquers*, who carries the crown. The crown of life is for that man, and that man is for the crown of life—who holds on conquering and to conquer, as Christ his head has done before him.

The heathens in their Olympics had their cups, and garments, and crowns which were the rewards of the conquerors; yes, if a horse did but run a race and won, he had a cup or a crown; and thereupon Theocritus says, "See what poor things the world glories in—when conquerors are crowned—so are their horses!" But what were all their cups, garments, and crowns of ivy and laurel, etc., compared to this *crown of life* which is promised to the overcoming Christian? You must first be *conquering* Christians before you shall be *crowned* Christians!

Says Ambrose, "Why would you preposterously have the crown, *before* you overcome? While we are in our warring state, fighting against the world, the flesh and the devil—a crown does not befit us." I have read how that upon a triumph of Emperor Severus, all his soldiers, for the greater pomp, were to put on crowns of ivy. But there was one Christian among them who wore it on his arm, and being asked the reason why, he boldly answered, "It befits not a Christian to wear his crown in this life!" That crown which is made out of the tree of life is a wreath of laurel which never withers—a crown which never fades—a crown which will sit fast on no head but the conqueror's! But,

**(4.)** Fourthly, **The crown of life signifies a lasting crown, a living crown.** To say *the crown of life*, is to say *a living crown*; and living crowns are only to be found in heaven, Proverbs 27:24; Ezek. 21:25-27. The word crown notes *the perpetuity of glory*. A crown is round, and has neither beginning nor ending; and therefore the glory of the saints in heaven is called an immortal, incorruptible, and never-fading crown, 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 9:24. The crown of life signifies the lasting honor and glory of the saints in heaven. I have read of an emperor who had three crowns—one on his sword; another on his head; and says he, "The third is in heaven. My hope shall be in the everlasting crown."

The life to come is only the *true* life, the *happy* life, the *safe* life, the *honorable* life, the *lasting*, yes, the *everlasting* life; and therefore the crown of life is reserved for that life. King William the Conqueror was crowned different three *times* every year of his reign, at three different *places*—namely, Gloucester, Winchester, and Westminster—but death has long since put an end to his crown. The crowns of the greatest monarchs in the world, though they last long—yet are corruptible, subject to wearing, cracking, stealing. Their crowns will either be taken away from them—or they will be taken away from their crowns, suddenly. Witness that pile of crowns, as the historian speaks, which was piled up, as it were, at Alexander's gates, when he sat down and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. All scripture and histories do abundantly tell us, that there is nothing more fading than princes' crowns! But,

**(5.)** Fifthly, **The crown of life notes a well-entitled crown;** a crown which comes by a true and noble title. A Christian has the best title imaginable to the crown of life.

(1.) He has a title by Christ's blood;

(2.) He has a title by the new birth;

(3.) He has a title by free and precious promises;

(4.) He has a title by donation;

(5.) He has a title by marriage union and communion with Christ, who is heir-apparent to all the glory of heaven;

(6.) He has a title by a sure and everlasting covenant. [Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:3-4; 2 Pet. 1:4; Luke 12:32; 2 Cor. 11:2; Heb. 1:2; 2 Sam. 23:5 Jer. 32:40, 41.]

King Henry the Seventh of England pretended a sixfold title to the crown;

(1.) By conquest;

(2.) By the election of the soldiers in the field;

(3.) By parliament;

(4.) By birth;

(5.) By donation;

(6.) By marriage. But what was his pretended title, compared to that real and full title which a believer has to the crown of life? But,

**(6.)** Sixthly, and lastly, **The crown of life notes the perfection of the glory of the saints in heaven.** "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Psalm 16:11. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him! 1 Corinthians 2:9. As the crown compasses the head, so in heaven there is an aggregation of all spiritual and eternal good. One of the ancients, speaking concerning what we can conceive of the glory of heaven, says, "Our conception of heaven, is but a little drop of the sea, and a little spark of the great furnace. For those glorious things of heaven are so **many** that they exceed number, so **great** that they exceed measure, so **precious** that they are above all estimation!" **Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolised!**

Says one of the fathers, "What will that life be, or rather, what will that life not be, since all good is in such a life? Light which place cannot comprehend, voices and music which time cannot ravish away, odors which are never dissipated, a feast which is never consumed, a blessing which eternity bestows—but eternity shall never see at an end!"

Says another, "Do you ask me what heaven is? When I meet you there I will tell you!" "The world to come," say the Rabbis, "is the world where all is well." I have read of one who would willingly swim through a sea of brimstone to get to heaven; for there, and only there, is perfection of happiness. What are the silks of Persia, the spices of Egypt, the gold of Ophir, and the treasures of both Indies, compared to the glory of the eternal world?

Says Jerome, "Are you able to put the whole earth, and all the waters of the sea--into a little pot? Can you hold the oceans in your hand? Can you measure the heavens with your fingers--or weight the hills and mountains with a scale? Just so, it is not possible that you can comprehend the least of the joys of heaven! Certainly, the least of the joys of heaven are inconceivable and inexpressible!"

**Thirdly, There is no power nor policy on earth or in hell, that can deprive a believer of an INCORRUPTIBLE crown:** Psalm 21:3; 1 Cor. 9:25, "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." He alludes to the Olympic games—of which *running* and *wrestling* were two of the games. Now in these Olympic games the reward was only a corruptible crown, a crown made up of laurels, or olive-branches, or oak-leaves, or of flowers and herbs, or at the highest of silver and gold, which soon faded. But we run for an incorruptible crown of glory! "A man," says Chrysostom, "would dwell in contemplation of heaven—and be reluctant to come out of it." Nay, says Augustine, a man might age himself in it, and sooner grow old than weary! 1 Peter 1:4, "To an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, and which does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Here are superexcellent properties of the heavenly inheritance.

(1.) First, It is "**an incorruptible inheritance.**" [Gen. 3:18; Isaiah 23:9.] All earthly inheritances are liable to corruption; they are true *gardens of Adonis*, where we can gather nothing but *trivial flowers*, surrounded with many briars, thorns, and thistles. Oh, the hands, the hearts, the thoughts, the lives—which have been corrupted by earthly inheritances! Oh, the impure love, the carnal confidence, the vain boastings, the sensual joys—which have been the products of earthly inheritances. If a man's estate lies in money, that may rust, or the thieves may break through and steal it. If a man's estate lies in cattle, they may die, or fall into the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans. If a man's estate lies in houses, they may be burnt. Witness the late dreadful fire that turned London into a ruinous heap. If a man's estate lies in lands, a foreign enemy may invade them and conquer them. [James 5:2-5; Mat. 6:19-20; Job 1:14-15, 17.] All earthly inheritances are no better than the cities

which Solomon gave to Hiram, which he called **Cabul**, that is —'worthless, good-for-nothing, displeasing or dirty.' "But when Hiram went from Tyre to see the towns that Solomon had given him, he was not pleased with them. 'What kind of towns are these you have given me, my brother?' he asked. And he called them the Land of Cabul, a name they have to this day." 1 Kings 9:12-13. Earthly inheritances do but dirt, daub, and dust people; it is only the heavenly inheritance which is incorruptible.

(2.) Secondly, It is "**an undefiled inheritance.**" There are few earthly inheritances—but some defilement or other sticks close to them. Many times they are gotten by fraud, oppression, violence, injustice, etc., and as they are often wickedly *gotten*—so they are as often wickedly *kept*. The heavenly inheritance is the only undefiled inheritance. No sin, no sinner, no devil—can enter to defile or pollute the heavenly inheritance, the incorruptible crown. The Greek word signifies a precious stone, which though it be ever so much soiled—yet it cannot be blemished nor defiled; yes the oftener you cast it into the fire and take it out, the more clear, bright, and shining it is! The apostle may probably allude to this stone: and it is as if he should say, The incorruptible crown that you shall receive, shall be studded with these precious stones, which cannot be defiled. No unclean thing shall enter into heaven to defile this crown, this inheritance! The serpent got into the earthly paradise, and defiled Adam's crown, yes he robbed him of his crown! But the subtle serpent can never enter into the heavenly paradise! "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21:27. But,

(3.) Thirdly, It is an "**inheritance which does not fade away.**" This is a metaphor taken from flowers. The beauty of flowers, and the sweetness of flowers, withers in a moment, and is quickly gone, and then they are good for nothing but to be cast upon the ash-heap. So it is with all earthly inheritances, they soon lose their glory and fragrancy. Where is the glory of the Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, and Roman kingdoms? Dan. 7:3-8. "*Fading glory*" has been long since written upon them all! Yes, all the glory of the world is like the flower of the field, which soon fades away! Isaiah 40:6; 1 Pet. 1:24. How many great men and great kingdoms have

for a time shined in great glory, even like so many suns in the sky—but are now vanished away like so many blazing comets! How has the *moon* of great men's honors been eclipsed; and the *sun* of their pomp gone down at noon! How soon is the courtier's glory eclipsed if his prince does but frown upon him! And how soon does the prince become a peasant—if God does but frown upon him!

The Greek word *amarantos*, say some, is the proper name of a flower which is still fresh and green after it has hung up in the house a long time. It is as if the apostle had said, "Your incorruptible crown shall be garnished or adorned with the precious flower *amarantos*, which is always fresh and green and flourishing. And indeed this is the excellency of the heavenly inheritance, that it fades not away, that it is a flower that never withers. All the glory of heaven is like God himself—lasting, yes, everlasting! This never-fading crown is always fresh and resplendent. The glory of believers shall never fade nor wither, it shall never grow old nor rusty. Thrice happy are those souls that have a share in this incorruptible crown! When Alexander heard the philosopher's discourse of the eternal world in which he had no part, he wept, to speak with the apostle, as "one without hope," 1 Thes. 4:13. None on earth have such cause to weep, as those who have no interest in that inheritance that fades not away. But,

(4.) Fourthly and lastly, **There is no power nor policy on earth or in hell, which can deprive a sincere Christian of a crown of glory.** 1 Pet. 5:4, "And when the chief shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory which fades not away,"—as the garlands faded, with which the conquerors at games, races, and combats were crowned, which were made of herbs, leaves, and flowers. A crown imports perpetuity, plenty, dignity. A crown is the height of human ambition. The Greek word comes from *amarantos*, which is a flower that fades not, of which garlands were made in former times, and with which they crowned the images of the heathen gods. A believer's crown, his inheritance, his glory, his happiness, his blessedness—shall be as fresh and flourishing after he has been many millions of years in heaven—as it was at his first entrance into it. Earthly crowns are like tennis-balls, which are bandied up and down from one to another, and in time wear out. When time shall be no more, when earthly crowns and kingdoms shall be no more, yes,

when the world shall be no more—a Christian's crown of glory shall be fresh, flourishing, and continuing. All the devils in hell shall never wrangle a believer out of his heavenly inheritance, nor deprive him of his crown of glory. The least thing in—heaven is better than the greatest things in this world. All things on earth are fading—but the crown of glory never fades away.

Thus you see why heaven and the glory above is expressed by a crown. Sometimes it is called a crown of *righteousness*, to note the grounds and rise of it; sometimes it is called a crown of *life*, because it is only to be enjoyed in everlasting life; sometimes it is called an *incorruptible* crown, to note the duration and continuance of it; and sometimes it is called a crown of *glory*, to note the honor, splendor, and eternity of it. Now let devils, let oppressors, let persecutors do their worst—they shall never be able to deprive the saints of their blessed and glorious crowns. But,

**[16.] Sixteenthly**, "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer—None, so as to make void our covenant-relation, or our covenant-interest**; as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Psalm 89:30, 35; Jer. 31:31, and 31:38-41; Isaiah 54:10; Heb. 8:8, 10.]

The covenant of grace is founded upon God's *free LOVE*, upon God's *everlasting* love, upon God's *special* and *peculiar* love, upon God's *unchangeable* love—so that God can as soon cease to be, as he can cease to love those whom he has taken into covenant with himself, or cease to keep covenant with them. Those whom free grace has brought into covenant, shall continue in covenant forever and ever. Once in covenant—forever in covenant.

The covenant of grace is also founded upon **God's immutable counsel and purpose**. "The foundation of God stands sure," Heb. 6:17; 2 Tim. 2:19, that is, the degree and purpose of God's election stands firm and sure. Now the purpose of God's election is compared to a foundation, because it is that upon which all our happiness and blessedness is built and bottomed, and because as a foundation it abides firm and sure, John 10:28-32; 1 Pet. 1:5; Jude 1.

The covenant of grace is also founded upon God's *glorious* **POWER**, upon God's *infinite* power, upon God's *supreme* power, upon God's *invincible* power, upon God's *independent* power, upon God's *incomparable* power; and until you can find a power that can overmatch this divine power, the saints' covenant-relation holds good.

The covenant of grace is also founded upon **the OATH of God**; "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our fathers," Luke 1:72-73. Now to think that God will break his oath, or be perjured, is an intolerable blasphemy.

The covenant of grace is bottomed upon **the precious blood of Christ**. The blood of Christ is called "The blood of the everlasting covenant." "Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," Mat. 26:28; Heb. 9:15, and 13:20.

Now by these hints it is most evident that the saints' covenant-relation, their covenant-interest, holds good at all times, in all cases, and in all conditions. It is not the indwelling power of sin, nor spiritual desertions, nor violent temptations, nor heavy afflictions, nor divine delays, which can dissolve our covenant-relation. Though sin may work, and Satan may tempt, and fears may be high, and God may hide his face from his people, and stop his ears at the prayers of his people, Isaiah 8:17; Lam. 3:44—yet God will still maintain his interest in his people, and his people's relation to himself. "God has not cast away his people, whom he foreknew," Romans 11:2; "I am the Lord, I change not," Mal. 3:6; "I will betroth you unto me for ever," Hosea 2:19; "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," Heb. 13:5. It is not all the powers of hell, nor all the powers on earth, that can make null or void our covenant-relation, our covenant-interest. But,

**(17.) Seventeenthly and lastly**, "If God is for us—who can be against us?" **I answer—None, so as to hinder our growth in grace, or the thriving and flourishing estate of our precious and immortal souls.** The troubles, afflictions, persecutions, and sufferings that the saints meet with in a way of holiness, shall but further the increase and growth of their graces. Grace never rises to so great a height as it does in

times of persecution. Suffering times are a Christian's harvest times, Ps. 60:7-9, 12.

Let me instance in that grace of **zeal**: I remember Moulin, speaking of the French Protestants, says, "When papists hurt us, and persecute us for reading the Scripture, we burn with zeal to be reading of them. But now that persecution is over, our Bibles are like old almanacs." Michal's scoffing at David did but inflame and raise his zeal; "If this is vile—I will be more vile," 2 Sam. 6:20-22. Look! as fire in the winter burns the hotter, because of the coldness of the air; just so, in the winter of persecution, that divine fire, the zeal of a Christian, burns so much the hotter, and flames forth so much the more vehemently and strongly.

Hot persecutions will but set Christians all on fire for God, as you may see among the apostles, primitive Christians, and the martyrs of a later date. Grace usually is in the greatest flourish, when the saints are under the greatest trials. The trimming of the candle makes it burn the brighter. God allows wicked men to beat and bruise his people, to make them burn the brighter; and to pound and bruise his spices, to make them send forth the greater aromatic flavor. Fiery trials are like the teazle, which though it be sharp and scratching, it is to make the cloth more pure and fine. Stars shine brightest in the darkest nights; just so, do the graces of the saints shine brightest in the darkest nights of affliction and tribulation. God does sometimes more carry on the growth of grace by a *cross* than by an *ordinance*. Yes, the Lord will sooner or later turn all fiery trials into ordinances, for the helping on the growth of grace in his people's souls.

Commonly the saints' spiritual growth in grace, is carried on by such divine methods, and in such ways as might seem to deaden grace, and weaken it—rather than any ways to augment and increase it. We know that winter is as necessary to bring on harvest as the spring, and so fiery trials are as necessary to bring on the harvest of grace as the spring of mercy is. Though fiery trials are *grievous*—yet they shall make the saints more *gracious*. God usually, by sharp sufferings, turns his people's *sparks* of grace into a *mighty flame*; their *mites* into *millions*; their *drops* into *seas*. All the devils in hell, and all the sinners on earth, cannot hinder the Lord from carrying on the growth of grace in his people's souls. When men and devils have done their worst, God will, by all sorts of ordinances,

and by all sorts of providences, and all sorts of changes—make his people more and more holy, and more and more humble, and more and more meek and lowly, and more and more heavenly, wise, faithful, fruitful, sincere, courageous, etc.

Though the church of *Smyrna* was outwardly poor—yet she was inwardly rich, rich in grace, and rich towards God, Rev. 2:9. I think he hit the mark on the head, who said, "It is far better to be a poor man—and a rich Christian; than to be a rich man—and a poor Christian." Though the *Corinthians* were under great trials and sufferings—yet they abounded in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and diligence, and in their love to gospel ministers, 2 Cor. 8:7. The storm beat hard upon the *Romans*—and yet you see what a singular testimony the apostle gives of them, "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another," Romans 15:14. The *Thessalonians* were under great persecutions and troubles—and yet were strong in the grace that was in Christ Jesus; they were very growing and flourishing Christians.

Singular prophecies speak out the saints' growth and flourishing in grace. "The Lord is exalted; for he dwells on high: he has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness." "The Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness shall be a fruitful field." [2 Thes. 1:3, 8; Isaiah 33:5, 32:15, 35:1.] "The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose: it shall blossom abundantly." "The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." "They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

And as singular prophecies, so choice and precious promises, speak out the saints' growth in grace. Take a taste of some of them. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." "They shall go from strength to strength; everyone of them in Zion appears before God." "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." "Those who be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; in old age they shall be fat and flourishing," Proverbs 4:18; Job 17:9; Psalm 84:7, and 92:12-14.

I have read of an old man who, being asked whether he grew in grace? answered, "I believe I do, for God has promised that in old age his children should be fat and flourishing." Just so, Isaiah 46:3, "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth." verse 4, "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you." Zech. 12:8, "And he who is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." Hosea 14:5, "I will be as the *dew* unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." verse 6, "His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." verse 7, "Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." Mal. 4:2, "But unto you who fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as the calves of the stall." Psalm 1:3, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth it's fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." John 4:14, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

The light and glory of the church rises by degrees;

(1.) Looking forth as the morning; with a little light;

(2.) Fair as the moon; more light;

(3.) Clear as the sun; that is, come up to a higher degree of spiritual light, life, and glory, Cant. 6:10. By all which it is most evident that all the powers of hell, nor all the powers on earth—can hinder the saints' growth in grace, nor the thriving and flourishing estate of their precious and immortal souls.

But you will say, **What are the reasons why God will be favorably, specially, and eminently present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers?** I answer there are these ten great reasons for it—

**[1.] First, To awaken and convince the enemies of his people, and to render his suffering children glorious in the very eyes and consciences both of sinners and saints.** [Ponder upon these scriptures, Micah 7:8-10, 16-17; Psalm 126:1-2; Exod. 8:19; Isaiah 60:13-14; Rev. 3:8-9; Acts 4:13, and 6:15; John 7:44-46, etc.] Dan. 3:24, "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spoke and said unto his counselors, Did we not cast three men into the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king." Verse 25, "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Now see what a majesty there is in this presence of Christ with his people in the fire, to convince Nebuchadnezzar, and to render the three champions very glorious in his eyes. Verse 28, "Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any God except their own God." Verse 29, "Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a ash-heap, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." Verse 30, "Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon."

The presence of the Lord with the three children commanded favor, respect, reverence, and honor from this great monarch, *Nebuchadnezzar*. The presence of God with his people is very majestic; the greatest monarchs have fallen down before it; not only Nebuchadnezzar—but also *Darius*, falls down before the special presence of God with Daniel when he was in the lions' den, Dan. 6:20 seq. And *Herod* falls down before the presence of God with John, Mark 6:20. And King *Joash* falls down before

the presence of God with Jehoiada, 2 Kings 11:1-2. And *Saul* falls down before the presence of God with David: "You are more righteous than I," 1 Sam. 24:17, etc.

In the special presence of God with his people in their affliction there is such a sparkling luster, that none can behold it but must admire it, and bow before the graceful majesty of it. Such has been the special presence of God with the martyrs in their fiery trials, that many have been convinced and converted. I have read of a martyr of Paris who was burned for his faith, how the presence of God did so shine in his courage and constancy, that many did curiously inquire into that religion for which he so stoutly and resolutely suffered, so that the number of sufferers was much increased thereby. I read that Cecilia, a poor virgin, by her gracious behavior in her martyrdom, was the means of converting four hundred to Christ. It was the observation of Mr. John Lindsay, that the very smoke of Patrick Hamilton converted as many as it blew upon. And the very Hittites could say of Abraham, who had a very special presence of God with him, "You are a prince of God among us!" Gen. 23:6. Some say, he is called Prince of God, because God prospered him, and made him famous for his virtue and godliness. But the Hebrews commonly speak so of all things that are notable and excellent, because all excellency comes from God; as the angel of God, the mount of God, the city of God, the wrestlings of God, Exod. 3:2, and 4:37; Psalm 26:4; Gen. 30:8, etc. "You are a prince of God;" that is, You are a most excellent person. Seneca saw so much excellency that morality put upon a man, that he could say, "The very looks of a godly man delights one." And why then may not the sons of Heth call him a prince of God, from that majesty and glory that they saw shine forth in his graces, and in his gracious behavior and conversation, and because they did observe a special presence of God with him in all he did, it being no higher observation than what Abimelech had made before them? Gen. 21:22.

In Queen Mary's days, not of *blessed* but of *abhorred* memory—the people of God met—sometimes forty, sometimes a hundred, sometimes two hundred—together. The fiery persecutors of that day sent in one among them to spy out their practices and to give information of their names, that they might be brought to Smithfield shambles; but there was

such a presence of God in the assembly of his people, that this informer was convinced and converted, and begged mercy for them all. 1 Cor. 14:24, "But if all prophesy, and there comes in one who believes not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all;" verse 25, "And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." It may be before they came to the assembly of the saints, they had hard thoughts of the people of God: they thought that folly was in them, or that disloyalty was in them, or that madness and rebellion was in them, or that plots and designs against the government was in them, or that the devil was in them. Oh—but now such a majestic presence of God appears in the midst of his people, that the unbeliever is convinced, and confesses "that God is in them of a truth."

Blessed Bradford had such a special presence of God with him in his sufferings, as begot great reverence and admiration, not only in the hearts of his friends—but in the very hearts of very many papists also. Henry the Second, king of France, being present at the martyrdom of a poor tailor, who was burnt by him for his religion; the poor man had such a special presence of God with him in his sufferings, that his courage and boldness, his holy and gracious behavior, did so amaze and terrify the king, that he swore, at his going away, that he never more would be present at such a sight.

As the presence of God is the greatest ornament of the church triumphant, so the presence of God is the greatest ornament of the church militant. The redness of the rose, the whiteness of the lily, and all the beauties of sun, moon, and stars, are but deformities, compared to that beauty and glory which the presence of God puts upon his people, in all their troubles and trials. There is nothing in the world that will render the saints so amiable and lovely, so eminent and excellent in the eyes of their enemies—as the special presence of God with them in their greatest trials. Demetrius was so handsome of face and countenance, that no painter was able to draw him. The presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—puts so rare a beauty and glory upon them, that no painter can ever be able to draw them. But,

**[2.] A second reason why God will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—is drawn from the covenant of grace, and those precious promises which God has made—to be with his people.** God's covenant is, that he will be with his people forever, and that he will never turn away from them to do them good, Jer. 32:40-41. That is a branch of the covenant: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," Heb. 13:5. And that is a branch of the covenant: "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward," Gen. 15:1; see Psalm 115:9-11. The *shield* is between the body and the thrust. Just so, says God, I will put myself in between you and harm. Though those kings whom you have even now vanquished, may rant high and threaten revenge—yet I will shield off all dangers that you may be incident to. Though God's people be in the waters and in the fires—yet his promise is to be with them; so the psalmist, "I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honor him," Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 91:15, and 50:15; Job 5:19; Hosea 2:14.

God will not fail to keep his people company in all their troubles. No storm, no danger, no distress, no fiery trial, can keep God and his people asunder. God is immutable in his *nature*, in his *counsels*, in his *covenant*, and in all his *promises*, Mal. 3:6. Though all creatures are subject to change—yet God is unchangeable; though angels and men, and all inferior creatures are *dependent*—yet God is *independent*. He is as the schoolmen say, *altogether immutable*, and therefore he will be sure to keep touch with his people. **The precious promises of Scripture are the food of faith, and the very soul of faith.** They are a mine of rich treasures, a garden full of choice flowers, able to enrich a suffering Christian with all celestial contentments, and to sweeten the deepest distresses. God has deeply engaged himself, both by covenant and promises, that he will be with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers; and therefore he will not fail them: Deut. 7:9, "Know therefore that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant," etc. God will never allow his faithfulness to fail, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth, Psalm 89:33. All his precepts, threatenings, predictions, and promises are the issue of a most wise, holy, faithful, and righteous will—and therefore they shall certainly be made good to his people. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, The Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—because it makes most eminently for the advancement of his own honor and glory in the world.** God never gets more honor than by helping his people when they are in severe distress. God's special presence with Israel at the Red Sea, makes Moses sing a song of praise, Exod. 15. A great part of the revenue of divine glory arises from the special presence of God with his people in their deepest distresses and most deadly dangers, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Exod. 15; Judges 5; Psalm 23:4, 6; Isaiah 43:2, 5, 7.] It is the honor of a husband to be most present with his wife in her greatest troubles, and the honor of a father to be most present with his children in their deepest distresses, and the honor of commanders to be present with their soldiers in the heat of battle, when many fall on their right hand and on their left. Exod. 15:3, "The Lord is a man of war," that is, an excellent warrior, "the Lord is his name;" according to the Septuagint, "He breaks battles, and subdues war." God, like a brave commander, stands upon his honor, and therefore he will stand by his soldiers in the greatest dangers. The word *ish*, here used for man, signifies an eminent man, a mighty man, a famous warrior, or, as the Chaldee has it, *An overcomer of battles*. Now eminent warriors, mighty warriors, famous warriors, they always stick closest to their soldiers in their greatest dangers, as all know, who have read either Scripture or history. Now the Lord is such a man of wars, such a famous warrior, as that he will be sure to stick closest to his people in the greatest dangers. God is both in the vanguard and in the rear guard, Isaiah 52:12. And as there is nothing which more raises the honor, fame, and renown of great warriors in the world—than their presence with their soldiers when the bullets fly thickest; just so, there is nothing by which God gets himself a greater name, fame, and honor in the world—than by his special presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. But,

**[4.] Fourthly, The Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—because then his people stand in most need of his presence.** A believer needs the presence of God at all times—but never

so much as in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers. For now Satan will be stirring—he loves to fish in *troubled* waters. When earthly friends and earthly comforts and earthly succours will commonly fail us; when cares and fears will be multiplied upon us; when unbelief, which is virtually all evil, will be raising doubts and cavils and objections in the soul, [Job 2:9, and 19:13-17; Pa 88:18; Isaiah 41:17-18.] so that if God does not stand by us now, what could we do? how can we bear up? how can we stand fast? What was Samson, that man of strength, when his hair was gone—but as weak as water? Judges 16:19-20; and what is the strongest Christian when his God is gone—but as weak as weakness itself?

All our *doing* strength, and all our *suffering* strength, and all our *bearing* strength, and all our *witnessing* strength—lies in the special presence of God with our souls. All our comforts, and all our supports, and all our ease, and all our refreshments—flow from the presence of God with our souls in our greatest troubles and deepest distresses; and therefore, if God should leave us in a day of trouble—what would become of us? and where should we go? and where should we find rest? When does a man need a brother or friend—but in a day of adversity? "A brother is born for adversity," Proverbs 17:17. Though at other times brethren may jar and jangle and quarrel—yet in a day of adversity, in a strait, in a stress—brothers will stand together to help each other. Adversity breeds love and unity. Ridley and Hooper differed very much about ceremonies in the day of their liberty; but when they were both prisoners in the Tower, then they could agree well enough, and then they could be mutual comforts one to another. And when does a Christian most need the strength of God, the consolations of God, the supports of God, the teachings and quickenings of God, and the special singular presence of God—but when they are in the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? When the people of God are in a low and afflicted condition, then the Lord knows that that is the season of seasons for him to grace them with his gracious presence, Isaiah 33:9-10. When calamities and dangers break in upon us, and when all heads and hands and hearts and counsels are set against us—now is the time for God to help us, for God to support us, for God to stand by us. But,

**[5.] Fifthly, The Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—because he dearly loves them.** God entirely loves his people, and therefore he will not leave his people. People whom we entirely love we cannot leave, especially when they are in a distressed condition. "A friend loves at all times," says Solomon, and God is such a friend, Proverbs 17:17. God loves not by fits and starts, as many people do—but his love is like himself, sincere and steadfast. Because he loves them, he won't forsake them when they are in the greatest troubles and most terrible dangers, 1 Sam. 12:22, "For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people." He chose you for his love, and he still loves you for his choice, and therefore he won't forsake you. *Discipline* you he may—but *forsake* you he won't; for it will not stand with the glory of God to leave his people, to forsake the people of his love. Should I cast you off whom I love—then the heathen nations would say that I was mutable in my purposes, or unfaithful in my promises. Though David's parents forsook him—yet God did not forsake him—but took him up into his care and keeping, Psalm 27:10. It is the deriding question which the enemies of the saints put to them in the time of their greatest troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers—Where is now your God? Psalm 79:10. But they may safely and groundedly return this answer when they are at lowest—our God is here; he is near unto us, he is round about us, and he is in the midst of us, Isaiah 52:12.

Witness that golden promise, that is more worth than a world, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," Heb. 13:5, 11. God is a God of affections, a God of great pity, a God of tender compassion, and therefore he will not leave his people in a time of distress, Hosea 8:9; Mic. 7:19; Jer. 31:18-20. Parents' affections do most yearn towards their children when they are sick, and weak, and most in danger. It goes to the very heart of a man to leave a friend in misery. But what are the affections of men, compared to the affections of God! or the compassions of men, compared to the compassions of God! There is an ocean of love in the hearts of parents towards their children when they are in distress, 2 Sam. 19:6; and this love makes them sit by their children, and sit up with their children, and not stir from their children. God's love does so link his heart to his

people in their deep distresses, that he cannot leave them, he cannot stir from them, Psalm 91:15.

Isaiah 43:4, "Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." Well, and what then? This love so endears and unites God to his people, that he cannot leave them, he cannot stir one foot from them: "But now, O Israel, the LORD who created you says—Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Isaiah 43:1-3

The Lord dearly loves his people, and he highly prizes his people, and he greatly delights in his people, and therefore he will be specially present with his people, both in the fire and in the water—both in the fire of persecution, and in the waters of affliction. God loves the *persons* of his people, and he loves the *presence* of his people, and he loves the *graces* of his people, and he loves the *services* of his people, and he loves the *fellowship* of his people; and therefore he will never leave his people—but stand by them, and be specially present with them, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses.

Such is God's singular love to his covenant-people, that he will neither *forsake* them nor *forget* them—in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. The Jews were low—yes, very low, in Babylon; their distresses were great, and their dangers many; they looked upon themselves as so many dead men, "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts," Ezek. 37:1-15. They looked upon themselves both as forsaken and forgotten by God. Behold, captive Zion lamentingly says, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me!" Isaiah 49:13-18; Psalm 84:7; Isaiah 1:27; Heb. 12:22.

**Zion** is taken several ways in Scripture:

(1.) For the place properly so called, where they were accustomed to meet to worship the Lord; but this place was long ago destroyed.

(2.) For the blessed angels, "You are come to mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels.

(3.) For the congregation of saints, of believers, of which it is said, "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob," Psalm 87:2.

The believing Jews being sorely oppressed and afflicted by a long captivity, Dan. 9:22; Lam. 4:6, and by many great and matchless miseries that did befall them in their captive state, they look upon God as one who had quite forsaken them and forgotten them; but they were under a very high mistake, and very erroneous in their complaint, as appears by God's answer to Zion: verse 15, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yes, they may forget—yet will I not forget you." Verse 16, "Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of my hands, your walls are continually before me." In these words, as in a crystal glass, you may see how dearly, how sweetly, how graciously, how readily, how resolutely God does engage himself that he will neither forsake Zion, nor yet forget Zion in her captive state. Now let us a little observe how this singular promise is amplified, and that, by an emphatic illustration; God's compassionate remembering of Zion far transcends the most compassionate remembrance of the tenderest mother to her dear nursing babe. Now this is laid down—

First, **Interrogatively**, "Can a woman," the most affectionate gender, "forget a nursing child, for having compassion on the son of her womb?" Can a woman, can a mother so forget as not to compassionate a child, which she naturally inclines to pity? A nursing child that hangs on her bosom, such as mothers are accustomed to be most watchful of, and to be most tenderly affected towards? her nursing child, which, together with the milk from the breast, draws love from her heart? her nursing child of her own womb, which her affections do more yearn over than they do over any other child in the world? And this is the "son of her womb," which the mother usually embraces with more warm affections than the daughter of her womb. Can a woman, yes, can a mother forget to exercise love, pity, and compassion to such a poor babe? Surely, very rarely.

Second, **Affirmatively**, "Yes, they may forget." It is possible that a

woman may be so unwomanly, and that a mother may be so unmotherly in some cases, and in some extremities, as to forget her nursing child, yes, as to eat the fruit of her womb, as the pitiful women did boil and eat their own children in the siege of Samaria and Jerusalem, 2 Kings 6:24-30; Lam. 4:10. Extremity of hunger overmastered natural affections, and made the pitiful mothers require of their children those lives which not long before, they had given them.

Thirdly, **Negatively**, "Yet will I not forget you." God will be more constantly, immovably, and unchangeably *mindful* of Zion, and *tender* of Zion, and *compassionate* of Zion, and *watchful* over Zion—than any mother could be over her youngling; yes, he would be more motherly to his poor captives in Babylon, than any mother could be to her sucking babe. This precious promise is amplified by a convincing argumentation, and that partly from his "engraving of them upon the palms of his hands." This is an allusion, say some, to those who carry about with them, engraved on some tablet, or on the stone of some ring which they wear on their finger, the mark, name, or picture of some person they entirely love. Their portraiture, their memorial, was like a signet engraved upon his hand. God will as soon blot out of mind, and forget his own hands, as his Zion; and partly from his placing their walls still in his sight. The ruined demolished walls of Jerusalem were still before him as to their commiseration, and to their reparation, God being fully resolved in the fittest season to raise and rebuild them. Look! as the workman has his model or pattern constantly either before his eye, or in his thoughts, or in his brain, that he is to work by. "Just so," says God, "Zion is continually in my eye, Zion is still in my thoughts; I shall never forsake her, I shall never forget her." But,

**[6.] Sixthly, The Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—because of his propriety and interest in them, and his near and dear relation to them.** "But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. Isaiah 43:1 " "You are mine—for I have *made* you. You are mine—for I have *chosen* you. You are mine—for I have *bought* you, I have

*purchased* you. You are mine—for I have *called* you. You are mine—for I have *redeemed* you. You are mine—for I have *stamped my image* upon you. You are mine—for I have *put my Spirit* into you!" Isaiah 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18; Phil. 4:23-24.

Now mark what follows: verse 2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." God will certainly keep his own people, his own children, company, both in the fire and in the water; that is, in those various trials and troubles that they are incident to in this world, Isaiah 55:5; Psalm 103:13-14; Exod. 15:3; Mal. 4:2; Mat. 9:12; Psalm 23:1. When should a *husband* be with his wife—but when she is in greatest troubles? and a *father* with his child—but when he is in deep distresses? and a *general* with his army—but when they are in greatest dangers? When should the *physician* be most with his patient—but when he is most desperately sick? and when should the *shepherd* be nearest his sheep—but when they are sick, and the wolf is at hand? Now God, you know, stands in all these relations to his people, and therefore he will not fail to be near them when troubles, distresses, and dangers are growing upon them. But,

**[7.] Seventhly, The Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—because such times are commonly times of great and sore temptations.** When God's hand is heaviest, then Satan will be busiest, Job 2:7-8; Mat. 9:4; Heb. 2:18. The devil is never more violent in his temptations, than when the saints are under afflictions: James 1:2, "My brethren, count it all joy, when you fall into various afflictions." verse 12, "Blessed is the man who endures affliction." 2 Pet. 2:9, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of affliction." Thus God is said to tempt Abraham, Gen. 22:1, that is, he did test and prove the faith, the fear, the love, the obedience of Abraham. *Afflictions* are sometimes called *temptations*, partly because as afflictions will try what mettle we are made off, so will temptations; and partly because as afflictions are burdensome and grievous to us, so are temptations. But mainly afflictions are called temptations, because in time of affliction

Satan will be sifting and winnowing of the saints. Now he will make use of all his devices, methods, depths, darts—yes, fiery darts—that he may vex, afflict, trouble, grieve, wound, torture, and torment those dear hearts that God would not have grieved and wounded. Therefore the Lord now steps in and stands by his people, and by his favorable, special, and refreshing presence, he bears up their heads above water, and keeps their hearts from fainting and sinking under Satan's most dangerous and desperate temptations, Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11; Rev. 2:24; Eph. 6:16.

When a city is besieged, and the enemies have raised their batteries, and have made breaches upon their walls, and their provisions grow low, oh, then, if ever, there is need of support and relief! So here. But,

**[8.] Eighthly, The Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—because he highly prizes them, and sets an honorable value and esteem upon them.** Isaiah 43:4, "Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life," that is, for your preservation and protection. God sets such a mighty price upon his people, that to preserve them from ruin and destruction, he makes nothing of giving up to the sword and destruction, the most rich, strong, populous, and warlike nations in the world. Now the high price and value that he sets upon them, engages him to be present with them: verse 2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." Those we highly prize—we won't leave in a day of distress; no more will God. God prizes his people as his peculiar treasure: Exod. 19:5, as his "portion;" Deut. 32:9, as his "pleasant portion;" Jer. 12:10, as his "jewels;" Mal. 3:17, as his "glory;" Isaiah 4:5, as his "crown and royal diadem." Yes, he prizes the poorest, the lowest, and the weakest saint in the world, above a multitude, yes, above a world of unforgiven sinners.

Heb. 11:37-38, "Of whom the world was not worthy." Though they were not adorned in silks and velvets—but were clad "in sheep-skins and goat-skins;" yet they had that inward excellency, as that the world was not

worthy of their company: and though they did not dwell in expensive houses, nor in stately palaces—but "in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth;" yet the vile sinful persecuting world was not worthy of their presence, or prayers, or of their prudent counsels, or pious examples, etc. God sets a higher value upon a Job, though on an ash-heap—than upon an Ahab, though on his royal throne, Job 1:1, and 2:3. God values men by their inward excellencies, and not by their outward dignities and worldly glories. He sets a higher price upon a Lazarus in his tattered rags—than upon a rich Dives in his purple robes. Such people have most of our company whom we prize most, Job 2:11-13. Job's three friends did highly value him, and therefore in his deepest distresses, they own him, they pity him, they weep over him, they accompany him, and they keep close unto him. Because God highly prizes his people, he will be specially present with them in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. But,

**[9.] Ninthly, The Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, because they won't leave him—but stick close to him, and to his interest, gospel, and glory; and will cleave fast to his word, worship, and ways,** in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, come what will of it, Josh. 24; Jer. 13:11; Acts 11:23. "You may take away my life," said Basil, "but you cannot take away my comfort. You may take my head—but not my crown; yes, had I a thousand lives, I would lay them all down for my Savior's sake, who has done abundantly more for me!"

John Ardley professed to Bonner, when he told him of his soon burning, and how badly he could endure it, that "if he had as many lives as he had hairs on his head, he would lose them all in the fire before he would lose his Christ or part with his Christ." It was a common thing among the martyrs to make all haste to the fire, lest they should miss of that *noble treatment*. Gordius the martyr said, "It is to my loss if you abate me anything of my sufferings." "The sooner I die," said another, "the sooner I shall be happy."

Psalm 63:1, "O God, you are my God, early will I seek you; my soul thirsts for you in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water;" verse 8, "My

soul follows hard after you," etc. This notes,

(1.) The strength of his *intention*;

(2.) The strength of his *affection*;

(3.) The constancy of his *pursuit*.

And all this in a dry and barren wilderness, and in the face of all discouragements, and in the lack of all outward encouragements, Dan. 9:3; Psalm 119:20. Whatever the danger or distress is—the psalmist is peremptorily resolved to cleave close to the Lord, and to follow hard after the Lord. "All this happened to us, though we had not forgotten you or been false to your covenant. Our hearts had not turned back; our feet had not strayed from your path. But you crushed us and made us a haunt for jackals and covered us over with deep darkness." Psalms 44:17-19. See 2 Tim. 1:11-12, and 2:8-10; Eph. 6:19-20; Col. 4:3, 18, Romans 8:36. In the face of all dangers, deaths, distresses, miseries, etc., God's faithful servants will own the Lord, and cleave to his ways, and keep close to his worship and service, let persecutors do their worst.

"Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." Psalms 44:22. It is probable that this psalm was penned upon the occasion of the horrible persecution of the church under Antiochus Epiphanes, unto which I guess Paul has reference towards the latter end of that 11th chapter to the Hebrews. In this 22d verse you have three things observable,

(1.) The greatness of their sufferings: "they were killed," amplified by a similitude, as sheep to the slaughter."

(2.) The cause: not for their sin—but "for your sake."

(3.) The continuance: how long, even "all the day long."

Their sufferings are great and long. That tyrant Antiochus made no more thought of taking away of their lives, than a butcher does of cutting the throats of the poor sheep, Dan. 11; and as butchers kill the sheep without making conscience of the effusion of their blood, even so did that tyrant

Antiochus destroy the saints of the Most High, without making the least conscience of shedding innocent blood. And as butchers think well of their work, and are glad when they have butchered the poor sheep, so did this tyrant Antiochus; he thought he did God good service in butchering of the holy people, and rejoiced in that bloody service; and yet notwithstanding all the dreadful things that these blessed souls suffered, they still kept close to God, and close to his covenant, and close to his ways, and close to his worship. And Austin observes, "that though the heathen sought to suppress the growth of Christianity by binding— butchering, racking, stoning, burning, etc.—yet still they increased and multiplied, Exod. 1:12, and still they kept close to God and his ways."

The church was at first *founded* in blood, and it has *thrived* best when it has been moistened with blood. It was at first founded in the blood of Christ, and ever since it has been moistened or watered, as it were, with the blood of the martyrs. The church of Christ in all ages has been like the oak, which lives by it's own wounds; and the more limbs are cut off, the more new sprouts. Oh, how close to God, his ways and worship—did the saints keep in the ten persecutions! "They have followed the Lamb wherever he went," Rev. 14:4-5. If they would have complied with the *ways* of the world, and the *worship* of the world, and the *customs* of the world—they might have had ease, honor, riches, preferments, etc., Heb. 11:35; but nothing could work them off from God or his ways; and therefore he will certainly stand by them, and cleave to them, and be specially present with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. But,

**[10.] Tenthly, The Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—that they may be joyful and cheerful under all their troubles, and that they may glory in all their tribulations.** Mat. 5:12; Luke 6:23. It is good to have a *patient* spirit—but it is better to have a *joyful* spirit in all our sufferings, troubles, distresses, etc., that we meet with in a way of well-doing, 2 Cor. 12:10. "His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing (Greek, "rejoice and leaping for joy,") because

they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." Acts 5:40-41. They looked upon it as a high honor to be dishonored for Christ; and as a grace to be disgraced for Christ. It was the divine presence that made Paul and Silas to sing when they were beaten with many stripes, and cast into prison, into the inner prison. "After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God," Acts 16:23-25. The divine presence made Paul and Silas to glory in all their stripes, sores, and wounds, as old soldiers glory in their scars and wounds which they receive in battle for their prince and country, Eph. 6:17; Romans 5:3. The divine presence might well make Paul and Silas to say of their stripes and sores, as Munster once said of his ulcers, "These are the jewels and the precious ornaments with which God adorns his dearest servants."

It was the divine presence that made Ignatius say in the midst of all his sufferings, "I bear my bonds as so many spiritual pearls." Just so, 2 Cor. 7:4, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulations." Greek, "I do overabound with joy." Verse 5, "For, when we had come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest—but we were troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears;" verse 6, "Nevertheless God, who comforts those who are cast down, comforted us." It was the divine presence which filled the Corinthians with exceeding comfort and joy when their flesh had no rest, and when they were troubled on every side. This special presence of God with them in all their tribulations filled their souls with such an exuberancy of joy, that no good could match it nor no evil over match it. It was the divine presence that made the martyrs, both ancient and modern, so comfortable and cheerful under all their hideous sufferings. It was the divine presence that made Francisco Soyit say to his adversaries, "You deprive me of this life—and promote me to a heavenly life; which is as if you should rob me of pennies and furnish me with gold."

"Oh, how my heart leaps for joy," said one, "that I am so near the apprehension of eternal bliss! God forgive me my unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory. In all the days of my life I was never so

merry as now I am in this dark dungeon." "Believe me, there is no such joy in the world as the people of Christ have under the cross," said blessed Philpot, who went to heaven in flames of fire. Let God but withdraw this special presence from his people in their sufferings, and you will quickly find their hearts to droop, their spirits to fail, and they overwhelmed in a sea of sorrows. It was this divine presence that made the primitive Christians to rejoice more when they were condemned, and to kiss the stake, and to thank the executioner, and to sing in the flames, and to desire to be with Christ. Just so, Justin Martyr, "We thank you for delivering us from hard taskmasters, that we may more sweetly enjoy the bosom of Jesus Christ."

The bee gathers the best honey of the bitterest herbs, and Christ made the best wine from water. Certainly the best, the purest, the strongest, and the sweetest joys, spring from the special presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Only remember this—that that joy that flows from the divine presence in times of troubles and distress, is an inward joy, a spiritual joy, a joy which lies remote from a carnal eye. "The heart knows his own bitterness; and a stranger does not intermeddle with his joy," Proverbs 14:10. The joy of the saints in sufferings is a jewel that falls not under a stranger's eye. The joy of a Christian lies deep, it cannot be expressed, it cannot be painted. Look! as no man can paint the sweetness of the honeycomb, nor the sweetness of a cluster of grapes, nor the fragrancy of the rose of Sharon; so no man can paint out the sweetness and spiritualness of that joy that the divine presence raises in the soul—when a Christian is under the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers.

Holy joy is a treasure which lies deep; and it is not every man who has a golden key to search into this treasury. Look! as a man standing on the sea-shore sees a great heap of waters, one wave riding upon the back of another, and making a dreadful noise—but all this while, though he sees the water rolling, and hears it raging and roaring—yet he sees not the wealth, the gold, the silver, the jewels, and incredible treasures which lie buried there; just so, wicked men they see the needs of the saints—but not their wealth; they see their poverty—but not their riches; they see their miseries—but not their mercies; they see their conflicts—but not their

comforts; they see their sorrows—but not their joys. Oh, this blind world cannot see the joys, the comforts, the consolations that the divine presence raises in the souls of the saints, when they are at worst! Holy joy and cheerfulness under great troubles and deep distresses, is an honor to God, a glory to Christ, and a credit to religion; it stops the mouths of sinners, and it encourages and strengthens weak saints; and therefore the Lord will be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, etc., that they may grace their suffering condition with joy and cheerfulness. And let thus much suffice for the reasons of the point.

But before I come to the useful application, to prevent the objections, and to allay the fears and doubts and disputes that may arise in the hearts of weak Christians concerning this special presence of God, I shall briefly lay down these following **PROPOSITIONS**—

**1. First, That Christ is many times *really* present, when he is *seemingly* absent.** Gen. 28:16, "And **Jacob** said, Surely the Lord is in this place—and I knew it not." Choice Christians may have the presence of Christ really with them, when yet they may not be sensible of his presence, nor yet affected with it, Psalm 139. God is present everywhere—but especially with his saints; and not only then when they are apprehend him—but when they perceive no evidence of his presence. Being awakened, he perceived that God had very graciously and gloriously appeared to him; and therefore he falls admiring and extolling the singular goodness and the special kindness of God towards him: as if he had said, I thought that such strange and blessed apparitions were peculiar to the family of the faithful; I thought that God had only in this manner revealed himself in my father's house: I did not in the least think or imagine that such a divine revelation would happen to me in such a place; but now I find that that God, who is everywhere in respect of his general presence, he has, by the special testimonies of his presence, manifested himself to me also in this place.

Just so, **Job**, "Lo, he goes by me, and I see him not: he passes on also—but I perceive him not," [Consult these scriptures, Luke 24:32; John 20:13-15; Psalm 31:22; Cant. 3:1-5, and 5:6-8.] Job 9:11. Just so, Jonah, chapter 2:4, "Then I said, I am cast out of your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple." In times of sore afflictions God's children are

very prone to have hard thoughts of God, and heavy thoughts of themselves. Unbelief raises fears, doubts, despondency, despair, and works a Christian many times, when he is under deep distresses, to draw very sad conclusions against his own soul, "I am cast out of your sight." But this was but an hour of temptation, and therefore he soon recollects and recovers himself again: "yet I will look again toward your holy temple." Here now faith has got the upper hand of unbelief. In the former part of the verse you have Jonah doubting and despairing, "I am cast out of your sight;" but in the latter part of the verse you have Jonah conquering and triumphing, "yet I will look again toward your holy temple."

When *sense* says a thing will never be, and when *reason* says such a thing can never be, *faith* gets above sense and reason, and says, "yes—but it *shall* be!" What do you tell me of a roaring, raging sea, of the belly of hell, of the weeds about my head, of the billows and waves passing over my head; for yet as low as I am, and as forlorn as I am, "I will yet look towards God's holy temple," I will eye God in the covenant of grace; though I am in the sea, though I am in the belly of hell—yet by faith "I will look toward your holy temple,"—toward which they were to pray, 1 Kings 8—and triumph over all those difficulties which formerly I looked upon as insuperable; I will pray and look, and look and pray; all which does clearly evidence a singular presence of God with him, even then when he peremptorily concludes that he was cast out of God's presence, out of his sight, out of his favor, out of his care, out of his heart.

The Lord is many times *really present* with his people when he is not *sensibly present* with his people: Judges 6:12,13 "When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said—"The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian." [God may sometimes appear terribly to those whom he loves entirely, Job 9:34.] God may be really present with his people, they may have his favorable presence with their inward man, when it goes very ill with their outward man. Certainly we must frame a new Bible before we can prove that he

does not love us when he afflicts us, or that he has withdrawn his presence from us.

Christ had never more of the real presence of his Father than when he had least of his sensible presence, of his comfortable presence: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mat. 27:46. Here is first a compellation or invocation of God twice repeated: "My God, my God." Secondly, the complaint itself, or matter complained of, concerning God's forsaking of him. Christ was forsaken of God in some sort, and he was very sensible of his Father's withdrawing, though it was but in part and for a time, "Why have you forsaken me?" This forsaking is not to be understood of his whole person—but of his human nature only, according to which and in the which he now suffered on the cross. Though the person of Christ suffered, and was forsaken—yet he was not forsaken in, or according to his whole person—but in respect of his human nature only. The godhead of Christ could not be forsaken, for then God should have forsaken himself, which is impossible. The personal union of the godhead with the manhood of Christ continued all the time of his passion and death, it was never dissolved, nor ever shall be. Yes, the godhead did uphold the manhood all the time of Christ's sufferings, so that he was not forsaken when he was forsaken; he was not forsaken wholly when he was forsaken in part. The love and favor of God the Father towards Jesus Christ did not ebb and flow, rise and fall; for God never loved Jesus Christ more or better than at the time of his sufferings, when he was most obedient to his Father's will. "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life for my sheep," John 10:17. Christ had never more of the supporting presence of his Father than when he had least of his comfortable presence. When Christ was in his grievous agony and distress of body and mind, the godhead did withdraw the comforting presence from the manhood; and so far, and so far only, was Christ forsaken. Though the union was not dissolved—yet there was a suspension of vision for the time, so as the human nature did neither see nor feel any present comfort from God. Now so far as the godhead did withdraw its comfortable presence, so far our Savior was forsaken, and no further; that was but in part, and therefore he was but in part forsaken. God was really present with Christ when in respect of his comfortable presence he was withdrawn from him. Just so, here. The husband may be

in the house and the wife not know it; the sun may shine and I not see it; there may be fire in the room and I not feel it; so God may be really present with his people when he is not sensibly present with his people. But,

**2. The second proposition is this—That the favorable, special, and eminent presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—is only to be extended to his covenant-people, to those who are his people by special grace.** "They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me... I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me." Jeremiah 32:38-40.

There are many precious promises of the divine presence, as I have already showed; but they are all given to God's covenant-people. We are all the people of God by creation, both good and bad, sinners and saints, bond and free, rich and poor, high and low; and we are all the people of God by outward profession. All who do make an outward profession of God, and perform external worship to God, they are all the people of God in this sense. All the carnal Israelites are frequently called the people of God—as well as the spiritual seed. Thus Cain was one of God's people as well as Abel, and Esau as well as Jacob. Now such as are only the people of God by creation, or by profession, these are strangers to God, these are enemies to God, Eph. 2:12; and will he be favorably present with these? Such as are only the people of God by creation and outward profession—they are dead in trespasses and sins—and can the living God take pleasure in being among the dead? Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13. Such are under all the threatenings of the law, and under all the curses of the law, Gal. 3:10, even to the uttermost extent of them; such are not one moment secure; the threatenings of God and the curses of the law may light upon them, when in the house, when in the field, when waking, when sleeping, when alone, when in company, when rejoicing, when lamenting, when sick, when well, when boasting, when despairing, when upon the throne, when upon a sick-bed; and will God grace these with his gracious presence? Lev. 26; Deut. 28. Surely not! Such say to God, "Depart from us; for we

desire not the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit would we have, if we pray unto him?" Job 21:14-15. Such queryings as this carry greatest contempt in them, and would lay the Almighty quite below the required duty as if *Almighty* were but an empty title; and will God ever honor such with his favorable presence, who bid him be packing, who reject his acquaintance, and are willing to be rid of his company? Surely not! Such as are only his people by creation, and an outward profession, such are under the wrath and displeasure of God. "God is angry with the wicked every day," Psalm 7:11; not with a paternal anger—but with a judicial anger, even to hatred and abhorment. "The wicked is an abomination to him, and he hates all workers of iniquity," Proverbs 3:32, and 15:9. And therefore to these he will never give his special presence. Such may well expect that God will pour on them the fierceness of that wrath and indignation, that they can neither decline nor withstand. Such wrath is like the tempest and whirlwind which breaks down all before it. It is like burning fire, and devouring flames, which consumes all. This wrath will break down all the sinner's arrogancies, and strangle all his vain hopes, and mar all his sensual joys, and fill him with amazing horrors, and make him drunk with the wine of astonishment. And will God dwell with these? will he keep house with these? Surely not!

By these short hints it is most evident that the special presence of God is entailed upon none outside of covenant, John 14:21, 23. God loves to keep house with none but his covenant-people. He will grace none with his gracious presence—but those who are his people by special grace, 1 Cor. 16-18. When wicked men are in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers—God either leaves them, as he did Saul, 1 Sam. 28:15-16, etc.; or else pursues them to an utter overthrow, as he did Pharaoh, Exod. 14; or else cuts them off by an invisible hand, as he did Sennacherib's mighty army, Isaiah 37:36, and proud king Herod, Acts 12:23; or else he leaves them to be their own executioners, as he did Ahithophel and Judas, etc. But,

**3. The third proposition is this, That a sincere Christian may enjoy the presence of the Lord in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, supporting and upholding**

**of him—when he has not the presence of God quickening, comforting, and joying of him.** Psalm 119:117: Psalm 37:24, "Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with his hand," "upholding with his hand." There is not one moment wherein the Lord does not uphold his people by the hand. The root word signifies to sustain and bear up, as the tender mother does the little child, the weak child, the sick child. God's hand is still under his people, so that they can never fall below supporting grace. Psalm 63:8, "Your right hand upholds me;" or, "Your right hand underprops me." God never did, nor never will, lack a hand to uphold, a hand to underprop his poor people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Though the saints have not always the *comforting* presence of God in their afflictions—yet they have always the *supporting* presence of God in their afflictions.

Christ in his bitter and bloody agony had much of the *supporting* presence of his Father, when he had none of the *comforting* presence of his Father with him. Mat. 27:46, "My God, my God," etc. Just so, the saints in their deep distresses have many times much of the supporting presence of God. His left hand is under their heads, and his right hand does embrace them, Cant. 2:6, when, in respect of his comforting presence, they may say with the weeping prophet, "The comforter who should relieve my soul, is far from me," Lam. 1:16.

When the love-sick spouse was ready to faint, Christ circles her with amiable embracements; "His left hand is under her head, and his right hand does embrace her." This is a posture and sign of the greatest love, which the sick fainting spouse here glories in. Christ's two hands are testimonies and witnesses of his great power and might, who is able to preserve his people, though lame cripples, from falling, and also to lift them up again when they are fallen ever so low, and likewise to support and uphold them, that they shall never finally and utterly be cast down. When the hearts of the saints are ready to faint and sink, then the Lord will employ all his power for their support, bearing them up as it were with both hands. He has put his left hand under my head, as a pillow to rest upon, and with his right hand he has embraced me, as a loving husband cherishes his sick wife, and does her all the help he can, Eph. 5:29. The best of saints would fail and faint in a day of trouble, if Christ

did not put both his hands to keep them up. In days of sorrow, God's people stand in need of a whole Christ to support them and uphold them. "My head sinks, O my beloved, put your left hand, softer than pillows of roses, firmer than pillars of marble, under it; my heart fails and dies—oh let your right hand embrace me." But,

**4. The fourth proposition is this—That all saints have not a like measure of the presence of the Lord in their troubles and trials, in their sorrows and sufferings.** Some have more, and others have less of this presence of God in an evil day.

(1.) All saints have not alike work to do in an evil day.

(2.) All saints have not alike temptations to withstand in an evil day.

(3.) All saints have not alike testimony to give on an evil day.

(4.) All saints have not alike burdens to bear in an evil day.

(5.) All saints have not alike things to suffer in an evil day.

There are *greater* and there are *lesser* troubles, distresses, and dangers; and there are *ordinary* troubles, distresses, and dangers; and there are *extraordinary* troubles, distresses, and dangers. [Lam. 1:12, and 4:6; Dan. 9:12-13; 2 Cor. 11:21 to the end; Heb. 11:25 to the end.] Now, where the trouble, the distress, the danger, is ordinary—there an ordinary presence of God may suffice. But where the trouble, the distress, the danger, is extraordinary—there the people of God shall have an extraordinary presence of God with them, as you may see in the three Hebrew children, Daniel, the apostles, the primitive Christians, and the Book of Martyrs.

Some troubles, distresses, and dangers, are but of a *short continuance*, as Athanasius said of his banishment, "It is but a little cloud, and will quickly be gone." Others are of a longer continuance, and accordingly God suits his presence.

All saints have not alike *secondary* succours, supplies, reliefs, comforts, etc., in their troubles, distresses, and dangers. Some have a shelter, a

friend at hand—others have not. Some have many friends—and others may have never a friend. Some are surrounded with outward comforts—and others have not one, not one penny, not one friend, not one day's work, etc. In a storm some have good harbors at hand—others are near the rocks, and in danger of being swallowed up in the sands. Just so here, and accordingly God lets out more or less of his presence among his people; some need more of his presence than others do—and accordingly God dispenses it among his saints. But,

**5. The fifth proposition is this—That none of the saints have at all times, in all afflictions, distresses, and dangers, the same measure and degree of the presence of the Lord;** but in one affliction they have more, in another less, of the divine presence. [Some scores of Psalms do evidence the truth of this proposition.] In one affliction, a Christian may have more of the *enlightening* presence of God than in another. And in another affliction, a Christian may have more of the *comforting* presence of God than in another. In this trouble a Christian may have more of the awakening presence of God than in another, and in that trouble a Christian may have more of the sanctifying presence of God than in another; and in this distress a Christian may have more of the supporting presence of God than in that. No one saint does at all times, nor in all troubles, need a like measure of the divine presence. The primitive Christians and the martyrs had sometimes more and sometimes less of the divine presence with them, as their condition did require. God, who is infinitely wise, does always suit the measures and degrees of his gracious, favorable, special presence to the necessities of his saints. This is so clear and great a truth, that there are many thousands that can seal to it from their own experience; and therefore I need not enlarge upon it. But,

**6. The sixth and the last proposition is this—That many precious Christians, in their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, may have this favorable, special, and eminent presence of God with them—and yet fear and doubt, yes, peremptorily conclude that they have not this presence of God with them.** [Jonah 2:4; Cant. 5:6-10; Psalm 88.] Psalm 77:7-10. These sad interrogatories argues much fear and doubt; but let me

evidence the truth of this proposition, by an induction of particulars.

Thus, first: If Christ is not specially with you, why is it, that in your troubles, you so fearful of offending of him, and so careful and studious in pleasing of him? Gen. 39:9-10; Psalm 17:3-5; Dan. 3:16-17, and 6:10-13.

Secondly, If Christ is not specially with you, why is it, that under all your troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers—you are still a-justifying of God, a-clearing of God, a-speaking well of God, a-giving a good report of God? Psalm 119:75; Ezra 9:13; Neh. 9:32-33; Dan. 9:12, 14.

Thirdly, If God is not specially with you, why is it, that you bear up so believably, sweetly, stoutly, cheerfully, and patiently under your troubles, deep distresses, and greatest dangers? Gen. 49:23-24; 1 Sam. 30:6; Hab. 3:17-18; Acts 5:40-42, 16:25-26, and 27:22-26; Heb. 10:34.

Fourthly, If Christ is not specially present with you, why is it, that your thoughts, desires, hearts, thirstings and longings of soul, are so earnestly, so seriously, so frequently, and so constantly carried out after more and more of Christ, and after more and more of the presence of Christ, and after more and more communion with Christ? Psalm 139:17-18, 63:1, 8, 27:4, and 42:1-3; Exod. 33:13-16; Cant. 1:2.

Fifthly, If Christ is not specially present with you, why is it, that you are so affected and afflicted with the dishonors and indignities, wrongs and injuries, which are done to the Lord by others? Psalm 69:9, and 119:53, 136, 158; Jer. 9:1-2; Ezek. 9:4, 6; 2 Pet. 2:7-8. None but such that have the presence of the Lord specially with them can seriously and sincerely lament over the high dishonors that are done to the Lord by others.

Sixthly, If the Lord is not specially present with you under all your troubles and deep distresses, why do you not cast off prayer, and neglect hearing, and forsake the assembling of yourselves together, and turn your backs upon the table of the Lord, and take leave of closet duties? Job 15:4; Heb. 10:25.

Seventhly, If the Lord is not specially present with you under your great troubles and deep distresses, why don't you say with Pharaoh, "Who is

the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" And with the king of Israel, "Behold, this evil is from the Lord—why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Or with that pagan, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" Or like Saul—why don't you run to a witch? Or with Ahab, Why don't you sell yourselves to work evil in the sight of the Lord? Or like Ahaz—trespass most when you are distressed most? [Exod. 5:2; 2 Kings 6:32, and 7:2; 1 Sam. 28:15-16; 1 Kings 21:20; 2 Chron. 28:22; Isaiah 51:20, and 59:10-11.]

Why don't you fret, and faint, and act like a wild bull, full of fury? Why don't you grope for the wall, and stumble at noonday, and roar like bears?

Eighthly, If the Lord is not specially present with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, why do you, with Moses, prefer suffering before sinning, and Christ's reproaches before Egypt's treasures? Heb. 11:25-26. Why do you scruple the sinning of yourselves out of your sorrows? Psalm 38:4; Gen. 39:9-10. Why do you look upon sin as your greatest burden? Why are you so tender in the point of transgression, and so stout in resistance of the most pleasing temptation?

Ninthly, If the Lord is not specially with you in your great troubles and deep distresses, why do you set so high a price upon those who have much of the presence of God with them in their troubles and trials? Psalm 16:3-4; Proverbs 12:26; Heb. 11:38. Why do you look upon them as more excellent than their neighbors? yes, as such worthies of whom this world is not worthy?

Tenthly and lastly, If the Lord is not specially present with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, why is it, that you are somewhat bettered, somewhat amended, somewhat reformed by the rod—by the afflictions that have been, and still are, upon you? Psalm 119:67, 71; Hosea 5:14-15, and 6:1-2; Hosea 2:6-7. When the *heart* is more awakened, humbled, and softened by the rod, when the *will* is more compliant with the will of God in doing or suffering, when the *mind* is more raised and spiritualized, when the *conscience* is more quick and tender, and when the *life* is more strict and circumspect; then we may safely and roundly conclude that such people do undoubtedly enjoy the special and singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles,

deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, Eph. 5:15.

And thus I have laid down these six propositions; which, if well weighed and improved—may many ways be of singular use to sincere Christians.

We shall now come to the **application** or useful **improvement** of this great and seasonable truth. *Explanation* is the drawing of the bow—but *application* is the hitting of the mark, the bulls-eye. Is it so, that when the people of the Lord are in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, that then the Lord will be favorably, specially, and eminently present with them? **Then let me briefly give these ten INFERENCES.**

**[1.] First, That the saints are a people of Christ's special care.** 2 Chron. 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him." The words contain,

**(1.) The UNIVERSALITY of God's providence.** His eyes walk the rounds, they run to and fro through the whole earth, to defend and secure the sincere in heart. Diana's temple was burnt down when she was busied at Alexander's birth, and could not be at two places together; but God is present at all times, in all places, and among all people, and therefore his church, which is his temple, can never suffer because of his absence, 1 Cor. 3:16, and 6:19. The Egyptians had an idol called *Baal-Zephon*, which is by interpretation, *Lord of the watch-tower*, Exod. 14:2; his office was to frighten such fugitive Jews as should offer to steal out of the country; but when Moses and the people of Israel passed that way, and pitched their camp there, this drowsy god was surely fast asleep, for they all marched on their way without hindrance or molestation. Whereas he who keeps Israel "neither slumbers nor sleeps;" he kept his Israel then, and he has kept his Israel ever since: he made good his title then, and will make good his title still; he ever was, and he ever will be, watchful over his

people for their good, Psalm 121:3-5; Isaiah 27:3-4.

**(2.) The EFFICACY of God's providence.** To show himself strong. God fights with his eyes as well as his hands; he does not only see his people's dangers—but saves them from dangers in the midst of dangers, Zech. 2:5. When the philosopher in a starry night was in danger of drowning, he cried out, "Surely I shall not perish; there are so many eyes of providence over me!" King Philip said he could sleep safely, because his friend Antipater watched over him. Oh, how much more may the saints sleep safely, who have always a God who keeps watch and ward about them Psalm 3:5-6. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." Proverbs 18:10. God is so strong a tower that no cannon can pierce it, and he is so high a tower that no ladder can scale it, and he is so deep a tower that no subverter can undermine it; and therefore they must needs be safe and secure—who lodge within a tower so impregnable, so indomitable. Now this is the case of all the saints.

The **fatherly care and providence of God** is still exercised for the good of his people. "In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The Lord alone led him." Deuteronomy 32:10-12. [Isaiah 49:16, 31:5, and 32:1-2.] The eagle carries her young ones upon her wings, and not between her talons, as other birds do, but safely and swiftly; and so did God his Israel, being protective and watchful of them all the way, securing them also from their enemies, who could do them as little hurt as any do the eagle's young, which cannot be shot but through the body of the mother eagle, Isaiah 63:4-6, and 59:15.

See at what a rate God speaks in Isaiah 40:27-29, "Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? *Do you not know? Have you not heard?* The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." Observe how God comes on with his piercing interrogatories, "Have you not known?" What an *ignorant* people! "Have you not heard?"

What a *deaf* people!

1 Pet. 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you." "I will now with you sing away care," said John *Careless*, martyr, in his letter to Mr. Philpot, "for now my soul is turned to her old rest again, and has taken a sweet nap in Christ's lap. I have cast my care upon the Lord, which cares for me, and will be careless according to my name."

God's providence extends to all his creatures; it is like the sun, of universal influence—but in a special manner it is operative for the safety of his saints. In common dangers men take special care of their jewels, and will not God; will not God take special care of his jewels? Mal. 3:17; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5. Surely, yes! The church of God is the house of God, and will not God take care of his house? Surely that shall be well guarded, whatever be neglected. His house is every moment within the view of his favorable eye, and under the guard of his almighty arm; his thoughts and heart is much upon his house. God has a peculiar and paternal care over his saints.

A God there is, whose providence does take  
Care for his saints, whom he will not forsake.

"His eyes run," implying the celerity and swiftness of God in hastening relief to his people; "His eyes run through the whole earth," implying the universality of help. There is not a saint in any dark corner of the world, under any straits or troubles—but God eyes him, and will take singular care of him. God will always suit his care to his people's conditions, to which his eminent appearances for them in days of distress and trouble give special testimony. It is our work to *cast* care; it is God's work to *take* care. Let not us, then, take the Lord's work out of his hand. But,

**[2.] Secondly,** Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then here you may see the true reason why the saints are so comfortable, cheerful, and joyful in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers.** It is because of that special presence of God with them. [Acts 5:40-41, and 16:25; Romans 5:3; 2 Cor. 7:4, and 12:10; 1 Pet. 4:12-14. These scriptures are already opened

and improved.] It was this special presence of God with the martyrs, which made them rejoice in the midst of their greatest sufferings, and which made them endure great sufferings without any sensible feeling of their sufferings: as that young child in Josephus, who, when his flesh was pulled in pieces with pincers, by the command of Antiochus, said, with a smiling countenance, "Tyrant, you are wasting your time. Where are those sharp pains with which you threatened me? make me to shrink back and cry out if you can!" And Bainham, an English martyr, when the fire was flaming about him, said, "You papists talk of miracles; behold here a miracle. I feel no more pain than if I were in a bed of down; it is as sweet to me as a bed of roses." Surely their strength was not the strength of stones, nor their flesh of brass, Job 6:12, that they should not be sensible of so great sufferings; but this was only from that special presence of God, who made them endure grievous pains without pain, and most exquisite torments without torment, and sore sufferings without feeling of their sufferings, Heb. 11:33-39. And other choice souls there were, who, though they were sensible of their sufferings—yet by the divine presence, they were filled with unspeakable courage, comfort, and alacrity.

Laurence, when his body was roasted upon a burning gridiron, cried out, "This side is roasted enough; turn the other!" Marcus of Arethusa, a worthy minister, when his body was cut and lanced and coated with honey, and hung up aloft in a basket to be stung to death by wasps and bees; he, looking down cheerfully upon the spectators, said, "I am advanced, despising you who are below." And when we shall see poor, weak, feeble creatures like ourselves defying their tormentors and their torments, conquering in the midst of their greatest sufferings, and rejoicing and triumphing in the midst of their fiery trials; singing in prison, as Paul and Silas did; kissing the stake, as Henry Voes did; clapping their hands when they were half consumed in the flames, as John Noyes did; calling their *execution-day* their *wedding-day*, as Ridley did; we cannot but conclude that they had a singular presence of God with them, which made all their sufferings seem so easy and so light unto them.

Caesar cheered up his drooping mariners in a storm by reminding them

of his presence; but, alas! alas! what was Caesar's presence, compared to this divine, this special presence that the saints have enjoyed in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses? But,

**[3.] Thirdly,** Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then from hence you may see the weakness, madness, sottishness, and folly of all such as make opposition against the saints; who affront and injure those who have the presence of the great God in the midst of them.** Isaiah 8:9-10, and 27:4; 1 Cor. 1:25. O sirs! the *weakness* of God is stronger than men. What then is the strength of God? 1 Cor. 10:22, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" Ah, who knows the power of his anger! Psalm 90:11. It is such that none of the potentates of the world, who set themselves against the saints, can avert or avoid, avoid or abide. That God is a mighty God, the Scriptures do abundantly evidence, and it appears also in the epithet, that is added unto *El-*, which imports that he is a God of prevailing might. By Daniel he is called *El-Elim*, "the mighty of mighties." Now what folly and madness is it for dust and ashes, for crawling worms, to make war against a mighty God; yes, an Almighty God, who can curse them, and crush them with a word of his mouth!

2 Chron. 32:7,8 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles." Gen. 49:25; Num. 24:4, 16; Ruth 1:20-21. The king of Assyria was at that time the greatest monarch in the world, and the most formidable enemy the church had—yet the divine presence was a sovereign antidote to expel all base slavish fears, which might arise in any of their hearts concerning his greatness, power, or multitude. What was that great multitude that was with the king of Assyria, compared to that innumerable company of angels which was with Hezekiah? [2 Kings 6:17; Pa. 34:7, etc., and 91:11; Heb. 12:22, and 1:14; Isaiah 37:29, 36-38.]

And what was an arm of flesh, compared to God's supreme sovereignty, that had this proud prince in chains, and that put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips, and cut off his great army by the hand of an angel in

one night, and left him to fall by the sword of his own sons? The Lord Almighty can crush the greatest armies in the world into atoms, at his pleasure. When the divine presence is armed against the great ones of the world—they must certainly fall. In Diocletian's time, under whom was the last and worst of the ten persecutions, though then Christian religion was more desperately opposed than ever—yet such was the presence of God with his people in those times, that Christianity prospered and prevailed more than ever; so that Dioclesian himself, observing that the more he sought to blot out the name of Christ—the more legible it became; and the more he sought to block up the way of Christ—the more passable it became; and whatever of Christ he thought to root out—the deeper it rooted, and the higher it rose; thereupon he resolved to engage himself no further—but retired to a private life. This is a good copy for the persecutors of the day to write after.

O sirs! what folly and madness is it for weakness to engage against strength, the creature against the Creator, an arm of flesh against the Rock of Ages! What is the chaff, compared to the whirlwind; stubble and straw, compared to the devouring flames? No more are all the enemies of Zion, compared to the great and glorious God, who is specially present with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses, etc., Acts 5:38-40; Psalm 76:12, and 110:5-6; Rev. 6:14-16. There was not one of those persecuting emperors that carried on the ten bloody persecutions against the saints—but came to miserable ends; yes, histories tell us of forty-three persecuting emperors who fell by the hand of revenging justice; sooner or later, the presence of God with his people will undo all the persecutors in the world! But,

**[4.] Fourthly,** Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then from hence you may see the Lord's singular love and admirable kindness to his people in gracing them with his presence in their greatest troubles.** "But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says—Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be

burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3.

That is a friend indeed, who will stick close to a man in the day of his troubles, as Job's friend stuck close to him in the day of his troubles, and as Jonathan stuck close to David in his greatest dangers, and as the primitive Christians stuck close one to another, though with the hazard of their lives, and to the amazement of their enemies, Job 2:11-13; 1 Sam. 20:30-33. "Behold," said they, "how the Christians love one another," and stand by one another.

The people of God, in their greatest troubles, are a people of God's special love. When they are in distress, he lays them in his very bosom, and his "banner over them is love," Cant. 2:4. The love of God to his people is engraved upon the most afflictive dispensation they are under. When he smartly rebukes them, even then he dearly loves them, Rev. 3:19. "Hear you the rod," Mic. 6:9. Oh, God's rod speaks love. Many of the saints have read much of the Lord's love, written in letters of their own blood. They have read love in prisons, and love in flames, and love in banishment, and love in the cruelest torments their enemies could invent! When a Christian's wounds are bleeding—then God comes in with a healing plaster, Mal. 4:2. When a Christian is in a storm—then the presence of the Lord makes all calm and quiet within, Mat. 8:26. The presence of the Lord with his people in their troubles and distresses—speaks out the *reality* of his love, the *cordialness* of his love, the *greatness* of his love, and the *transcendency* of his love.

The truth and strength of relations' love one to another does best appear by their presence one with another, when any of them are in the iron furnace, or in bonds, or in great straits or needs, or deep distresses. The parents show most of their love to their sick and weak children by their daily presence with them; and the husband shows most of his dear and tender love by keeping his wife company when she is in greatest straits and dangers. Just so, here. But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then this may serve to justify the saints, and to encourage the saints**

**to write after this fair copy, which Christ has set them.** Oh visit your distressed brethren! oh stand by them! oh stick close to them in all their troubles, distresses, and dangers. Let the same mind be in you, one towards another, as is in Christ towards you all. Are there any Jobs upon the ash-heap? Visit them! Are there any Pauls in chains? Find them out, and be not ashamed of their chains! "May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus." 2 Timothy 1:16-18. "He often refreshed me." Greek, "*Poured cold water upon me.*" It is a metaphor taken from those who, being almost overcome with heat, are refreshed by cooling. "And was not ashamed of my chains." Learned antiquaries observe that the apostle at this time was not in prison with fetters—but in the custody of a soldier, with whom he might go abroad, having a chain on his right arm, which was tied to the soldier's left arm. Paul at this time was not in prison, for then Onesiphorus needed not to have made any great search to find him; but was a prisoner at large, going up and down with his keeper to despatch his affairs; and therefore he speaks not of chains in the plural number—but of a chain in the singular, with which he was tied to the soldier that kept him. It noways becomes the saints to be ashamed of the chains which may be found upon the ambassadors of Christ in an evil day. The primitive Christians were not ashamed of the martyrs' chains—but owned them in their chains, and stood by them in their chains, and frequently visited them in their chains, and freely and nobly relieved them and refreshed them in their chains: and will you, will you be ashamed to visit the saints in bonds? "Oh let not this be told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon," 2 Sam. 1:20, that the high-flown professors and Christians of these times are ashamed to own, relieve, and stand by the saints in chains.

Just so, Mat. 25:36, "I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came unto me." [See Exod. 2:11-12, compared with Acts 7:23-29, only remember the case was extraordinary, and his call was extraordinary.] It is very remarkable that the last definitive sentence shall pass upon men, according to those acts of favor and kindness that have been showed to the saints in their suffering state; and that the sentence of absolution shall contain a manifestation of all their good works. In this great day Christ sees no iniquity in his people, he objects nothing against them, and he only makes honorable mention of the good that has been done by them. O sirs, all the visits you give to sick saints, and all the visits you give to imprisoned saints—Christ takes as visits given to himself! Suffering saints and you are brethren; and will you not visit your own brethren? suffering saints and Christ are brethren; and will you not visit Christ's brethren? suffering saints and you are companions; and will you not visit your own companions? suffering saints and you are traveling heavenwards; and will you not visit your fellow-travelers? suffering saints and you are fellow-citizens; and will you not visit your fellow-citizens? suffering saints and you are fellow-soldiers; and will you not visit your fellow-soldiers? suffering saints and you are fellow-heirs; and will you not visit your fellow-heirs? [Mat. 25:40; John 20:17; Psalm 119:63; 2 Cor. 8:19; Eph. 2:19; Phil. 2:25; Romans 8:17.] Oh, never be ashamed of those whom Christ is not ashamed of! Oh, never fail to visit those whom Christ daily visits in their suffering state! Oh, never turn your backs upon those to whom Christ has given the right hand of fellowship! Oh, be not shy of them, nor strange to them whom Christ lays daily in his bosom! Oh, be not unkind to those, with whom one day you must live forever! But,

**[6.] Sixthly,** Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then never give way to base slavish fears!** Psalm 51:12-13, and 46:1-3; Mat. 10:28, etc. There are as many *fear nots* in Scripture as there are *fears*. Take a taste of some of them—Heb. 13:5, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Verse 6, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." This text is taken out of Psalm 118:6, "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me." Some read it by way of interrogation, "What can

man do unto me?" [The Earl of Murray, speaking of Mr. John Knox, said, Here lies the body of him who in his lifetime never feared the face of any man.] There is some difference in the apostle's quoting the text between the Hebrew and the Greek. The Hebrew thus reads it, "The Lord is with me," or for me; or as our English has translated it, "The Lord is on my side." The Greek thus, "The Lord is my helper." But the sense being the same with the Hebrew, the apostle would not alter that translation. The alteration which is in the Greek serves for an exposition of the mind and meaning of the psalmist; for God being with us, or for us, or on our side, presupposes that he is our helper. Just so, as there is no contradiction between the psalmist and the apostle—but a clear interpretation of the psalmist's mind; and a choice instruction thence arises —namely, that God's special presence with us, for us, or on our side, may abundantly satisfy us, and assure us that he will afford all needful help and support to us. The consideration of which should abundantly arm us against all base slavish fears.

God is not present with his saints in their troubles and distresses as a stranger—but as a father; and therefore he cannot but take such special care of them, as to help them, as to support them, and as to secure them from dangers in the midst of dangers, and therefore why should they be afraid? Isaiah 43:2. The Greek word that is translated helper in Heb. 13:6, signifies one who is ready to run at the cry of another. Now this notation implies a willing readiness and a ready willingness in God to afford all support and relief to his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Herein God shows himself like a tender father or mother, who immediately run when they hear the child cry, or see danger near.

Isaiah 8:10, "God is with us." Verse 12, "Do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it." The divine presence should arm us against all base slavish fears of men's power, policy, wrath, or rage. Kings and princes, compared with God, or with the special presence of God, are but as so many grasshoppers, skipping and hopping up and down the field; and does it befit Christians who enjoy this divine presence to be afraid of grasshoppers? Isaiah 40:22.

Isaiah 41:10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with

my righteous right hand." God expects that his special presence with us should arm us against all base fear and dismayedness. Psalm 23:4, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me." The divine presence raised David above all his fears; Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Who is the enemy that I should be afraid of? where is the enemy that I should be afraid of? by what name or title is the enemy dignified or distinguished that I should be afraid of? I look before me and behind me, I look round about me and I look at a distance from me, and I cannot see the man, the devil, the persecutor that I should fear or be afraid of—for God is with me.

We may safely, readily, and cheerfully set the divine presence against all our enemies in the world. Ah, Christians, Christians, look about you, look about you, and see who is specially present with you—and then be afraid if you can! But,

[7.] **Seventhly**, Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then certainly there is no such great evil in troubles, distresses, sufferings, etc., as many conceive, fear, dream, think, judge.** Many men look upon troubles, afflictions, sufferings, in a *magnifying* glass, and then they cry out, "There is a lion in the way! There is a lion in the streets!" Proverbs 22:13, and 26:13. But, sirs, the lion is not always so fierce as he is painted, nor are afflictions always so grievous as men apprehend. There are many who have been very fearful of prisons, and have looked upon a prison as a hell on this side hell, who when they have been there for righteousness' sake, and the gospel's sake—they have found prisons to be palaces, and the imaginary hell to be a little heaven unto them.

Many *fear* afflictions, and *flee* from afflictions as from toads and serpents, as from enemies and devils; and yet certainly there is no such great evil in affliction as they apprehend, for the Lord is specially present with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Now what evil can there be in that condition wherein a man enjoys the divine presence—which makes every bitter sweet, and every burden light, and which turns winter nights into summer days, etc.? Yes, many times the

saints enjoy more of the singular presence of God in their afflictions, in their day of adversity—than ever they did in the day of prosperity, or in the day of their worldly glory. What bride is afraid to meet her bridegroom in a dark entry, or in a dirty lane, or in a narrow passage, or in a secret forest? And why then should a Christian be afraid of this or that afflicted condition, who is sure to meet his blessed bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, in every state, in every condition, who is sure to enjoy the presence of Christ with him in every turn or change that may pass upon him?

How many martyrs have ventured into the very flames to meet with Christ, Heb. 11:34, and who have many other ways made a sacrifice of their dearest lives, and all to meet with Christ! Oh the cruel mockings, the scourgings, the bonds, the imprisonments, the stoning, the sawing asunder—which many of the Lord's worthies have ventured upon, and all to meet with the presence of the Lord! And why then should any of you be afraid to enter into an afflicted condition, where you shall be sure to meet the singular presence of the Lord, which will certainly turn your afflicted condition into a comfortable condition? Rev. 12:11, and Heb. 11:36-38.

The great design of the Lord in afflicting his people—is to meet with them, and to draw them into a nearer communion with himself. It is that they may *see* more of him than ever, and *taste* more of him than ever, and *enjoy* more of him than ever; in order to which he subdues their corruptions by afflictions, and strengthens their graces, and heightens their holiness by all their troubles and trials, Isaiah 1:25, 27:8-9; Heb. 12:10-11; Hosea 2:14. Whenever he leads his spouse into a wilderness, it is that he may speak friendly and comfortably to her, or that he may speak to her heart, as the Hebrew runs. The great design of the Lord in bringing her into a wilderness was that he might make such discoveries of himself, of his love, and of his sovereign grace, as might cheer up her heart, yes, as might even make her heart leap and dance within her. Or, as some sense it, "I will take her alone for the purpose, even into a solitary wilderness, where I may more freely impart my mind to her," that she having her whole desire she may come up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved, Cant. 8:5, and so be brought into the bride-house with all solemnity. By all which it is most evident, that there is no such evil in a

wilderness estate, in an afflicted condition, as many imagine. But,

**[8.] Eighthly,** Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then what a high encouragement should this be to poor sinners to study Christ, to acquaint themselves with Christ,** to embrace Christ, to choose Christ, to close with Christ, to submit to Christ, and to make a resignation of themselves to Christ, and to secure their saving interest in Christ, that so they may enjoy his special presence in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, John 1:12; Psalm 112:2-3, and 2:12; 2 Cor. 8:5.

Oh, how many mercies are enrap't up in this mercy of enjoying the singular presence of the Lord in all the troubles and trials of this life! Psalm 23:4. It is a mercy to have the presence of a friend, it is a greater mercy to have the presence of a near and dear relation with us in a day of distress, in a day of darkness; but what a mercy is it then to have the presence of the Lord with one in a dark day! That is excellent counsel that the wisest prince who ever swayed a scepter gives, in Eccles. 11:8, "*Remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many.*" When light shall be turned into darkness, pleasure into pain, delights into wearisomeness, calms into storms, summer days into winter nights, and the lightsome days of life into the dark days of old age and death; oh, now the singular presence of the Lord with a man in these days of darkness will be a mercy more worth than ten thousand worlds!

To have a wise, a loving, a powerful, a faithful friend to own us in the dark, to stand by us in the dark, to uphold us in the dark, to refresh us in the dark, to encourage us in the dark, etc., is a very choice and singular mercy, Psalm 71:20-21. Oh then, what is it to have the presence of God Almighty with us in all those dark days which are to pass over our heads! What David said of the sword of Goliath in another case, "There is none like it!" 1 Sam. 21:8-9, that I may say of the divine presence with a man in the dark, "There is none like it!" The psalmist hit the mark, the bulls-eye, when he said, "My flesh and my heart fails: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." When his "flesh," that is his outward man, and when his "heart," his courage, that is his inward man, failed him, then God was "the strength of his heart," or "the rock of his heart,"

as the Hebrew runs. At the very last gasp God came in with his sovereign cordial, and revived him and recovered him, and brought new life and strength into him. When a saint is at worst, when he is at lowest, when he is even overwhelmed with troubles and sorrows, and when the days of darkness so multiply upon him that he seems past all hope of recovery, then the divine presence does most gloriously manifest itself and display itself in supporting, strengthening, comforting, and encouraging of him!

In Rev. 4:6, you read that the world is like a sea of glass, "I saw before the throne a sea of glass." The world is transitory, very frail and brittle as glass, and it is unstable, tumultuous, and troublesome as the sea. Here the world is shadowed out to us by a sea of glass; and how can we stand on this sea, how can we live on this sea, how can we walk on this sea—if Christ doesn't take us by the hand, and lead us and support us and secure us? O sirs, we cannot uphold ourselves on this sea of glass, nor can others uphold us on this sea of glass; it is none but dear Jesus, it is no presence but his singular presence, which can make us to stand or go on this sea of glass. And if this world be a sea of glass, oh what infinite cause have we to secure our saving interest in Christ, who alone can pilot us safely over this troublesome, dangerous, and tempestuous sea!

Oh, that I could prevail with poor sinners to take Christ into the ship of their souls, that so he may pilot them safely into the heavenly harbor, the heavenly Canaan. No pilot in heaven or earth can land you on the shore of a happy eternity, from off this sea of glass—but Jesus. When on this sea of glass the winds blow high, storms arise, and the huge waves beat into the ship, oh then the sinner cries, "A kingdom for a Christ," a world for a pilot to save us from eternal drowning! Oh, that before eternal storms and tempests beat upon poor sinners, they would be prevailed with to close with Christ, to accept of Christ, and to enter into a marriage-covenant, a marriage-union with Christ; that so they may enjoy his singular presence with them while they are on this sea of glass, Psalm 11:6, and 9:17; Hosea 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 11:2.

There is no presence so greatly desirable, so absolutely necessary, and so exceeding sweet and comfortable, as the presence of Christ; and therefore, before all and above all, secure this presence of Christ by matching with the person of Christ, and then you will be safe and happy

on a sea of glass. But,

**[9.] Ninthly,** Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then let me infer that unbelief, infidelity, and despondency of spirit in an evil day, does very ill befit the people of God.** Is the Lord present with you in your greatest troubles, and will you waver in your faith, and be crestfallen in your courage, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall? Isaiah 25:4. What is this but to tell all the world that there is more power in your troubles to sink and daunt you, than there is in the presence of the Lord to support and encourage you? When a Christian is upon the very banks of the Red Sea—yet then the divine presence should encourage him "to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," Exod. 14:13. It would be good for timorous Christians in an evil day to dwell much upon the prophet's commission: Isaiah 35:3, "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart—Be strong, fear not!" Ah—but how shall weak hands be strong, and a timorous heart cease to fear and faint? Why, Behold, your "God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you!" He is on his way, he will be suddenly with you; yes, he is already in the midst of you, and he will save you.

If you cast but your eye upon precious promises, if you cast but your eye upon the new covenant, which is God's great storehouse, there you will find all supports, all supplies, all helps, and all comforts, laid up, and laid in for you; and therefore never despond, never faint, never be discouraged in an evil day, in a dark time. [Isaiah 41:10, and 13:2; Heb. 13:5; Jer. 32:40-41, 31:31-38; Gen. 41:35-36, 48-49; Col. 1:19, and 2:8.] As Joseph had his storehouses to give a full supply to the Egyptians in time of famine, so dear Jesus, of whom Joseph was but a type, has his storehouses of mercy, of goodness, of power, of plenty, of bounty, out of which in the worst of times he is able to give his people a full supply according to all their needs; and therefore be not discouraged, do not despond in a day of trouble.

O my friends, how often has the Lord hid you in the secret of his presence, from the pride of men, and kept you secretly in his pavilion

from the strife of tongues! Psalm 27:5, and 31:20. "And therefore be strong, and lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees," Heb. 12:12. When **David** was in a very great distress, he neither desponds nor gives way to unbelief—but encourages himself in the Lord his God, 1 Sam. 30:6. The Hebrew word is derived from *Chazack*, which notes a laying hold on God with all his strength, as men do when they are in danger of drowning, who will suffer anything rather than let go their hold. When David was almost under water, when he was in danger of drowning, then, by a hand of faith, he lays hold on the Rock of Ages, and encourages himself in the Lord his God.

What heavenly gallantry of spirit did good **Nehemiah** show from that divine presence which was with him in that great day of trouble and distress, when "the remnant of the captivity were in great affliction and reproach: and the wall of Jerusalem broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire!" Neh. 1:3. You know Shemaiah advises him to take refuge in the temple, because the enemy had designed to fall upon him by night and slay him, and cause the work to cease; but Nehemiah, having a special presence of God with him, gives this heroic and resolute answer, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life?" Neh. 6:10-11. I will not go in. Should I flee into the temple like a malefactor to take sanctuary there, how would God be dishonored, religion reproached, the people discouraged, the weak scandalised, and the wicked emboldened to insult and triumph over me! saying, "Is this the man who is called by God, and qualified by God, for this work and service? Is this the man who is blessed and encouraged by the king to build the walls, and gates, and city of Jerusalem? Neh. 2:5-10. Is this the man who is the chief magistrate and governor of the city? Is this the man who is sent and set for the defense of the people, and that should encourage them in their work? Oh what a mouth of blasphemy would be opened, should I make a base retreat into the temple to save my life! I have found the face of God, the presence of God, in bowing the heart of king Artaxerxes, to contribute his royal aid, and commission me to the work; and in the bending of the hearts of the elders of the Jews to own my authority, and to rise up as one man to build; and therefore I will rather die upon the spot than go into the temple to save my life"

O my friends, it does not befit those who have the presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—to sink so low in their faith and confidence, as to cry out with the prophet's servant, "Alas, master! what shall we do?" or, with the disciples when in a storm, "We perish!" or, with the whole house of Israel, "Our our hope is lost!" or, with weeping Jeremiah, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord!" or, with Zion, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me!" 2 Kings 6:15; Mat. 8:25; Ezek. 37:11; Lam. 3:18; Isaiah 49:14. Oh, it is for a lamentation when God's dearest children shall manifest unbelief by a fainting, sinking, discouraged spirit in an evil day. But,

**[10.] Tenthly and lastly,** Will the Lord be specially present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? **Then let the people of the Lord be very thankful for his presence with them in their greatest troubles,** etc., Exod. 33:13-16; 2 Tim. 4:22; Psalm 16:11. O Sirs! this divine presence is a great mercy. It is a peculiar mercy, it is a distinguishing mercy, it is a big-bellied mercy, it is a mercy that has many mercies in its womb. It is a mercy-greatening mercy; it greatens all the mercies we enjoy. It is a mercy-sweetening mercy; it sweetens health, strength, riches, honors, trade, relations, liberty, etc. It is a soul-mercy, a mercy that reaches the soul, that cheers the soul, that lifts up the soul, that quiets the soul, that satisfies the soul, and that will go to heaven with the soul, Eph. 1:3. And will you not be thankful for such a mercy? Will you be thankful for temporal mercies, and will you not be thankful for spiritual mercies? Will you be thankful for left-handed mercies, and will you not be thankful for right-handed mercies? Will you be thankful for the mercies of the footstool, and will you not be thankful for the mercies of the throne? Will you be thankful for the mercies of this lower world, and will you not be thankful for the mercies of the upper world? Psalm 103:1-4. To enjoy the presence of God when we most need it, is a mercy that deserves perpetual praises.

Oh, it is infinite mercy not to be left alone in a day of trouble. It is very uncomfortable to be left alone: "Woe to him who is alone," Eccles. 4:10-11. If a man falls, and is left alone, who shall help him up? If a man is in

danger and alone, how miserable is his case! But this is the support and comfort of a Christian in all his difficulties, that he is never left alone; but his God is with him when he is at the lowest ebb, Heb. 13:5; Psalm 37:24, 31:3, 73:24; Exod. 33:2, 14-16. For God to afford us the presence of our friends in a day of trouble is a very great mercy; but what is it, then, to enjoy the presence of God in a day of trouble? What is the presence of a friend, a favorite, in a day of distress, compared to the presence of a prince? yes, what is the presence of an angel, compared to the presence of God in an evil day? To enjoy the presence of God in an afflicted condition is a more transcendent mercy than to enjoy the presence of twelve legions of angels in an afflicted condition. *The divine presence is the greatest good in the world.* It is life eternal; it is the bosom of God, the gate of glory, the beginning of heaven, the suburbs of happiness; and therefore be much in blessing of God, in admiring of God, for his presence with you in a dark and trying day.

There is no gall, no wormwood, no affliction, no judgment, compared to that of God's departing from a people, Lam. 3:19-20: Jer. 6:8, "Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from you, lest I make you desolate, a land not inhabited." When God departs, nothing follows but desolation upon desolation; desolation of persons, desolation of peace, of prosperity, of trade, and of all which is near and dear unto us: Hosea 9:12, "Though they bring up their children—yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left; yes, woe also to them when I depart from them." All terrible threatenings are summed up in this, "Woe unto them—when I depart from them." Surely every woe to them; he put a sureness upon this "woe to them when I depart from them." As if the Holy Spirit should say, "What, do I threaten this or the other evil? The great evil of all, the rise of all evils—is God's forsaking of them." Hell itself is nothing else but a separation from God's presence, with the dreadful consequences thereof. And were hell as full of tears as the sea is full of water—yet all would not be sufficient to bewail the loss of that beatifical vision!

How miserable was Cain when cast off by God! Gen. 4; and Saul, when the Lord departed from him! It was a most dreadful speech of Saul, "I am greatly distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God has

departed from me," 1 Sam. 28:15-16. [Those who are out of God's care, are under his curse.] When God left the Israelites, though for a little while, the Holy Spirit says they were naked, Exod. 32:25. How naked? Not for lack of raiment, or weapons of war—but for lack of God's presence and protection. When God departs from a people, that people lies naked; that is, they lie open for all storms, tempests, and dangers. Now if it is the greatest *evil* in the world to be shut out from the gracious presence of Christ—then it must be the greatest *mercy* in this world, to enjoy the gracious presence of God in our great troubles and desperate dangers. And therefore let all sincere Christians be much in thankfulness to the Lord, and in blessing and praising the Lord, for his special presence with them in their low and afflicted estate.

Oh, the light, the life, the love, the holiness, the peace, the grace, the comforts, the supports—which always attend the gracious presence of the Lord with his people in their deep distresses, etc. Therefore let the high praises of God forever be in their mouths, who enjoy this special presence of God.

The *46th Psalm* is called by some *Luther's psalm*; that is a psalm that Luther was accustomed to call to his friends to sing when any danger, trouble, or distress was near. When the clouds began to gather, "Come, says Luther, let us sing the 46th Psalm, and then let our enemies do their worst!" Observe the confidence and triumph of the church in the face of the greatest dangers, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. **The Lord Almighty is with us**; the God of Jacob is our fortress." Psalm 46:1-3, 7. Now mark, by the change of the earth and removing of the mountains, are often meant the greatest alterations and convulsions of states and polities, Hag. 2:22-23; Jer. 51:25; Rev. 6:14. Now, says the psalmist, all these dreadful turns, changes, shakings, and convulsions of states and kingdoms shall never trouble us, nor daunt us; they shall never make us fret, faint, or fear. Why, what is the ground? "The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress!" And also in verse 11, the same words are repeated again. "God is not gone, God is not withdrawn, God is not departed from

us." Oh no! "The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress!" Therefore we are divinely fearless and divinely careless. Though hell and earth should combine against us—yet we will bear up, and be bold to believe that all shall go well with us; for God is in the midst of us, "The Lord Almighty is with us," even the Lord, who commands far greater armies than any enemy has. The God of Jacob is our fortress;" Heb., "Our high tower." God is a tower, so high, so strong, so inaccessible, so invincible, that all our enemies, yes, all the powers of darkness, can never hurt, reach, storm, or take; and therefore we who are sheltered in this high tower may well cast the gauntlet to our proudest, strongest, and subtlest enemies. And let thus much suffice for the **inferences**.

The next use is a use of **exhortation**, to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, as to keep the divine presence—as to keep the special, the singular presence of God, with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. Now that this may stick in power upon your souls, consider seriously of these following **motives**:

[1.] **First**, to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider—**that the special presence of God with his people, puts the greatest imaginable honor, dignity, and glory upon them.** Isaiah 43:2, 4; Jer. 13:11; Ezek. 48:35. There are many titles of honor among men; but this, above all, is the truly honorable title—that we have God so near unto us. Deut. 4:7, "What nation is there so great, who has God so near unto them, as the Lord our God is to us?" While his presence was among them—how honorable, how renowned were they all the world over! But when he departed from them they became the scorn and contempt of all nations. It may be said of some men, they have large estates—but not the presence of

God with them; they are highly honored and dignified in the world—but no presence of God with them; they have great trades and vast riches—but no presence of God with them; they are nobly related—but no presence of God with them; they have singular abilities and accomplishments—but no presence of God with them. The lack of the divine presence gives a stain, casts a blot upon all their grandeurs and worldly glory; and turns all their wine, be it ever so rich—into ink and blackness.

What a deal of honor and glory did the presence of God cast upon *Joseph* in prison, Gen. 39:19-20; and upon *Daniel* in the den; and upon the *three Hebrew children* in the fiery furnace; and upon *David*, when a persecuting Saul could cry out, "You are more righteous than I," 1 Sam. 24:17; and upon John, when a bloody Herod feared him and observed him, Mark 6:20; and upon *Paul*, when a tyrannical Felix trembled before him, Acts 24:25; as if Paul had been the judge, and Felix the prisoner at the bar.

Some write of the *crystal*, that whatever stone it touches, it puts a luster and loveliness upon it. The presence of God puts the greatest luster, beauty, glory, and loveliness—which can be put upon a person. Now because the witness of an adversary is a double testimony, let Balaam—who, as some write of a toad, had a pearl in his head, though his heart was vile, very vile, stark vile—give in his evidence. "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, and your tabernacles, O Israel," Num. 24:5. He speaks both by way of interrogation and admiration: their tents are so lovely, and their tabernacles so lovely, that their grand enemy was affected and ravished with them. But whence is it that Israel is so formidable and dreadful in his eye? How does this come about—that he who came to fight against them thinks them beyond all comparison; more—that he himself admires their great glory and brave gallantry? Why, all is from the presence of their Lord-General with them: "The Lord their God is with them!" Num. 23:21.

It is the highest honor, renown, and dignity of a people to have God in the midst of them, to have God near unto them. Thus Moses sets out the honor and dignity of the Jews: "The LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are

to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised." Deuteronomy 26:18-19. When God reckons up the dignities of his people, this is the main, the top, of all: Psalm 87:5, "Indeed, of Zion it will be said—This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her." If you would keep your honor and dignity, keep the presence of God in the midst of you. When God is departed from Israel, then you may write *Ichabod* upon Israel; "The glory is departed from Israel," 1 Sam. 4:21-22. But,

**[2.] Secondly,** to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider—**that nothing can make up the lack of this special presence of God.** It is not the presence of friends, of relations, of ministers, of ordinances, of outward comforts—which can make up the lack of God's presence. It is neither candlelight, nor torchlight, nor starlight, nor moonlight, which can make up the light of the sun. When the sun is set behind a thick cloud, all the world cannot make it day; and when the presence of God is withdrawn, nothing can make up that dismal loss. "You hid your face—and I was troubled," Psalm 30:6-7, that is, you suspended the actual influence and communication of your grace and favor. The Chaldee has it, "You hid your *Shechinah*, your divine presence—and I was all—amort, dead, stunned, confused." It was not David's crown, his kingdom, his riches, his dignities, his royal attendance, etc., which could make up the loss of the face of God; neither is it the presence of an angel that can make up the lack of the presence of God.

Exod. 33:2, "I will send an *angel* before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites." God here promises Moses that he would send an angel before them—but he adds that he himself would not go up in the midst of them. Yes—but such a guide, such a guardian, such a companion, such a captain-general would not satisfy Moses.

"Moses said unto God--If Your Presence does not go with us, do not send

us up from here!" Exod. 33:15. Nothing would satisfy Moses, below the presence of God, because he knew that it would be better that they should never move a foot farther--as to go on without God's favorable presence. God promises that His *angel* will drive all their enemies out of the land. "Oh, but if Your Presence does not go with us--do not send us up from here!"

"Yes, but, I will bring the necks of all your proud, stout, strong, and subtle enemies under your feet." "Oh, but if Your Presence does not go with us--do not send us up from here!"

"Yes, but, I will bring you to a land flowing with milk and honey. I will make you to ride on the high places of the earth, and I will make you to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; and you shall drink the finest wine." "Oh, but if Your Presence does not go with us--do not send us up from here!"

"Yes, but, I will bring you to the paradise of the world, to a place of pleasure and delight, to Canaan, a type of heaven!" "Oh, but if Your Presence does not go with us--do not send us up from here! O Lord, if I might have my wish, my desire, my choice, I had infinitely rather to live in a barren, howling wilderness with Your Presence, than in Canaan without it! It is a mercy to have an angel to guard us, it is a mercy to have our enemies sprawling under our feet, it is a mercy to be brought into a pleasant land. Oh, but if Your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here! Lord, nothing will please us, nothing will profit us, nothing will secure us, nothing will satisfy us--without your presence!

I have read of the Tyrians, that they bound their gods with chains, that they might have them in their greatest need--and not be conquered by their enemies. And among the rest, they chained and nailed their god Apollo to a post--that they might be sure to keep their idol, because they thought their safety was in it.

I am sure--that our safety, our comfort, our all--lies in the special Presence of God with us! Therefore let us, by faith and prayer--chain God to ourself! If we let Him go, a thousand worlds cannot make up His absence!

You may have heard of the heathens in Troy; they imagined that so long as that idol was kept safe, they were unconquerable; all the strength and power of Greece would never be able to prevail against them. Therefore the Grecians sought by all the means they could, to get this idol from them. O my friends, so long as you keep the Presence of God with you—I am sure you are unconquerable! But if God withdraws His special presence—the weakest enemy will be too hard for you; yes, wounded men will prevail over you! Jer. 37:10, "Even if you were to destroy the entire Babylonian army, leaving only a handful of wounded survivors, they would still stagger from their tents and burn this city to the ground!"

The burning bush, which was a type of the church, was not consumed while it burned with fire—because God was in the midst of it. Oh, do but keep God's special Presence with you—and nothing shall hurt you, nothing shall burn you! But if God's special Presence departs—nothing can secure you! Nothing can make up his withdrawing from you. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, if you do not labor to live and conduct yourselves so that you may enjoy the favorable, special, and eminent presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—you have high reason to question whether you have ever really enjoyed this favorable, this special presence of God with you or not;** for there are always four things to be found in him who has really tasted, and in good earnest experienced, the sweet, the life, the power, the virtue—which is in the favorable special presence of God—

**(1.)** Such a person sets the highest price and value imaginable upon it, he prizes it above all the honors, riches, dignities, delights, comforts, and contentments of this world, Psalm 4:6-7; yes, he prizes it above life itself: Psalm 63:3, "Your loving-kindness is better than life." The Hebrew is plural, *lives*. The loving-kindness of God, the presence of God in a wilderness, is better than lives, than many lives, than all lives with all their contentments. There is a greater excellency in the favor of God, in the presence of God—than in all lives put together. There have been many people that have been weary of their lives—but there never was any man who has been weary of the favor of God, of the presence of God, 1 Kings 19:4; Job 7:15; Jonah 4:8; Proverbs 33:14.

(2.) Such a person keeps up in his soul a humble fear of losing of it. The divine presence is a jewel more worth than all the world, and he who has experienced the sweetness of it had rather lose all he has in this world than lose the divine presence. I have read of a pious woman, that having born nine children, professed that she had rather endure all the pains of those nine travails at once, than endure the misery of the loss of God's presence.

(3.) Such a person keeps up in his soul a diligent care to maintain this presence; his head, his heart is still a-contriving how he may keep his God with him: Jer. 14:9, "Why should you be as a man astonished, as a mighty man who cannot save? yet you, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name; leave us not." This person had rather that his dearest friends should leave him, that his nearest relations should leave him, yes, that all the world should leave him—than that his God should leave him. The daily, yes, the hourly language of the soul is, Lord, "leave me not; though all the world should leave me—yet don't you leave me!"

(4.) Such a person will do all he can, that all who are under his care and charge may partake of this special presence of God; he will do his utmost that children, spouse, relatives, may taste the sweetness of the divine presence, John 1:40 to the end, and 4:28-43; Acts 10:24-36. When Samson had found honey in the carcass of the lion, he did not only eat himself—but he gave of the honey to his father and mother, and they did eat also, Judg. 14:8-9. Of all sweets, the presence of God is the greatest sweet; and whenever a poor soul comes to taste of this heavenly honey, he will do his best that all others, especially those who are near and dear to him, may taste of the same honey. But,

[4.] **Fourthly**, to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider—**the excellent properties or qualities of this favorable, this special presence of God with his people.** This I can but hint at, because I must hasten all I can to a close.

**(1.) It is the BEST presence.** Psalm 63:3. It is better than the presence of friends, of relations, of saints, of angels, etc.

**(2.) It is the GREATEST presence.** It is the presence of the great King, it is the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, it is the presence not only of a mighty but of an almighty God, 1 Kings 8:27; Rev. 17:14, and 19:16; Num. 24:4, 16; Ruth 1:20, 24.

**(3.) It is the HAPPIEST presence.** It is a presence that makes a man really happy, presently happy, totally happy, eminently happy, and eternally happy, Psalm 144:15; 1 Kings 10:8; Deut. 33:29; Proverbs 3:18. He can never be truly happy, who lacks this presence; he can never be truly miserable, who enjoys this presence. True happiness is too great a thing to be found in anything below this favorable, this special presence of God. He who enjoys this presence enjoys all; he who lacks this presence enjoys nothing at all; he who lacks this presence may write *nothing* upon his honors, riches, pleasures, dignities, offices, relations, friends, etc., Amos 6:13. All a man has, are but ciphers without a number, if he is not blessed with this divine presence. This divine presence was Jacob's "enough," yes, Jacob's "all." Gen. 33:11, "I have all." Esau had much, "I have much, my brother;" verse 9, "But Jacob had all." "He has all, who has him who is all in all." "All good is in the chief good," (Augustine.) Secure this divine presence, and you secure all, Col. 3:11.

**(4.) It is the MOST DESIRABLE presence.** Consult these scriptures. [Psalm 42:1-2, 63:1-2, 8, and 27:4; Gen. 8:20; Psalm 84.] Job 23:3, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat." Exod. 33:15, "If your presence does not go with us, carry us not up hence;" verse 16, "For wherein shall it be known here, that I and my people have found grace in your sight, is it not in that you go with us?" Cant. 3:1, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves, I sought him—but I found him not." The presence of bad men is never desirable; the presence of godly men is not always desirable, for there are cases wherein their presence may be a burden to us, as Job and others have experienced, Jer. 9:1-2; Job 16:1-4, and 19:3-5. Job 16:2, "Miserable comforters are you all;" chapter 19:2, "How long will you vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?"

But the presence of the Lord is very desirable, most desirable, and always desirable, and the more any man has of this divine presence, the more his heart will be inflamed after more and more of it. A sound sincere Christian can never have enough power against sin, nor ever enough strength against temptation, nor ever enough weanedness from this world, nor ever enough ripeness for heaven, nor ever enough of the presence of the Lord. Enough of the divine presence he may have to quiet him, and cheer him, and encourage him—but while he is out of heaven he can never have enough of the divine presence to satisfy him, so as not to cry out, "Lord, more of your presence! oh, a little more of your presence!" Proverbs 30:15-16.

**(5.) It is the most JOYFUL, REFRESHING, and DELIGHTFUL presence.** Psalm 16:11; Acts 5:40-41, and 16:25. This Vincentius and many thousand martyrs and suffering Christians have experienced in all the ages of the world—but of this before, Isaiah 60:1-2; Psalm 46:7.

**(6.) It is a SPECIAL and DISTINGUISHING presence.** Exod. 33:16. This favorable special presence of God is a choice jewel that he hangs on no *breasts*, a bracelet that he puts upon no *arms*, a crown that he sets upon no *heads*—but such whom he loves with a special love, with an everlasting love. The *general* presence of God extends and reaches to all sinners and saints, angels and devils; to all, both in that upper and this lower world; but this *favorable special* presence of God is peculiar to those who are the purchase of Christ's blood, and the travail of his soul, Jer. 31:3; John 13:1; Psalm 139:7-10; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Isaiah 53:11; Ruth 1:4-18.

**(7.) It is an INFLAMING presence.**

[1.] Oh, how does it, inflame the heart to duty! Psalm 63:1-3.

[2.] How does it inflame the heart against sin! Job 31:4-7; Gen. 39:9-10; Romans 8:10.

[3.] Oh, how does it, inflame the heart to long for the majestic and glorious presence of God in heaven, Cant. 8:14; Luke 2:28-30; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 22:20.

[4.] How does it inflame their love to the Lord, his ways, his worship, his interest, his glory! Cant. 1:3-4, 2:3-6, and 8:1-3, 5-7.

[5.] It inflames against temptations, verse 10-11. It was this divine presence, which did steel and strengthen Basil, Luther, and a world of others, against the worst of temptations, Heb. 11.

[6.] It inflames the hearts of the saints into great freeness, readiness, and willingness to suffer many things, to suffer great things, to suffer anything—for Christ, his gospel, his interest, etc. Oh, how did this divine presence make many martyrs hasten to the flames! etc.

**(8.) It is a SOUL-QUIETING, a soul-silencing, and a soul-stilling presence.** Psalm 3:5, 4:8; Cant. 2:3, 3:4-5. When friends can't quiet us, when relations can't quiet us, when ministers can't quiet us, when duties can't quiet us, when ordinances can't quiet us, when outward comforts can't quiet us—yet then this divine presence will quiet us. When dolls and rattles can't quiet the child—yet then the breasts can. Just so, here.

**(9.) This divine presence is a SWEETENING presence.**

**(1.)** It sweetens all duties and services, public and private, ordinary and extraordinary.

**(2.)** It sweetens all personal afflictions and trials.

**(3.)** It sweetens all our sufferings for righteousness' sake.

**(4.)** It sweetens all gospel ordinances, Exod. 20:24.

**(5.)** It sweetens all a man's outward mercies and blessings; it sweetens health, strength, riches, trade, etc.

**(6.)** It sweetens all changeable providences. Here providence smiles, and there it frowns; here it lifts up, and there it casts down; this providence is sweet, and that is bitter; this providence kills, and that providence makes alive. Oh—but this divine presence sweetens every providence!

(7.) It sweetens all other presences; it sweetens the presence of friends, it sweetens the presence of relations, it sweetens the presence of strangers, it sweetens all civil societies, it sweetens all pious societies.

(8.) It sweetens the thoughts of death, and the arrests of death; it turns the king of *terrors* into the king of *desires*, Job 14:5, 14, 30:23, and 17:13-14. How does Job court the worms, as if he were of a family with them, and near of kin to them! How does he look upon the grave as his bed, and makes no more to die than to go to bed! It was this divine presence that made the martyrs as willing to die as to dine. But,

[5.] **Fifthly**, to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider—**that in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, you will most need the favorable special presence of God with you.** We always stand in need of the divine presence—but never so much as when we are under great troubles and deep distresses. For,

(1.) In days of trouble and distress, men's affections are most apt to be greatly disordered, and their hearts discomposed, as you see in Job and Jonah, Job 3; Jonah 4.

(2.) Now their fears, doubts, and disputes are apt to rise highest. When the wind rises high, and the sea roars, men are most apt to be afraid, Jonah 2:2-7.

(3.) Now Satan commonly is busiest. Satan loves to fish in *troubled* waters. When the hand of God is heaviest upon us, then Satan will shoot his most deadly darts at us, Job 2:9; James 1:12. The sons of Jacob fell upon the Shechemites when they were sore, Gen. 34:25; and Amalek fell upon God's Israel and smote them, when they were weak, and feeble, and faint, and weary, Deut. 25:17-19. Just so, Satan falls foul upon Christ, when he was in the wilderness, and when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, and was a-hungry, Mat. 4:1-11. As Satan has dealt with Christ, the head—so he still deals with the members.

(4.) Now unbelief is most turbulent, strong, and mighty in operation, as you may see in the spies, Num. 13:31-33, "But the other men who had explored the land with him answered, "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" So they spread discouraging reports about the land among the Israelites: "The land we explored will swallow up any who go to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. We felt like grasshoppers next to them, and that's what we looked like to them!" Just so, 2 Kings 6:33, "This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Also, 2 Kings 7:1-2, 19-20. Just so, David, in Psalm 116:11, "I said in my haste, all men are liars." The prophets have all deceived me, and Samuel has deluded me, they have told me of a kingdom, a crown—but I shall never wear the one, nor possess the other: so 1 Sam. 27:1, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Thus his *fear* is got above his *faith*, and his soul wherried about with unbelief—to the scandal of the weak, and the scorn of the wicked, besides his own particular disadvantage.

(5.) Now fainting-fits will be most strengthened, increased, and multiplied. Now fainting-fits, like Job's messengers, or like the rolling waves, will come thick one upon another, Proverbs 24:10; Job 4:5; Lam. 1:12-13.

(6.) Now conscience will be most startled and disquieted, Gen. 42:21, and 50:15; 1 Kings 17:18. Great troubles and deep distresses are many times like strong medicine, which stirs the humours and makes the patient sick, very sick, yes, heart-sick. Conscience commonly never reads the soul such sad and serious lectures, as when the rod lies heaviest upon the back.

By all which you see, what high cause the people of God have so to live and conduct themselves, as that they may find the gracious presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, and deepest distresses, for then they will certainly need most of the divine presence. But,

[6.] **Sixthly**, to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider— **this divine presence**

**will make you divinely fearless in the midst of your greatest troubles and deepest distresses.** Psalm 23:4, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil—for you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me." Psalm 46:2, "We will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." verse 3, "Though the waters thereof roar," etc. Why? "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early," verse 5; "The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." verse 7. Num. 14:9, "Neither fear the people, for they are bread for us, their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not." Deut. 7:21, "You shall not be affrighted at them, for the Lord your God is among you, a mighty God and dreadful." Heb. 13:5, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." verse 6, "I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

There is no such way to keep down all base slavish fears of men, as to keep up the presence of God in the midst of you. You will not fear the *power* of men, nor the *policy* of men, nor the *threats* of men, nor the *wrath* of men—if you do but enjoy this gracious, this special presence of God, which is under our present consideration. Men's fears are never so rampant as when God withdraws his presence from them, 1 Sam. 28:15, 20. But,

**[7.] Seventhly,** to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider—**that there is in God a very great unwillingness to withdraw his presence from his people when they are in great troubles and deep distresses.** Ezek. 8:6, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing? Do you see the great sins the people of Israel are doing to drive me from my Temple?" Isaiah 1:2-4, 16, 18; Ezek. 18:31, and 33:11; Jer. 3:13-14. Of all sins, the sin of idolatry drives God farthest off from his sanctuary. When God goes off from a people, he goes not off rashly, he goes not off suddenly—but he goes off gradually; he removes not at once—but by degrees; now a step, and then a step, as Lot did when he lingered in Sodom, Gen. 19:16. Lot was not more reluctant to depart out of Sodom, than God is loath to leave

his people. [1 Sam, 4:4; Psalm 8:20; Isaiah 37:16.] He goes first to the threshold: Ezek. 9:3, "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub whereupon he was to the threshold of the house." Then over the threshold: 10:4, "Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house." Here is a second step. This is the second time of resting, before God departs. The Lord had his ordinary dwelling-place in the holy of holies. Now God's first remove was from the most holy place; his second remove was from the holy place; his third remove was higher towards heaven: verse 19, "And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight, then to the door of the east gate," or foremost gate, "of the Lord's house," to note God's total remove from his house. Then to the midst of the city: Ezek. 11:23, "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and then he stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city." This is God's last stop in his departure, by which is signified that he was willing to make one trial more, to see if the people would, in this present danger, call him back by invitation and lively repentance.

God is greatly troubled when it comes to parting: Hosea 11:8,9 "Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah and Zeboim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows! No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy." This is spoken *anthropomorphically* and not *properly*, because thoughts and repentance are not incident to God, "who is without all variableness, or shadow of change," James 1:17. The Lord seems here to be at a stand-still, or at strife with himself, about the destruction of this people. Howbeit God, in the affections of his mercy, yearning, and taking pity of his elect among them, spares to lay upon them the extremity of his wrath, and is ready to save them for his mercy's sake. Observe how fatherlike he melts and mourns over them, and how mercy interposes her four several "hows!" Here are four such heart-felt interrogations as the like are not to be found in the whole book of God, and not to be answered by any but God himself, as indeed he does to each particular in the following words: "My heart is torn within me;" that is the first answer. The second is, "My compassion overflows." The third is, "I

will not carry out my fierce anger." The fourth is, "I will not destroy Ephraim." *And why?* First, "I am God and not a mere mortal;" secondly, "I am the Holy One living among you."

God is very unwilling to break up house, and to leave his people desolate. Now is God so unwilling to withdraw his presence; and shall not we do all what we can to retain him in the midst of us? When dear friends are unwilling to leave us, we are the more earnest in pressing them to stay and abide with us. God is marvelously unwilling to go, and therefore let us, with the church, cry out, "Leave us not!" Jer. 14:9. But,

**[8.] Eighthly,** to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider—**that troubles will be no troubles, distresses will be no distresses, dangers will be no dangers—if you can but secure the presence of God with you.** Mountains will be molehills, stabs at the heart will be but as scratches upon the hand—if the divine presence is with you. God's special presence will turn—storms into calms, winter nights into summer days, prisons into palaces, banishments into enlargements. The favorable presence of God will turn—sickness into health, weakness into strength, poverty into plenty, and death into life. It can never be *night* so long as the *sun* shines. No afflictions, no trials, can make it night with a Christian—so long as he enjoys the presence of God with his spirit, 2 Tim. 4:22. That courtier need not complain that this man slights him, and that the other neglects him—who enjoys the delightful presence of his prince. When Samson had the presence of God with him, he made nothing of carrying the gates of the city, with the posts and bars, to the top of a hill, Judges 16:3. Just so, while a Christian enjoys the singular presence of God with him, he will make nothing of this affliction and that affliction, of this trouble and that trouble, of this loss and that loss. This presence makes *heavy* afflictions light, and *long* afflictions short, and *bitter* afflictions sweet, 2 Cor. 4:16-17.

It was this presence that made the martyrs all the great and grievous things that they suffered for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake—to be but light, Heb. 11:33-39. A man in misery, without this gracious presence of

God, is in a very hell on this side hell. God's gracious presence makes every condition to be a little heaven to the believing soul. There is nothing, there can be nothing—but heaven, where God is specially present. But,

**[9.] Ninthly,** to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider—**that the worst of men cannot curse or harm you, while you keep the presence of God with you.** Num. 23:21, "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." There could be no enchantment against them, for the Lord their God was with them, and the shout of a king was among them, that is, God reigns as a king among them. Hereby also is meant the faith, joy, boldness, courage, and confidence of God's people in their king. As when a king comes among the armies of his people, he is received with joyful shoutings and acclamations, and when he goes forth to battle with them, he goes accompanied with the sound of trumpets and shouts of the people, signs of their joy and courage; so it fared with the Israelites, because of that special presence of God that was among them, which was evident by his protecting and defending of them: 1 Sam. 4:5, "And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." Here is a valorous shout of a powerful people, encouraging each other to the battle, and a victorious shout as having obtained the victory in the battle.

Just so, 2 Chron. 13:12, "And behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you, O children of Israel." Num. 23:23, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel;" that is, there is none against Israel that shall be of force, or that shall take any effect to do the posterity of Jacob or Israel any hurt, any harm, any damage. But why? Because the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. The presence of God with his Israel blasts all Balaam's enchantments, and makes null and void all his divinations.

God is with his people to counsel them in all doubtful and difficult cases, and to defend them, and secure them against all their enemies and

opposers. Balaam had a mind to curse the people of God, as his unwearied endeavors to that purpose do abundantly evidence, Num. 23:1, 13, 28-29, and 24:1; but the presence of God with his people prevented all his mischievous designs. Shimei curses David—but his curses could not hurt him, for God was with him, 2 Sam. 16:7, 9, 11-12. The people generally cursed Jeremiah, chapter 15:10, and 1:17-19; but all their curses could not harm him, for God was with him. The Jews in their prayers daily curse the Christian churches—but all their curses can't prejudice them, because God is in the midst of them, Exod. 20:24. And who will say that the reformed churches are one pin the worse for all the pope's excommunications and execrations?

The special presence of God with his people is a most sovereign antidote against all the curses and cursings of cursed men, and therefore whatever you part with—be sure that you don't part with your God; let him be but in the midst of you, and then no curses shall be prevalent against you.

This age abounds with such monsters, whose mouths are full of curses; but if every curse should stick a visible blister on the curser's tongue, as it does insensible ones on the curser's soul, their tongues would quickly be too big for their mouths, and they would soon grow weary of cursing the people of God, the things of God, the ways of God, the providences of God, and the faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God. But the best of it is, when they have done their worst, and spat out all their curses, "the curse causeless will not come," Proverbs 26:2, for the ever-blessed God is *in* his people, and *with* his people, and *among* his people, and "a wall of fire always *around* his people," Zech. 2:5, and therefore they are safe and secure enough when men and devils have done their worst. But,

**[10.] Tenthly and lastly**, to exhort all the people of God so to live and conduct themselves, so as to keep the divine presence—so as to keep the special, the singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, consider—**that the divine presence will make up the absence of all outward comforts.** This gracious presence will supply and fill up the place of a friend, a child, a father, a husband. Some of the rabbis write that manna had all sorts of tastes and all sorts of sweets in it. Be that as it may, I am sure that the favorable presence of God has all sorts of sweets in it, Psalm 4:6-7;

Proverbs 4:23. It has the sweet of all ordinances in it, it has the sweet of all duties in, it has the sweet of all church privileges in it, it has the sweet of all relations in it, it has the sweet of all your outward comforts in it; and therefore, above all keeping, keep the presence of God with you.

Many in their distresses and miseries are full of complaints. One cries out, he lacks a faithful friend; another cries out, he lacks a helpful family member; a third cries out that he lacks necessaries both for back and belly; a fourth cries out he lacks the means which others enjoy; but he who enjoys the gracious presence of God finds all these lacks made up to him—yes, he finds the divine presence to be infinitely better than the presence of all outward comforts. As Elkanah said to Hannah, "Am not I better than ten sons?" 1 Sam. 1:8, so assuredly the presence of the Lord is wonderfully better than all other things, to every soul that has tasted the sweetness of it.

You know that one sun is more glorious, delightful, useful, and comfortable than ten thousand stars; just so here. Seneca tells a courtier that had lost his son, that he had no cause to mourn, either for that or anything else, so long as his king was in safety, and he in favor with his king; he had all things in him, and he would be unthankful to his good fortune if he were not cheerful both in heart and look, so long as things stood so with him as they did.

How much more may we say to every sincere Christian who enjoys the gracious presence of God with him, let your needs and your crosses be ever so great, your afflictions ever so pressing, your necessities ever so biting—you have no just cause to be troubled or dejected, so long as you are in favor with God, and enjoy the presence of God. All mercies, all comforts, all contentments, all enjoyments—they meet and center in the gracious presence of God, as all lights meet in the sun, and as all waters meet in the sea; and therefore let not that soul mourn or complain of the lack of anything, who enjoys that gracious presence of God—which is better than every earthly thing. Thus much for the **motives**.

But some may say, "O sir, **what MEANS should we use that we may enjoy the gracious presence of the Lord with us in our greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers?**" I answer,

**1. First, There are some things that you must carefully SHUN and take heed of.**

**[1.] First, Take heed of high sinnings, take heed of scandalous sins.** High sinnings do greatly dishonor God, wound conscience, reproach religion, stagger the weak, grieve the strong, open the mouths of the wicked, and provoke God to withdraw his gracious presence, Psalm 51:11-12; Exod. 32:8, and 33:3; Isaiah 63:10. Turn to these scriptures, and seriously ponder upon them. Great transgressions eclipse the favor of God as well as the honor of God. In great transgressions we turn our backs upon God, and God turns away his face from us. Gross sins will provoke God to withdraw his presence, both in respect of vigor and strength, as also in respect of peace and comfort. But,

**[2.] Secondly, Take heed of impenitency.** Next to our being preserved from sin, it is the greatest mercy in the world, when we have fallen by our transgressions, to make a quick and speedy return to God. When by your sins you have made work for repentance, for hell, or for the physician of souls—immediately make up the breach, take up the controversy between God and your souls, humble yourselves, judge yourselves, and speedily return to the Most High, Hosea 6:1; Exod. 32:9-15. Thus Peter did, and recovered the favorable presence of God immediately, Mat. 26:75; Mark 16:7.

But if men will commit sin and lie in it, if they will fall and have no mind to rise—God will certainly withdraw his favorable presence from them, as you see in David and Solomon, Psalm 51:11-12; 1 Kings 11:9; Josh. 7:1-5. This is further evident in that case of Achan, Josh. 7, "The Israelites they came to fight with the men of Ai, and fled before them, for the Lord was not with them." Why, what was the cause of God's withdrawing himself? See verse 11, "Israel has sinned." And verse 12, "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies—but turned their backs." Their sins having betrayed them into the hand of divine justice, and into

their enemies' hands also; mark what follows, "Neither will I be with you any more, except you destroy the accursed thing from among you." If we will not stone our Achans, our sins, by the lively exercise of faith and repentance; if we will keep up our lusts in despite of all who God does against us—we must never expect to retain the gracious presence of God with us. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, Take heed either of neglecting gospel-worship, or of corrupting gospel-worship.** *Omissions* will damn as well as *commissions*; and omissions will provoke God to withdraw his presence, as well as commissions. When people are careless in their attendance on gospel ordinances, no wonder if God withdraws his presence from them in their distresses, Cant. 5:2-3, 6, and 4:1-3. Cain went off from ordinances, and the Lord set a mark upon him, Gen. 4:15-16. Oh, the black and dismal marks of misery, which God has set upon many who have neglected gospel-worship; and for profit's sake, and for Diana's sake, are fallen roundly in with the worship of the world! 2 Tim. 4:10; Acts 19:24, 36.

O sirs, the great God stands upon nothing more in all the world than upon purity in his worship. There is nothing which does so provoke and exasperate God against a people, as corrupt worship. Corrupt worship sadly reflects upon the *name* of God, the *honor* of God, the *truth* of God, and the *wisdom* of God; and therefore his heart rises against such worship and worshipers, and he will certainly withdraw from them, and be a swift and terrible witness against them, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Psalm 106:39-43; Psalm 78:58-64; 2 Chron. 7:19-22, and 32:16-21; Deut. 29:22-29.] Corrupt worship is contrary to the *unity* of God. Now deny his unity, and you deny his deity, "For the Lord is one, and his name is one," Zech. 14:9. It is contrary to the *sovereignty* of God, "He is the only ruler, the only potentate," 1 Tim. 6:15. It is contrary to the *all-sufficiency* of God. The heathen worshiped several gods, as thinking that several gods did bestow several blessings. They begged health of one God, wealth of another God, and victory of a third God, thus imagining to themselves several deities for several supplies. Their God was but a Jupiter, a partial helper, an auxiliary God—but "our God is Jehovah," who is abundantly able to supply all our needs, Eph.

3:20.

Now, if either we neglect his true instituted worship, or fall in with a false worship, with a devised worship, with a human worship, with a worldly worship—God will certainly withdraw his gracious presence from us. Will-worship accuses and charges God with weakness and folly—as if God were not *careful* enough, nor *faithful* enough, nor *mindful* enough, nor *wise* enough—to order, direct, and guide his people in the matters of his worship—but must be indebted to the wisdom, prudence, and care of man—of vain man, of sinful man, of vile and unworthy man, of weak and foolish man—to complete, perfect, and make up something that was lacking in his worship! Heb. 3:4-6; John 4:23-24. Now assuredly God will never keep house with those who give in such severe accusations and charges against him. But,

**[4.] Fourthly, Take heed of a willing, willful, and presumptuous sinning against divine commands and divine warnings.** The disobedient child is turned out of doors; the disobedient servant shall have none of his master's smiles, the disobedient wife has little of her husband's company. A willing, wilful, presumptuous running cross to divine commands speaks out much pride, atheism, hardness, blindness, carnal security, and contempt of the great God. It speaks out the greatest insincerity, stoutness, and stubbornness that is imaginable; and therefore no wonder if God turns his back upon such, and if he disdains to be in the midst of such.

Numbers 14:42, 43 "Do not go into the land now. You will only be crushed by your enemies because the Lord is not with you. When you face the Amalekites and Canaanites in battle, you will be slaughtered. *The Lord will abandon you because you have abandoned the Lord.*" See Deut. 1:42-46. But they presumed to go up to the hill-top, though they had not the presence of God with them, nor the signs of his grace and favor with them, nor the company of Moses with them; but mark, they paid dearly for their presumption. Verse 45, "Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah."

When men are without God's presence, they are outside of God's

precincts, and so out of his protection. To act or run cross to God's express command, though under pretense of revelation from God, is as much as a man's life is worth, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings 13:24. We frequently deny our presence unto disobedient people, and so does God his. Disobedience to divine commands shuts the door against the divine presence, and will not allow God to come in to support us, comfort us, or support us, under our greatest troubles and deepest distresses. But,

**[5.] Fifthly, Take heed of carnal confidence, of resting upon an arm of flesh.** Psalm 30:6, "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved;" that is, when I was prosperously settled in the kingdom, I began to conclude within myself that now there was an end of all my troubles, I would now live all my days in a prosperous estate. [Adam in paradise was overcome, when Job on the ash-heap was a conqueror.] David having taken the strong fort of Zion, and having vanquished his enemies round about, and all the tribes having submitted themselves to him, and having built a beautiful palace, and being quietly settled in his throne, he began to be puffed up with carnal confidence. Oh the hazard of honor! Oh the damage of dignity! how soon are we broken upon the soft pillow of ease! Flies settle upon the sweetest perfumes when cold; and so does sin on the best hearts, when they are dissolved and dispirited by prosperity. Oh how apt are the holiest of men to be proud and secure, and promise themselves more than ever God promised them—namely, immunity from the cross.

David thought that his kingdom and all prosperity was tied unto him with adamant cords; he sitting quietly at Jerusalem, and free from fear of all his enemies, 2 Sam. 11:1; but God quickly confutes his carnal confidence by making him know that he could as easily blast the strongest oak as he could trample the smallest worm under his feet. Verse 7, "You hid your face—and I was troubled." God will quickly suspend his favor and withdraw his presence when his children begin to be proud and carnally confident. Look! as at the eclipse of the sun—the whole frame of nature droops; so when God hides his face, when he withdraws his presence—the best of saints cannot but droop and hang down their heads. Just so, Jer. 17:5, "Cursed be the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm,

and whose heart departs from the Lord." Verse 6, "For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes." But,

**[6.] Sixthly, Take heed of barrenness and unfruitfulness under gospel ordinances.** Turn to these scriptures, Isaiah 5:1-8; Mat. 31:34-42; 2 Chron. 32:16, to the end. Of all spiritual judgments, barrenness is the greatest; and when men are given up to this judgment, God withdraws; he has no pleasure to dwell in a barren soil. What are barren *grounds* and barren *wombs*, compared to barren *hearts*? He who remains wholly barren under gospel ordinances, may well question his marriage-union with Christ, Ezek. 47:11; Mat. 13:19; Hosea 9:14; John 15:3; Heb. 2:6-8; Jude 12: for, Romans 7:4, We are said to be "married to Christ, that we may bring forth fruit to God." There is a double end of marriage—namely, *cohabitation* and *propagation*; and therefore there cannot be a greater and clearer evidence that you are not yet taken into a married union with Christ, than a total barrenness under gospel enjoyments. Christ's spouse is fruitful: Cant. 1:16, "Our bed is verdant."

Christ has no further delight in his people, nor will he further grace his people with his special presence, than they make conscience of weeping over their barrenness, and of bringing forth fruit to him, Cant. 7:11-13. "Now my husband will love me, now he will be joined to me, now I have born him this son also," Gen. 29:34, said Leah. Just so, may the fruit-bearing soul reason it out with Christ: Now I know dear Jesus will *love* me, now I know he will *delight* in me, now I know he will *dwell* with me, now I know he will *honor* me with his presence—for now I bring forth fruit unto him. Barrenness under the means of grace drives God from us, and the gospel from us, and communion, and peace, and spiritual prosperity from us.

Ursinus observes, that the sins and barrenness of the Protestants under the gospel in king Edward's days, brought in the persecution in queen Mary's days. He tells us, that those who fled out of England in queen Mary's days acknowledged that that calamity befell them for their great unprofitableness under the means of grace in king Edward's days. Ah, England! England! I look upon nothing to be so ominous to you as the barrenness of the professors of the day! No wonder if God leaves his house, when the trees that are planted in it are all barren. The nutmeg-

tree makes barren all the ground about it; so does the *spice of worldly love*, make the hearts of Christians barren under the means of grace. But I must hasten.

**[7.] Seventhly, Take heed of pride and haughtiness of spirit.**

Hosea 5:5, 6 "Israel's *arrogance* testifies against them; the Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin; Judah also stumbles with them. When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, they will not find him; he has withdrawn himself from them." Pride is the great *master-scar* of the soul; it will bud and blossom, it cannot be hidden. Pride is the *leprosy* of the soul, which breaks forth in the very forehead, and so testifies to his face, Ezek. 7:10; Isaiah 3:16-25. Some have called Rome, *Epitomen universi*, *An epitome of the whole world*. Just so, it may be said of pride, that it is the sum of all vileness, a sea of sin, a complicated sin, a mother sin, a breeding sin, a sin which has all sorts of sin in the womb of it. Consult these scriptures. [Hab. 1:16; Isaiah 48:9, and 26:12; Hab.2:5, etc.] "I hate pride and arrogance!" Proverbs 8:13.

Aristotle, speaking of justice, says, That in *justice* all virtues are couched, summarily. Just so, it may be truly said of *pride*—that in it all vices are as it were in a bundle wrapped up together! Therefore it is no wonder, if God withdraws his presence from proud people, "He has withdrawn himself from them"—Heb., "Has snatched away himself;" he has thrown himself out of their company, as Peter threw himself out from the crude soldiers into a by-corner to weep bitterly, Mark 14:72. God will have nothing to do with proud people, he will never dwell with them, he will never keep communion with them. He who dwells in the highest heavens will never dwell in a haughty heart. The proud he knows afar off," Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 138:6. He won't come near such loathsome lepers; he stands off from such as are odious and abominable; he cannot abide the sight of them, yes, his very heart rises against them! Proverbs 15:25. "The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished!" Proverbs 16:5. James 4:6, "God resists the proud," that is, "He sets himself in battle array against him," as the Greek emphatically signifies. Above all sorts of sinners, God sets himself against proud people, as invaders of his territories and foragers or plunderers of his chief treasures. God defies such as deify themselves. God will arm himself

against them, he will never give his gracious presence to them; and therefore as ever you would enjoy the divine presence, arm yourself against pride, watch against pride, and pray hard against pride. But,

**[8.] Eighthly, Take heed of a slothful, lazy, trifling spirit in the things of God.** Cant. 5:2, 3 "I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My lover is knocking: "Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night." "I have taken off my robe—must I put it on again? I have washed my feet—must I soil them again?" Christ's head is drenched with dew; that is, Christ came to his spouse full of the dew of spiritual and heavenly blessings. Christ always brings spiritual and heavenly blessings in his hand, Eph. 1:3-4; Rev. 22:12. Christ never visits his people empty handed. He is no beggarly or niggardly guest. When he comes, he brings everything that heart can *wish*, or *need*, *require*. And now stand and wonder at the silly excuse that the spouse makes for herself: verse 3, "Do not trouble—for I am in bed; my clothes are off, my feet are washed, and I am composed to a settled rest!" "But are you so indeed?" might Christ have replied. "Is this your kindness to your friend? 2 Sam. 16:17. Is this the part and posture of a vigilant Christian? Would it not have been much better for you to be dressed and ready, your lamp burning, and you waiting for your Lord's return? Is it so great a trouble? Is it such a mighty business for you to rise out of your bed, to put on your clothes, and to let in such a guest, as comes not to take anything from you—but to enrich you with the best and noblest of favors?"

Now mark how severely Christ punishes his spouse's sluggishness, laziness, slothfulness, and delays to entertain him when he knocked: verse 6, "I opened for my lover, but *my lover had left; he was gone*. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him but did not find him. I called him but he did not answer." Or *He was gone! he was gone!* a most passionate complaint for his departure; or my best-beloved was departed, he was gone away! By the iteration or doubling of this sentence, wherein the spouse complains of the departure of her bridegroom, is signified her great trouble, her hearty sorrow, her inexpressible grief—which lay as a heavy load upon her spirit; because, by her unworthy usage of him, she had foolishly caused him to withdraw his presence from her.

**Spiritual desertions** are of three sorts:

(1.) *Cautional*, for preventing of sin, as Paul's seems to be, 1 Cor. 1:2, 8-9;

(2.) *Probational*, for trial and exercise of grace;

(3.) *Penal*, for chastisement of spiritual sloth and sluggishness, as here in the spouse. Now this last is far the saddest and heaviest; and therefore as ever you would enjoy the gracious presence of the Lord, take heed of a lazy, slothful, sluggish spirit in the things of God, in the concernments of your souls. That man must needs be miserable, who is lazy and slothful—and had rather go *sleeping to hell* than *sweating to heaven!* But,

**[9.] Ninthly, Take heed of a covetous worldly spirit under the smarting rod, under the severe rebukes of God.** Isaiah 57:17, "I was enraged by his sinful *greed*; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways." Covetousness or greed, was the common sin of the Jews. This disease had infected all sorts and ranks of men; this leprosy did spread itself over princes, prophets, and people, as you may see in comparing these scriptures. [Isaiah 56:11; Jer. 6:13, and 8:10.] "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." 1 Timothy 6:8-10

Now "covetousness being the root of all evil," as the apostle speaks, and the darling sin of our nation—God is so provoked by it that he first smites, and then hides himself, as one who in displeasure, having left one to the evil and harsh usage of some other, withdraws himself out of the way, and having shut himself up in his closet, will not be seen or spoken with. A worldly man makes the world his God. Covetousness is explicit idolatry: Col. 3:5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Now though it is true, that whatever a man loves most and best, that is his god—be it his belly or his back—yet, in a special manner, covetousness is idolatry—as no other sin is, Phil.

3:19; Isaiah 3:16-25.

### **Three things especially, make a god:**

First, our **judgment**, when we esteem it in our serious thoughts to be our chief good, and that in which we place our happiness. Now the covetous man looks upon the riches of the world as his heaven, his happiness, his great all. Pope Sylvester placed so much happiness in riches, that, to enjoy the popedom for seven years, he sold his soul to the devil. The people of Constantinople placed so much of their happiness in riches, and were so excessively covetous, that they were buying and selling in their shops, even three days after the Turks were within the walls of the city, and that was the reason that the streets run down with the blood of them, their wives, and children.

Secondly, our **confidence**. That is an homage which makes a god, when we place our trust in anything, make it our rock, our fortress, our all-sufficient good. This the covetous man does, "He says to the wedge of gold, you are my confidence," Job 21:34. The rich man's heart dances about his golden calf, saying to his wedge of gold, "you are my confidence!" And yet his wedge of gold shall prove but as Achan's wedge, a wedge to cleave his soul in sunder, and, as that Babylonish garment, to be his shroud, Josh. 7:21 to end. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city," Proverbs 10:15; 1 Tim. 6:27. Covetous people do really think themselves simply the better and the safer for their hoards and heaps of riches; but they may one day find themselves greatly mistaken.

Famous is that story of *Croesus* among the heathens. He was a rich king, who tumbled up and down in his gold and silver; and Solon, that wise man of Greece, coming into his country, he desired to speak with him, and after Solon had seen and viewed all his wealth and glory, *Croesus* asked him whom he thought to be the happiest man in the world, imagining that Solon would have said *Croesus*. But Solon answered, "I think Tellus was the most happy man." "Tellus!" says *Croesus*; "why Tellus?" "Because," said Solon, "though he was poor—yet he was a godly man, and content with that which he had; and having brought up his child honestly and piously, he died honorably."

"Well, then," said Croesus—"who do you think the *second* most happy man in the world?" "I think," said he, "those two brothers who carried their mother to the temple." Whereupon, said Croesus, "what think you of me"? "I think," says he, "you are a very rich man; but a man may be happy though he be poor, and a man may be unhappy though he be rich, for he may lose all his riches before he dies; and therefore, I think none truly happy but he who lives well and dies well." Whereupon that wise man Solon was dismissed. But afterward this Croesus, making war against Cyrus, he was conquered by Cyrus; and being taken captive, he was laid upon a pile of wood to be burned to death, then lying on the pile of wood he cried out and said, "O Solon! Solon! Solon!" Cyrus inquiring what he meant, he answered, "This Solon was a wise man of Greece, who told me that happiness did not consist in riches, for they might all be lost, and a rich man might die miserable; whose words, said he, I then neglected—but now I find true; and therefore now I cry out, O Solon, Solon, Solon!"

Let us now tell the covetous man, the worldly man, that his happiness lies not in riches, though he looks upon his riches as his strong city; he won't mind us, he won't regard. Oh but there is a time a-coming wherein the worldling will cry out, "O Solon, Solon, Solon!"

**Thirdly**, Our service, Mat. 6:24. That is an homage, which makes a god. When we devote all our pains, labor, and service to it—be it this or that—that makes a god. Now the covetous man, his *heart* is most upon the world, his *thoughts* are most upon the world, his *affections* are most upon the world, and his *discourse* is most about the world. He who has his mind taken up with the world, and chiefly delighted with the world's music, he has also his tongue tuned to the same key, and takes his joy and comfort in speaking of nothing else but the world and worldly things. If the world is in the heart—it will break out at the lips. A worldly-minded man speaks of nothing but worldly things. "They are of the world, therefore they speak of the world," John 4:5. The water rises not above the fountain. Out of the warehouse the shop is furnished.

The love of this world makes men forget God, neglect Christ, slight ordinances, refuse heaven, despise holiness, and oils the tongue for worldly discourses, Mat. 19:21-22. Ah the time, the thoughts, the

strength, the efforts, the words—which are spent upon the world, and the things of the world, while sinners' souls lie a-bleeding, and eternity is hastening on upon them!

I have read of a greedy banker, who was always best when he was most in talking of money and the world. Being near his death, he was much pressed to make his will. Finally he dictates:

First, I bequeath **my own soul** to the devil—for being so greedy of the muck of this world!

Secondly, I bequeath **my wife's soul** to the devil—for persuading me to this worldly course of life.

Thirdly, I bequeath my **pastor's soul** to the devil—because he did not show me the danger I lived in, nor reprove me for it.

Oh, the danger of making the world our god, when we come to die and to make up our accounts with God! Now when men make the world their god, and set up their riches, pleasures, and profits in the place of God, no wonder if God withdraws his presence from them; and therefore, as ever you would retain the gracious presence of God with you, take heed of a covetous spirit, a worldly spirit. "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction." 1 Timothy 6:9.

**[10.] Tenthly and lastly, As ever you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—take heed of a petulant, willful, and inflexible spirit under the rod.** When the child is willful under the rod, the father withdraws; so here, Isaiah 57:17, "I was angry and punished these greedy people. I withdrew myself from them, but they went right on sinning." Isaiah 47:6. Though I manifested my displeasure by giving them up to their enemies, and by laying them under the tokens of my anger, they persisted in their own willful, crooked, and rebellious courses, refusing to repent and turn to the Most High; and therefore God changes his countenance, hides his face, and withdraws his presence from them: Deut. 32:20, "I will hide my face from them—for

they are a perverse generation." Hebrew, *A generation of perversenesses*.

When the sick man is froward, friends withdraw and leave him alone: Psalm 18:26, "With the froward you will show yourself froward." God will meet with froward people in their own way, and make them reap the fruits of their own doings. God will walk cross and contrary to the froward, opposing and crossing them in all they do. God has no delight to grace froward people with his presence. When men begin to be froward under a divine hand, God commonly hides his face, and turns his back upon them. Men filled with impatience are no fit company for the God of all patience. Men who are peevish and petulant under the rod, will always see a cloud upon the face of God.

Thus you see that there are ten things that you must carefully take heed of—if you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, Romans 15:5; Proverbs 11:20. But,

**2. Secondly,** As there are many things to be avoided, **just so, there are several things to be put in PRACTICE, as you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you, in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers.** Let me glance at a few—

**[1.] First, Be sure that you are brought under the bond of the covenant.** This gracious special presence of God with his people, under their greatest troubles, and deepest distresses—is peculiar to those who are in covenant with God. [Ezek. 20:37; Psalm 25:14, and 50:5; Jer. 32:40-41; Gen. 6:8, 18, 19:20-26 and 39:20-22; Jer. 1:17-19, and 37:15, seq.; Dan. 3:23-25, and 6:22-23.] *Noah* was in covenant with God—and God was with him, providing an ark for him, and preserving of him from drowning in the midst of drowning. *Lot* was in covenant with God—and God was with him, and secures him in Zoar, when he rained hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. *Joseph* was in covenant with God—and God was with Joseph in prison. *Jeremiah* was in covenant with God—and God kept him company in the dungeon. The *three Hebrew children*, or rather champions, were in covenant with God—and God was specially present with them in the fiery furnace. *Daniel* was in covenant

with God—and God was wonderfully with him in the lions' den. *Job* was in covenant with God—and God was with him in six troubles, and in seven, Job 3:18-19. *David* was in covenant with God—and God was with him in the valley of the shadow of death, Psalm 89:33-34, and 23:4.

Do not rest your salvation—in a name to live, nor in a form of godliness, nor in common convictions, nor in an outward reformation. Do not rest anything below a covenant-relationship with God, if you would enjoy the precious presence of the Lord with you in your greatest troubles, and deepest distresses, Deut. 26:17-19. If you choose him for your God—you shall then assuredly find him to be your God. If he is the God of our love and fear—he will be the God of our comfort and safety. If God is your God in covenant—then in distress the cities of refuge are open to you. He will stick close to you, he will never leave you nor forsake you, Heb. 13:5-7; you have a Father to go to, a God to flee to, a God who will take care of you: "Come my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you, hide yourself, as it were for a little moment, until the indignation is over and passed." Here are chambers, with drawing-rooms provided, not open chambers—but with doors, and doors shut round about, intimating that guard of protection, which the people of God shall find from him, even in a common inundation. But,

**[2.] Secondly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you, in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—then look to the practical part of holiness, keep up the power of godliness in your hearts and lives.** 2 Chron. 15:2; John 14:21, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Verse 23, ""If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." He who frames his heart and life according to Christ's *rule*—shall be sure of Christ's *presence*.

*Ezekiel* was a man who kept up the power of holiness and godliness in his heart and life. [This is evident throughout the whole book of the prophet Ezekiel. See 2:4, 7-12.] And oh! the glorious visions, and deep mysteries, and rare discoveries of God, and of his presence, and of the great things

which would be brought about in the latter days, which were revealed to him!

*Daniel* kept up the power of holiness and godliness in his heart and life; and oh, what secrets and mysteries did God reveal to him! Many of those great and glorious things, which concern the destruction of the four last monarchies, and the growth, increase, exaltation, flourishing, durable, invincible and unconquerable estate of his own kingdom, was discovered to him.

*Paul* was a person who kept up the power of holiness and godliness in his heart and life; and oh, what a mighty presence of God had he with him—in all his *doing, suffering, and witnessing* work! And oh, what glorious revelations and discoveries of God had he, when he was caught up into the third heaven, into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, or wordless words, such as words were too weak to utter, such "as was not possible for man to utter," and that either because they transcended man's capacity in this life, or else because the apostle was forbid to utter them, they being revealed to him not for the public use of the church—but only for his particular encouragement, that he might be the better able to encounter with all hardships, difficulties, dangers, and deaths which did or might attend him in his ministerial work, 2 Cor. 1:7-10. Some of the ancients are of opinion that he saw God's essence, for, say they, other things in heaven might have been uttered—but the essence of God is so great and so glorious a thing that no man or angel can utter it. But here I must crave leave to enter my dissent from these learned men, for the scripture is express in this, "that no man has thus ever seen the Lord at any time, and that no man can thus see the Lord, and live," John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12; Exod. 33:20-23.

And as great a favorite of Heaven as Moses was—yet he could only see the back parts of God, he could only behold some lower representations of God. Some say that he heard the heavenly singing of angels and blessed spirits, which was so sweet, so excellent and glorious, that no mortal man was able to utter it; and this of the two interpretations, is most probable. But no man is bound to make this opinion an article of his faith. This, I think, we may safely conclude, that in this rapture, besides the contemplation of celestial mysteries, he felt such unspeakable delight and

pleasure, that was either like to that, or exceeded that, which Adam took in the terrestrial paradise. Doubtless the apostle did see and hear such excellent things as was impossible for the tongue of any mortal man to express or utter.

*John* was a man who kept up in his heart and life the power of holiness and godliness; and Christ reveals to him the general estate of his church and all that would befall his people, and that from *John's* time unto his second coming. Christ gives *John* a true representation of all the troubles, trials, changes, mercies, and glories—which in all times and in all ages and places, would attend his church—until Christ came in all his glory. About sixty years after Christ's ascension, [It is the general opinion of the learned that this Book of the Revelation was penned about the latter end of the reign of Domitian the emperor, which was about sixty years after Christ's ascension.] Christ comes to *John*, and opens his heart, and unbosoms his soul, and makes known to him all that care, that love, that tenderness, that kindness, and that sweetness, that he would exercise towards his church from that very time to the end of the world. Christ tells *John*, that though he had been absent, and seemingly silent for about sixty years, that yet he was not so taken up with the delights, contentments, and glory of heaven—that he did not care what became of his church on earth. Oh no! and therefore he opens his choicest secrets, and makes known the most hidden and glorious mysteries to *John* that ever were made known to any man.

As there was none who had so much of the *heart* of Christ as *John*—so there was none had so much of the *ear* of Christ as *John*. Christ singles out his servant *John* from all the men in the world, and makes known to him all the happy providences and all the sad occurrences which were to come upon the followers of the Lamb, so that they might know what to *prepare* for, and what to *pray* for, and what to *wait* for. Also he declares to *John* all that wrath and vengeance, all that desolation and destruction, which should come upon the false prophet and the beast, and upon all who wandered after them, and who were worshipers of them, and who had received their marks either in their foreheads or in their hands.

Thus you see that they which keep up the power of holiness in their hearts and lives—they shall be sure to enjoy the choicest presence of God,

and the clearest, fullest, and sweetest discoveries of God, and of these great things that concern the spiritual and eternal good of their souls. Nothing *wins* upon God like holiness, nothing *delights* God like holiness, nothing *engages* the presence of God like holiness, Psalm 50:23. He shows his salvation to him who orders his life aright. He who puts every piece of his life in the right order, he shall see and know that he shall be saved. He who walks accurately and exactly, who walks as in a careful frame, treading gingerly, stepping warily—he shall have a prospect of heaven here—and a full fruition of heaven hereafter, "You meet him who rejoices, and works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways," Isaiah 64:5. He who works righteousness and walks in righteousness, shall be sure to meet with God, and to enjoy the precious presence of God in his greatest troubles and deepest distresses. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers—then keep close to instituted worship, keep close to gospel ordinances, keep close to your gospel church.** Exod. 20:24, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto you and bless you." Isaiah 64:5; Rev. 2:1; Cant. 7:5; Ezek. 48:35. Where God fixes his solemn worship for the memorial and honor of his name, there he will vouchsafe his gracious presence: Mat. 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The promise of God's gracious assistance, presence, and acceptance is annexed to his church, whether it be great or small, numerous or few: Mat. 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always," according to my godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit. Lo, I am with you, to own you! Lo, I am with you, to counsel and direct you! Lo, I am with you, to cheer and comfort you! Lo, I am with you, to assist and strengthen you! Lo, I am with you, to shelter you and protect you! Lo, I am with you, to do all your works in you and for you! Lo, I am with you, to strengthen your graces and to weaken your sins! Lo, I am with you, to scatter your fears and answer your doubts! Lo, I am with you, to better your hearts and to mend your lives! Lo, I am with you, to bless you and crown you with immortality and glory! And what can the soul desire more?

Such as have low thoughts of gospel ordinances, such as slight gospel

ordinances, such as neglect gospel ordinances, such as vilify gospel ordinances, such as decry gospel ordinances, such as oppose gospel ordinances—such may talk of the presence of Christ, and such may boast of the presence of Christ—but all such are outside of the way of enjoying the presence of Christ. Christ is only to be met with in his own worship, and in his own ways. Ah, how many in these days are there, who are like to old Barzillai, who had lost his taste and hearing, and so cared not for David's feasts and music! 2 Sam. 19:35. How many are there that formerly were very zealous for ordinances—but now are as zealous against them! How many formerly have made many great, hard, and dangerous ventures to enjoy gospel ordinances, who now won't venture a broken shin for an ordinance, no, nor stir out of doors to enjoy an ordinance, etc.! How many in our days, upon neglecting and despising gospel ordinances, have grown from evil to be very evil, and from very evil to be stark evil. He shall be an Apollo to me, who can show me one man in the world that ever grew better or holier by neglecting or slighting gospel ordinances.

Many come to the ordinances, too, like the Egyptian dog, which laps a little as he runs by the side of Nylus—but stays not to drink. How many in this great city run every Sabbath to hear this man and that; and here they lap a little and there a little—but never stay to drink—never fix in this congregation or that, this way or that. These people are neither wise, serious, lovely, nor lively in the ways of God. I think they are judicially blinded and hardened, who are indifferent whether they enjoy ordinances or not, or who can part with ordinances with dry eyes. Surely the infant is very sick, who cries not for the breast, Zeph. 3:18. As ever you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in all your troubles and distresses, make conscience of sticking close to gospel ordinances. But,

**[4.] Fourthly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then, when you are not in troubles, distresses, dangers, etc., be sure you make much conscience of five things:**

**(1.) Of prizing his presence above all other things.** So Moses did, Exod. 33:13-17; so Augustine would willingly go through hell to Christ;

and Luther had rather be in hell with Christ than in heaven without him; and Bernard had rather have Christ in a chimney corner than be in heaven without him.

**(2.) Of improving this gracious presence against sin, the world, the flesh, oppositions and temptations, etc.**

**(3.) Of walking suitable to this gracious presence.**

**(4.) Of lamenting and mourning over those who lack this gracious presence.**

**(5.) Of holding any secret correspondence with the professed and known enemies of Christ.** Princes will never vouchsafe their favorable presence to such subjects as hold any secret correspondence with their professed and known enemies, either at home or abroad; so here. But,

**[5.] Fifthly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then, in all your troubles and distresses, etc., maintain uprightness and integrity of spirit with God.** Psalm 5:12: 2 Chron. 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him."

Psalm 84:11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will be withhold from those who walk uprightly." This is the largest promise we find in the whole book of God, The creature stands in need of two things, provision and protection; for the first, the Lord is a sun, as full of goodness as the sun is of light. He is a **sun**, in that he does enlighten and enliven his church, whereas all the world besides lie under darkness and the shadow of death; and in that he does cheer, and warm, and comfort the hearts of his people by his presence and lightsome countenance, and is the fountain from whence all external, internal, and eternal blessings are derived to them. For the second, a **shield**, Psalm 18:2. Among all inanimate creatures the sun is the most excellent, and among all artificial creatures a shield is chief, and

was of greatest use in those days. The sun notes all manner of excellency and prosperity, and the shield notes all manner of protection whatever, Isaiah 62:20; Psalm 3:4. Under the name of "grace," all spiritual good things are to be understood; and under the name of "glory," all eternal good things are to be understood; and under that phrase of "No good thing will he withhold," all temporal good things are to be understood, so far as they make for his glory, and his people's real good. Now this choice, this sweet, this full, this large promise, is made over only to the upright, and therefore, as you would have any share in it, maintain your uprightness!

Psalm 11:7, "His *countenance* does behold the upright;" Heb., His *faces*. Every gracious discovery of God to the upright is his face. God will, in all manner of ways, make gracious discoveries of his love and delight to upright ones. No father can so much delight to behold the countenance of his child, as God delights to behold the countenance of the upright.

Psalm 112:4, "Unto the upright there arises *light* in darkness." Light commonly signifies joy, comfort, peace, help, deliverance, Job 30:26; Esther 8:16; 2 Cor. 6:10. The upright man shall have joy in tribulation, plenty in poverty, liberty in bonds, life in death—as the martyrs have frequently and gloriously experienced. Sometimes God turns the upright man's adversity into prosperity, his sickness into health, his weakness into strength, his night into day, his storms into calms, his long winter nights into pleasant summer days. Sometimes God hides his upright ones in the hollow of his hand, in his pavilion, in his presence-chamber, Isaiah 26:9, 20; Mal. 3:17. When his judgments are abroad in the earth he takes special care of his jewels, and many times, when the upright are in darkness and in great distress, God cheers their hearts with the consolations of his Spirit and the light of his countenance, Psalm 94:19, and 71:20-21. By all which it is most evident that "Unto the upright there arises light in darkness."

O sirs, do but maintain your uprightness in all your troubles and distresses, and then you will be sure of the gracious presence of God with you in all your troubles and distresses. God values an upright Job upon a ash-heap before a deceitful Jehu upon his royal throne, Job 1:8, and 2:3, 7-9; he sets a higher price upon an upright Lazarus in rags than upon a rich Dives in his purple robes, Luke 16. And therefore when an upright man is in troubles and distresses, God will be sure to keep him company. The upright man is like the philosopher's dice, cast him which way you will, and into what condition you will, he is still upright; and therefore, of all people, God loves to grace the upright man with his gracious presence. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in all your troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, then you must be very earnest and importunate with God not to leave you**—but to stay with you, to abide with you, and to dwell in the midst of you, Psalm 148:18, "The Lord is near unto all who call upon him;" but, to prevent mistakes, I mean, "to all who call upon him in truth." There are many who call upon God—but not in truth; from these God stands at a distance, Proverbs 1:28; Isaiah 11-17; Deut. 4:4; 2 John 4. There are others that call upon God in truth, in plainness and singleness of heart; and to these God is near, not only in regard of his essence, which is everywhere—but also in regard of the effects of his power, and the readiness of his will in granting their requests. Abijah prays, and finds an admirable presence of God with him, giving him a mighty victory over his most powerful enemy, 2 Chron. 3,10-11,17-18. Asa prays, and finds such a singular presence of God with him as made him victorious over an enormous army, 2 Chron. 14:9 to the end. Jehoshaphat prays, and had such a special presence of God with him that those numerous forces that were combined against him fall by their own swords, 2 Chron. 20:1-11, with verse 22-25. The wrath of God wrought their ruin, unexpectedly and irresistibly. [They were carried by such a spirit of rage and fury that no man spared his neighbor—but each one destroyed him who was near him.] Others say that the Lord did suddenly and unexpectedly cut them off, as when men are cut off by enemies that lie in ambush against them, and that by sending some unexpected strife

among those nations, whereupon they fell out among themselves, and slew one another, and so accomplished that which the Levite had foretold, verse 17, "You shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand you still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you."

It was the presence of God with his people that was their preservation, and their enemies' destruction. There is no power, no force, no strength, no combinations that can stand before the powerful presence of God with his people, and a spirit of prayer upon his people.

Hezekiah prays, and finds such a powerful presence of God with him as bears up his heart, and as strengthens his faith, and as cuts off his enemies, Isaiah 37:14-21, with verse 36. Oh, beg hard of the Lord that he will stay with you, do as they did when Christ made as though he would have gone from them: Luke 24:29, "But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent; and he went in to tarry with them." By prayer and importunity lay hold on Christ; say, Lord, night is near, the night of trouble, the night of distress, the night of danger, the night of death is near; stay with us, depart not from us. They over-entreated him by their importunity, they compelled him by entreaty. "Night is near, and the day is far spent." Oh, lay a hand of holy violence upon God, as Jacob did, and say, as he, "I will not let you go." Jacob, though lamed, will not let Christ go. Jacob holds fast with both hands when his joints were out of joint, being fully resolved that whatever he did let go, he would not let his Lord go, until he had blessed him, Gen. 32:25,26; Hosea 4:12. Oh, be often a-crying out with Jeremiah, "Leave us not, Lord," Jer. 14:9. Though in our great troubles and deep distresses friends should leave us, and relations leave us, and all the world leave us—yet don't *you* leave us! Oh, don't you leave us, Lord! Though all creatures should desert us—yet, if you will but stand by us, we shall do well enough; but woe, woe unto us if God departs from us! Oh, leave us not! But,

**[7.] Seventhly, Keep humble, and walk humbly with your God.** Micah 6:8; Psalm 25:9. The highest heavens and the lowest hearts, are the habitation of God's glorious presence. Isaiah 57:15, "For this is what

the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy—I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." He who would in good earnest enjoy the gracious presence of God with him in his great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, he must keep humble, and walk humbly with his God. God will keep house with none but humble souls. There are none who feel so great a need of the divine presence as humble souls, there are none who so prize the divine presence as humble souls, there are none who so love the divine presence, and who are so enamored with the divine presence as humble souls, there are none who so thirst and long for much of the divine presence as humble souls, there are none who so lament and bewail the loss of the divine presence as humble souls, there are none who make such a singular and thorough improvement of the divine presence as humble souls; and therefore no wonder that of all the men in the world, God singles out the humble Christian, to make his heart the habitation where his honor delights to dwell.

Abraham is but dust and ashes in his own eyes, Gen. 18:27; and what man on earth had ever more of the divine presence of God with him than he? Gen 15:12-19, 17:1-10, and 18:17-19, etc.

Jacob knew that he was unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness God had shown him, Gen. 32:10; and he had a mighty presence of God with him, Gen. 32:24-31, etc.

David in his own eyes was but a worm and no man, Psalm 22:6. The word in the original, signifies a very little worm, which breeds in scarlet. It is so little, that no man can hardly see it or perceive it; and yet what a mighty presence of God had David with him in the many battles he fought, and in the many dangers he was in, and in the many miraculous deliverances he had. See them all summed up in that 18th Psalm. It is his triumphant song after many victories won, deliverances given, and mercies obtained; and therefore worthy of frequent perusal.

Paul was the least of all saints in his own eyes; yes, he was less than the least of all saints, Eph. 3:8. This is a double diminutive, and signifies "lesser than the least," if lesser might be. Here you have the greatest

apostle descending down to the lowest step of humility, 1 Cor. 15:8, 4:9; 1 Tim. 1:15. *Great Paul* is least of saints, least of the apostles, and greatest of sinners in his own eyes, and never had any mortal more of the gracious presence of God with him in all his services and in all his sufferings, in all his afflictions and in all his temptations, in all his trials and in all his troubles, which were many and great. See Acts 16:23-25, 23:10-11, 27:23-25; 2 Cor. 1:8-10, 4:8-11, 7:4-7, 11:21, seq., 12:7-10.

Is your condition low, then let your hearts be low. He who is little in his own account, is great in God's esteem, and shall be sure to enjoy most of his presence. God can dwell, God will dwell with none but those who are lowly in heart; and therefore as ever you would enjoy the special presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, be sure you walk humbly with your God. Many may talk much of God, and many may profess much of God, and many may boast much of God; but he only enjoys much of God who makes conscience of walking humbly with God. But,

**[8.] Eighthly, and lastly, If you would enjoy the special presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then labor every day more and more after greater measures of holiness.** The more holiness you reach to, the more you shall have of the presence of a holy God with you in all your straits and trials. [Ponder upon these scriptures, Isaiah 58:8-11; 2 Cor. 6:16-18, and 7:1; Deut. 23:13-14.] If the Scriptures be narrowly searched, you will find that men of the greatest measures and degrees of holiness have always enjoyed the greatest measures of the divine presence: witness Enoch, Gen. 5:24; Noah, Gen. 6:8-9, 17-18. Just so, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Daniel, John, Paul, etc. They were all famous for holiness; and accordingly they had a famous presence of God with them, as has been showed in part, and might more fully have been discovered.

**[1.] Consider, that the more holy any person is, the more excellent that person is.** All corruptions are diminutions of excellency. The more mixed anything is, the more abased it is. The more you mix your wine with water, the more you abase your wine; and the more you mix your gold with tin, the more you abase your gold. But the

purier your wine is, the richer and better your wine is; and the purer your gold is, the more glorious and excellent it is. Just so, the purer and holier any person is, the more excellent and glorious that person is. Now the more divinely excellent and glorious any person is, the more he is beloved of God, Dan. 9:23; and the more he is the delight of God, and the more he shall have of the presence of God.

**[2.] Consider, that the more holy any person is, the more that person pleases the Lord.** Fruitfulness in holiness fills heaven with joy. The *farmer* is not so much pleased with the fruitfulness of his fields, nor the *wife* with the fruitfulness of her womb—as *God* is pleased with the fruitfulness of his people in grace and holiness. Now certainly, the more God is pleased with any person, the more he will be present with that person. They commonly have most of our presence—who most please us.

**Enoch** had this testimony, before his translation, that he *pleased* God, or *gave God contentment*, as the original word imports. Enoch eyed God at all times, in all places, and in all companies; and this pleased God. Wherever Enoch was, his eye was still upon God. Enoch walked constantly with God; his whole life was but one continued day of walking with God; and this pleased God. Enoch kept himself from the corruptions and pollutions of the times, which were very great; he was not carried away with the stream of the times; he kept a constant counter-motion to the corrupt courses of the times; and this pleased God. Enoch maintained and kept up a clear, choice, and incessant communion with God; and this pleased God. Enoch made it his business, his work, his heaven, to approve his heart to God, and his ways to God; and this pleased God. Enoch was very serious and studious to avoid everything that might be a dishonor to God, or displeasing to God; and this pleased God. Enoch had great, and high, and honorable thoughts of God; and this pleased God. God was so pleased with Enoch, that he translates him from earth to heaven, from a *gracious* to a *glorious* presence. [God took him up in a whirlwind, say the Hebrew doctors, as Elijah was. He changed his place—but not his company, for he still walked with God; as on earth, so in heaven.] It was a singular mercy for God to be with Enoch on earth—but it was a far more glorious mercy for Enoch to be with God in heaven. The *gracious* presence of God is very desirable—but the *glorious* presence of

God is most comfortable. Enoch pleases God, and God translates Enoch. We can never have those friends near enough to us—who take a pleasure and delight to please us; so here Enoch was a bright morning star, a rising sun, for virtue and holiness; and therefore God could not satisfy himself, (to speak after the manner of men,) that he should live at so great a distance from him—and therefore translates him from earth to heaven. Well, my friends, the greater measures of holiness you reach to, the more you will please God; and the more you please God, the more you shall be sure to enjoy of the presence of God.

**[3.] Consider, that the more holy any person is, the more like to God he is; and the more like to God he is, doubtless the more he is beloved of God.** It is likeness both in nature and grace, which always draws the strongest love, 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Lev. 11:44, and 19:2, and 20:7. Though every child is the father multiplied, the father of a second edition; yet the father loves him best, and delights in him most—who is most like him, and who in feature, spirit, and action does most resemble him to the life. And so does the Father of spirits also; he always loves them best who in holiness resemble him most, Heb. 12:9. There are four remarkable things in the beloved disciple above all the rest, John 13:23, and 18:16, and 19:26-27, and Mark 14:50:

(1.) That he lay nearest to Christ's bosom at the table;

(2.) That he followed Christ closest to the high-priest's palace;

(3.) That he stood close to Christ when he was on the cross, though others had basely deserted him and turned their backs upon him;

(4.) That Christ commended the care of his mother to him. Now why did Christ's desire, love, and delight run out with a stronger and a fuller tide towards John than to the rest of the disciples? doubtless it was because John did more resemble Christ than the rest, it was because John was a more exact picture and lively representation than the others were of Christ.

Now the more any man in holiness is like to Christ, the more any man in holiness resembles Christ, the more that man shall enjoy of the presence

of Christ, the more that man shall lie in the bosom of Christ. The father loves to be most with that child which is most like him. Just so here, as ever you would enjoy the presence of God in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, be sure that you keep up holiness in your hearts and lives, be sure that you *grow* in holiness, and *flourish* in holiness—and then you shall be sure of the presence of God with you in all your troubles and deep distresses. A holy God will never leave the holy Christian. And thus much for this use of exhortation.

The last use of all, is a use of **comfort** and **consolation** to all the people of God, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Now here consider,

**(1.) First of all, That God himself hands out this as a rare comfort to his people in all their troubles, distresses, and dangers—namely, That he will be graciously present with them in the midst of all their sorrows and sufferings.** Gen. 26:3, "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you;" 28:15, "And behold I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you," etc., Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 91:15; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5; Exod. 3:12. Don't talk of your loss of friends, for I will be with you. Don't talk of your country, for I will give you this land, which is the paradise of the world. Don't talk of your poverty, for you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south, verse 14. Don't talk of your solitariness and aloneness, "for I will not leave you."

Isaiah 41:10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Suppose a man was injuriously dealt with by this man or that, would it not be a comfort to him that a just and righteous judge stood by and was an eyewitness of all the violences which

were done to him? Suppose a man were in exile with David, or in prison with Joseph, or in a dungeon with Jeremiah, or in the stocks with Paul and Silas, or in banishment for the testimony of Jesus, with John—yet would it not be a singular comfort to him to have the presence of a kind father, a bosom friend, a wise Counselor, an able physician with him? O Christian, be in whatever *place* you will, and with whatever *company* you will, and in whatever *condition* you will—yet your loving God, your kind father, your bosom friend, etc., will be still with you, he will never leave you, nor forsake you; and oh what a spring of comfort should this be to you! But,

**(2.) Secondly, Know for your comfort, that there are always some special favors and blessings annexed to this special presence of God,** as "I will be with you, and *bless you*." Gen. 26:3, "I am with you, and will *keep you* in all places where you go;" 28:15, "I will be with him in trouble, and *honor* him." Psalm 91:15, "I will be with him, and *strengthen* him." Isaiah 41:10, "I will be with you, and the *flames shall not kindle* upon you." 43:2, "I will be with you, and there shall not a man be able to stand before you." Josh. 1:5, "I will be with you, to *deliver* you." Jer. 1:19, "I am with you, to *save* you, and to deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and out of the hand of the terrible," 15:20-21.

Hushai's presence with David was a burden: Job's wife's presence was but a vexation unto him, and Christ's presence among the Gergesenes was a terror to them, and the presence of talkative friends is many times a trouble to us, 2 Sam. 15:33; Job 2:9-10; Mat. 8:28, 34. Oh—but this special, this favorable presence of the Lord with his people, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses, is a sweet presence, a comfortable presence, a delightful presence, a blessed presence, yes, such a presence as has many singular blessings annexed to it. But,

**(3.) Thirdly, Know for your comfort, that you shall have mercy and kindness, and whatever good you need in due season, at that very instant, at that very nick of time wherein you most need mercy.** God will time your mercies, and your blessings for you; he is near, and will not fail you when in dire straits, Psalm 145:18; Deut. 4:7; Gen. 22:10-13. When Abraham had bound his son, and bent his sword, and the knife was upheld—then comes a voice from heaven, "Abraham,

Abraham, hold your hand." At that very nick of time, when the four hundred and thirty years were expired, Israel was delivered out of their captivity and slavery, Exod. 12:41, 51: Deut. 11:14, "I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain, and the latter rain, that you may gather in your corn, and your wine, and your oil." God gives rain to all, by a *providence*—but he gives rain to his Israel by virtue of a *promise*, Acts 14:18; Job 38:26. God engages himself not only to give rain—but to give it in due season; he will give the first rain after the sowing of the seed, that it might take rooting in the earth; and he will give the latter rain a little before harvest, that the ears might be full. O my friends! it is wonderful mercy—that God will time our mercies for us.

When Jehoshaphat was put to a hard pinch, at that very nick of time God owns him, stands by him, and gives him a great victory, 2 Chron. 20:12, 22-26. When David was in great danger, Saul being at his very heels, at that very nick of time, tidings were brought to Saul, that the Philistines had invaded the land—and so David escapes, 1 Sam. 23:26-28. When all human help failed, God came in and helped! ["Let God," says Augustine, "choose his own opportunity, who so freely grants the mercy."] So Julian was cut off by the Persian war, at that very nick of time when he had vowed at his return, to make a sacrifice of the Christians' lives. And so Charles the Fifth was diverted from persecuting of the Protestants, by the Turks breaking into Hungary, at that very nick of time when his heart was set upon a hot persecution. And so Justice Gilford, a violent papist in Queen Mary's days, going up the stairs to Mrs. Roberts chamber, to compel her to go to mass, at that very nick of time he was suddenly taken with his old disease the gout, and so grievously tormented, that he swore he would never trouble her more. When Faux was giving fire to the match, that would have given fire to the powder that would have blown up king, lords, and commons—at that very nick of time, he who never slumbers nor sleeps prevented him; and so turned our intended funeral into a festival, Psalm 121:3-5.

O Christian! are your troubles many in number, strange in nature, heavy in measure, much in burden, and long in continuance—yet remember that your God is near, whose mercies are numerous, whose wisdom is wondrous, and whose power is miraculous. The nearness or remoteness

of a friend is very considerable in our troubles, distresses, needs, dangers, etc. "I have such a friend, and he would help me—but he lives so far off; and I have another friend who has a great love for me, who is able to counsel me, and to speak a word in season to me, and in my distress would stand close to me—but he is so remote. I have a special friend, that did he know how badly things go with me, would make my burdens his, and my needs his, and my sorrows his; but he is in a far country, he is at the Indies, and I may be undone before I can hear from him!"

But it is not thus with you, O Christians! who have a God so near unto you, who have the special presence of God in the midst of you, yes who have a God always standing by you, "The Lord stood by me," etc. O my friends, how can you lack comfort, who have the God of all consolation present with you? How can you lack counsel, who have the wonderful Counselor so near unto you? How can you lack grace, who have the God of all grace standing by you? How can you lack peace, who have always the presence of the Prince of peace with you? 2 Cor. 1:3; Isaiah 9:6; 1 Pet. 5:10; Isaiah 9:6. But,

**(4.) Fourthly, Know for your comfort, that if God is with you, there is nothing, there *can* be nothing—but weakness against you.** [God holds the church's enemies in chains, having his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips, Isaiah 37:29; he can easily rule and overrule his proudest enemies.] Isaiah 27:4, "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle, I would go through them, I would burn them together." What are briars and thorns, compared to a devouring fire, to the consuming flames? no more are all the enemies of the church, compared to the presence of God with his people. God will be a burning and destroying fire to all the enemies of Zion. Wicked men are chaff. Psalm 1:4. Wicked men are stubble. Job 21:18, "They are as driven stubble to his bow." Isaiah 41:2, "They are as stubble fully dry." Nah. 1:10. "They are as stubble before the flame." Joel 2:5, "They are like dust." 2 Kings 13:7, "Yes, like small dust." Isaiah 29:5, "They are like a morning cloud, an early dew, a little smoke." Hosea 13:3. "They will disappear like the morning mist, like dew in the morning sun, like chaff blown by the wind, like smoke from a chimney."

**Oh, the weakness of man! Oh, the power of God!** No people on

earth have such a power on their sides as the saints have. Consult these scriptures, 2 Kings 6:16; 2 Chron. 32:6-7; Isaiah 8:9-10; Num. 13:28, 30-33, and 14:9. No Christian can look upon the strong and mighty enemies of Zion in a scripture glass—but must behold them as weak and impotent people. Who could but smile to see weak children to attempt to besiege a wall of brass, or a wall of fire? Zech. 2:5; as great a folly and weakness it is for wicked men to make attempts upon the saints, who have been to this day, and will be to the end, a trembling and a burdensome stone to all who gather together against them, Zech. 12:2-3.

Sense looks upon the powers of the world as strong, mighty, and invincible; but faith looks upon them as poor, weak, contemptible, gasping, dying men. Thus heroic Luther looked upon them, "I care neither for Rome's favor nor fury; I am neither fond of the one, nor afraid of the other." It is dangerous to look upon the powers of the world in the *devil's multiplying glass*; it is best and safest to look upon them in a *scripture glass*, and then we shall never fear them, nor sinfully submit to them! But,

**(5.) Fifthly, If God be specially present with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then know for your comfort, that none can be against you but they must be against God himself!** Acts 9:4-6. God is with you in all your troubles, as a father is with his child, a husband with his wife, a general with his army, and as a confederate with his allies, who is with them offensively and defensively. Hence they are said to rage against God, Isaiah 37:28-29; and to blaspheme God, 2 Kings 19:3, 6; and to fight against God, Acts 5:38-39, and 23:9; Proverbs 21:30. To fight against God is labor in vain. Who ever fought against God and prospered? Some think that this phrase of fighting against God is drawn from the fable of the giants, which were said to make war with the gods.

The church of Christ always flourishes most, and increases most—when the tyrants of the earth oppose it most, and persecute it most. Diocletian laid down the empire in great discontent, because he could not by any persecution suppress the true Christian religion. The more violent he was against the people of God, the more they increased and multiplied, and the more they were emboldened and encouraged; and therefore in a rage

he throws up all. But,

**[1.] First, You have the presence of an ALMIGHTY God.** Gen. 17:1, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect," Gen. 49:25, and Num. 24:4. The word *El-Shaddai* signifies sufficiency. God is an all-sufficient good, and a self-sufficient good; he is an independent good, an absolute good, an original good, a universal good. Some derive the word *Shaddai* from *Shad*, which signifies a *breast*, because God feeds his children with sufficiency of all good things, as the loving mother does the child with the milk of her breasts. God is the only satisfactory good, and proportionable good, and suitable good to our souls—as the breast is the most suitable good to the child's stomach. And others derive the word *Shaddai* from *Shaddad*, which signifies to spoil, conquer, or overcome, and so they say that God did here invert or overcome the order of nature, in causing the barren to bear. But most authors do translate it *omnipotent*. God, then, is called *Shaddai*, that is omnipotent and all-sufficient, for his omnipotence includes also all-sufficiency.

**[2.] Secondly, You have the presence of a LOVING God with you.** Isaiah 43:4, "Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." But that this may the better stick and work, you must remember,

First, That God loves you with a **first** love, see Deut. 7:7-8: 1 John 4:19, "We love him because he first loved us." Our love is but reciprocal to his. God first cast an eye of love upon us—before we cast an eye of love on him, and therefore God is no way indebted to us for our love. Mary answers not *Rabboni*—until Christ first said unto her *Mary!* John 20:16. The pure nature of love is more seen in God's first love to us—than in our reciprocal love to him. By nature we were *without* God, and *afar off* from God; we were *strangers* to God, and *enemies* to God, yes, *haters* of God; and therefore if God had not loved us firstly, we had been everlastingly undone! Eph. 2:12, 19; Romans 5:10, and 1:30.

Secondly, As God loves you with a first love, so he loves you with a **free** love: Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." I know they are backslidden—but I will heal their backslidings. I know they have broken their bones by their fall—but I will make those broken bones

to rejoice. I know there is nothing at all in them, which is excellent or eminent, which is honorable or acceptable, which is laudable or lovely—yet "I will love them freely," of my own, free, rich, absolute, sovereign, and independent grace!

Thirdly, As he loves you with a free love, so he loves you with an **everlasting** love: Jer. 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Heb., "I love you with the love of perpetuity, or with the love of eternity. My love and my affections continue still the same to you, and shall continue forever!" Or, as others carry the words, "I love you with an ancient love, or with the love of antiquity; I love you still with the same affection that in former ages I bore towards you."

Fourthly, As he loves you with an everlasting love, so he loves you with an **unchangeable** love: Mal. 3:6, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." *Men* change, and *counsels* change, and *occurrences* change, and *friends* change, and *relations* change, and *kingdoms* change, and *commonwealths* change—but God never changes, as Balaam confesses, who was the devil's lackey, and who had a mind to dance with the devil all day, and then sup with Christ at night, Num. 23:10. God is neither false nor fickle; he cannot, like men, say and unsay; he cannot alter his mind nor eat his words. "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind," 1 Sam. 15:29 Psalm 89:34; Men are so mutable and changeable, that there is no hold to be taken of what they say; but God is immutable in his nature, in his essence, in his counsels, in his attributes, in his decrees, in his promises, etc. He is, as the learned say, *Omnina immutabilis*, "Altogether immutable".

Fifthly, As he loves you with an unchangeable love, so he loves you with a **special** love, with a **peculiar** love, with a **distinguishing** love, with a **superlative** love. "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the Lord, who remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches

over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord!" Psalms 146:5-10

Sixthly and lastly, As he loves his people with a special love, with a peculiar love, so he loves them with the **greatest** love, with a **matchless** love. "O Daniel greatly beloved." John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son," etc. This signifies the *greatness* of God's love, the *vehemency* of his love, and the *admirableness* of his love.

Now, what an unspeakable comfort must this be to his saints, to have the presence of a loving God, to have the presence of such a loving God with them in all their troubles and deep distresses! If the presence of a loving friend, a loving relation in our troubles and distresses, is such a mercy, oh, what then is the presence of a loving God!

**[3.] Thirdly, It is the presence of an ACTIVE God, who will be a defense to you, a shield to you, a sword to you, a sun to you, a strong tower to you, a salvation to you!** None can withstand him, none can equal him, none can out-act him, Psalm 18:2; 2 Chron. 16:9; Proverbs 18:10; Jer. 32:40-41; Isaiah 30:18-19, and 27:3; Jer. 31:28.

**[4.] Fourthly, You have the presence of a wakeful God, of a WATCHFUL God—of a God who never, no never, slumbers or sleeps!** God will be so far from *sleeping*, that he will not so much as *slumber*, Psalm 121:3-5. The phrase is taken from watchmen, who stand on the walls in time of war to discover the approaches of enemies, and accordingly give warning. Now, watchmen have been treacherous and sleepy. The capitol of Rome would have been taken by the Gauls, if the geese had not been more wakeful than the watchmen of the walls. *Iphicrates*, the Athenian captain, visiting the guards on the walls of Corinth, found one of the watch asleep, and presently thrust him through with his sword, saying, "Dead I found him, and dead I left him!" Though watchmen slumber and sleep—yet that God who is present with his people does neither; *his seven eyes* are always open.

**[5.] Fifthly, You have the presence of a WISE God, of an omniscient God.** God *fills* all things, he *encompasses* all things, and he

*sustains* all things—and therefore he must needs *know* all things, Ezek. 3:9; Psalm 33:10-11; Isaiah 46:10, and 40:28; Romans 11:33; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jonah 1:5; 2 Kings 14:6; Mat. 26:24-25. God can find *Jonah* in the bottom of the ship; and *Jeroboam's wife* in her disguises; and *Judas* in his treason; and *Demas* in his apostasy; and the *scribes* and *Pharisees* in their hypocrisy, 2 Tim. 4:10; Mat. 23; Rev. 4:6. The whole world is to him as a sea of glass—clear and transparent. There is nothing hidden from his eyes!

"All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do," Heb. 4:13. "Naked," as when the skin is pulled off, and "opened as the entrails of a sacrifice," cut down the back. The apostle, say some, uses a metaphor taken from a sheep, whose skin is taken off, and he hanged up by the neck, with his back towards the wall, and all his entrails laid bare and exposed to open view. He alludes, say others, to the anatomizing of a creature, wherein men are very cautious to find out every little vein or muscle, though they be ever so hidden. They are *naked*, therefore God sees their outside; and *opened*, dissected, quartered, and cleft asunder through the backbone, so that he sees their inside also. Opened is more than naked: naked is that which is not clothed or covered; opened is that whose inwards are discovered and made conspicuous.

Is it such a comfort to have the presence of a wise and knowing friend with us in our greatest troubles and deepest distresses? what a transcendent comfort must it be then to enjoy the presence of an all-seeing and an all-knowing God in all our troubles and distresses! The *eye of heaven* sees all, and knows all, and writes down all your troubles and trials, your sorrows and sufferings, your losses and crosses, Mat. 6:32; and accordingly will an all-knowing God act for his own glory and his people's good.

**[6.] Sixthly and lastly, You have the presence of a God of MERCY, a God of tenderness, a God of compassion.** Exod. 33:7-8; Jer. 31:18-20; Hosea 11:8-9; Lam. 3:22. "His compassions never fail!" Mercy is as essential to God—as light is to the sun, Micah 7:18-19, or as heat is to the fire. He delights in mercy, as the senses and faculties of the soul do in their several actions. Patience, and mildness, and mercy, and

compassion, and peace are the fruits of his heart—the offspring which the divine nature produces. God's compassions are *fatherly* compassions, Psalm 103:13; they are *motherly* compassions, Isaiah 49:15; they are *brotherly* compassions, Heb. 2:12; they are *friendly* compassions, Cant. 5:1-2. Oh, how sweet must the presence of a God of mercy, a God of compassion, be to the saints in a day of trouble! The presence of a compassionate friend in a day of distress is very desirable and comfortable; what then is the presence of a compassionate God!

Thus you see that there is no presence, compared to the divine presence! There is no presence, compared to the special presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. But,

**(7.) Seventhly and lastly, If God is specially present with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses—then let them all know for their comfort, that this presence will make up the lack or loss of all outward comforts—**this presence will make up the loss of a husband, a child, a friend, an estate, etc., 1 Sam. 1:8. Look! as all light meets in the sun, and as all water meets in the sea, so all our outward comforts meet in the God of all comfort, 2 Cor. 1:3. "When Alexander asked king Porus, being then his prisoner, how he would be treated. Porus answered in one word, "like a king!" Just so—all things, all comforts are to be found in this special presence of God with his people, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Certainly the gracious presence of the Lord is infinitely better than the presence of all outward comforts, as you know one sun is more glorious and comfortable than ten thousand stars.

**QUESTION. But how may a person who has lost this gracious presence of God, recover it again?**

**First, Observe HOW you lost this presence of God, and labor to recover it by a contrary course.** Did you lose it by sinful omissions? then be more active in a way of duty. Did you lose the presence of God by neglecting your watch, or by not walking with God, or by an eager pursuit of the world, or by giving in to this or that temptation, or by letting fall your communion with God? take a contrary course. Now keep up your

watch, walk close with God, keep up a daily converse with lively Christians, let your heart and affections be set upon things above, keep your ground in the face of all temptations, maintain a standing communion with God, Psalm 119:63; Col. 3:1-2.

After Christ had stood knocking and calling to his spouse—"Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled one; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night," Cant. 5:2-3, 6—but found no entrance, he *retired* and withdrew himself, because she would not arise and put on her coat. But when she bestirs herself, "she *finds* him whom her soul loved," chapter 3:1-4. Then Christ comes into his garden again, and returns to his spouse again, and forgets all former unkindness, chapter 6:1-2. But.

**Secondly, Inquire WHERE, WHEN, and WHY God has withdrawn himself; as we do when dear friends absent themselves from us.** "O Hope of Israel, its Savior in times of distress, **why** are you like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who stays only a night? **Why** are you like a man taken by surprise, like a warrior powerless to save? You are among us, O Lord, and we bear your name; do not forsake us!" Jeremiah 14:8-9

**Thirdly, Do not part with Christ for anything—not for a right eye, or a right hand, nor for an Isaac or a Benjamin.** Don't say this work is too high, and feat too hard, and the other too hot, and the other too dangerous—in order to the recovery of God's countenance and presence. You must not think anything in the world too much to *do* for Christ, or to *suffer* for Christ. You will be a happy man if you can recover Christ's lost presence; though it be upon the hardest terms imaginable! But,

**Fourthly, Let your hearts lie humble and low under the loss of God's gracious presence.** Psalm 51:8-12; 1 Pet. 1:5, 6. "All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him." Song of Songs 3:1. "Have you seen the one my heart loves?" Song of Songs 3:3. "I opened for my lover, but my lover had left; he was gone. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him but did not find him. I called him but he did not answer." Song of Songs 5:6. For,

(1.) The loss of God's gracious presence is the greatest loss.

(2.) The loss of God's gracious presence is a loss-embittering loss; it is a loss that will greatly embitter all your worldly losses. I have lost my health, I have lost a precious child, I have lost a gracious spouse, who was the delight of my eyes and the joy of my heart; I have lost a costly estate, I have lost an intimate friend, I have lost a thriving trade. Oh—but that which embitters all my losses, and puts a sting into them, is this—that I have lost the gracious presence of God that once I enjoyed!

(3.) The loss of God's gracious presence is a loss that all outward comforts can never make up. When the sun is set, nothing can make it day with us.

(4.) The loss of God's gracious presence is an soul loss; and no losses can be compared to soul losses. As there are no mercies, compared to soul mercies, so there are no losses to soul losses.

(5.) The loss of God's gracious presence is a loss that will cost a man dearly, before it will be made up again. Oh the sighs, the groans, the strong cries, the earnest prayers, the bottles of tears that the recovery of the divine presence will cost a Christian!

Upon all these accounts, how well does it befit a Christian, to lie humble at the foot of God!

**Fifthly, Lift up a mighty cry to heaven.** Thus the saints of old have done. Consult these scriptures, Psalm 51:6-13; Lam. 3:56-57; Psalm 4:6-7, 27:9, 38:21-22, 138:3, and 119:8, "O forsake me not utterly." Christ was forsaken for a few hours; David for a few months; and Job for a few years—for the trial and exercise of his faith and patience; but then they all sent up a mighty cry to heaven. Leave them God did, to their thinking; forsake them he did in regard of *vision*—but not in regard of *union*. The promise is, that "God will draw near to us if we draw near to him," James 4:8. Draw near to God in duty, and he will draw near to you in mercy: sanctify him, and he will satisfy you.

**Prayer** is the only means to supply all defects, it gets all, and makes up the loss of all; as a gracious poor woman said in her distress, "I have no

friend—but I have prayer; that will get favor with my God; so long as I can find a praying heart, God will, I am sure of that, find a pitying heart and a helping hand." It is not the length—but the strength of prayer; it is not the labor of the lip—but the travail of the heart—which prevails with God, Jer. 29:12-14. It is not the *arithmetic* of our prayers, how many they are; nor the *rhetoric* of our prayers, how eloquent they be; nor the *geometry* of our prayers, how long they be; nor the *music* of our prayers, how sweet they be; nor the *logic* of our prayers, how methodical they are—which will prevail with God. It is only fervency, importunity in prayer, which will make a man prevalent with God. Fervent prayer hits the mark, carries the day, and pierces the walls of heaven, though like those of Gaza, made of brass and iron, James 5:16-17; Luke 18; Isaiah 45:2. The child has got many a kiss and many a hug by **crying**. If God has withdrawn his presence, the best, the surest, and the readiest way to recover it is to send up a mighty cry to heaven. "In my distress I called to the Lord; I **cried** to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears." Psalm 18:6. "I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me." Psalm 77:1. "In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free." Psalm 118:5. But,

**Sixthly, Be sure you don't take up your greatest delight in any creature, in any comfort, in any contentment, in any worldly enjoyment.** Jer. 50:6. When the presence of God is withdrawn from you, say as Absalom, "What is all this to me, so long as I am banished my father's presence, so long as I can't see the king's face?" 2 Sam. 14:24, 28, 32-33. When the mother sees that the child is enthralled with the doll or the rattle—she comes not in sight. If you take up your rest in any of the *dolls* and *rattles*—in any of the poor things of this world, God will certainly keep out of sight. He will never honor them with his countenance and presence—who take up in anything below himself, below his favor, below his presence.

I have read of a devout pilgrim, who along the way to Jerusalem was very kindly and nobly entertained in several places—but still he cried out, "Oh—but this is not Jerusalem! this is not Jerusalem!" So when you cast your eye upon this creature or that, oh then cry out, "This is not the presence of God, this is not the presence of God!" And when you begin to be tickled

and enthralled with this and that enjoyment, with this or that contentment, oh then remember "this is not the presence of God, this is not the presence of God!"

"Here is a gracious spouse, here are precious children, here is a pleasant home, here is a wonderful climate, here is a gainful trade, etc.—but what are all these to me, so long as my sun has set in a cloud, and God has withdrawn his presence from me? Remember this once for all—that the whole world is but a barren wilderness without the countenance and presence of God! "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you." Psalm 63:1-3. But,

**Seventhly and lastly, Patiently and quietly wait upon him in the way of his ordinances for the recovery of his presence.** Consult these scriptures. [Exod. 20:24; Mat. 18:20; Isaiah 64:5; Psalm 27:4, and 65:4; Rev. 2:1; Psalm 40:1-3; Isaiah 8:17; Mic. 7:7-9; Isaiah 26:8-9.] Here God dwells, here he walks, here he makes known his glory, here he gives forth his love, here he vouchsafes his presence. When God is withdrawn, your great business is to prize ordinances, and to keep close to ordinances, until God shall be pleased to lift up the light of his countenance and vouchsafe his presence to you. You will never recover the divine presence by neglecting ordinances, nor by slighting ordinances, nor by turning your back upon ordinances, nor by entertaining low thoughts of ordinances. He who thinks ordinances to be needless things, concludes—

(1.) That the taking away of the kingdom of heaven from the Jews was no great judgment, Mat. 21:43.

(2.) That the bestowing of it upon other people is no great mercy. If God is gone, it is good to lie at the pool until he returns, John 5:2-10. There are many dear Christians who have lost their God for a time—but after a time they have found him again in the way of his ordinances; and therefore let no temptation draw you off from ordinances; say, "Here I will live, here I will lie, here I will wait at the pool of ordinances, until the

Lord shall return in mercy to my soul!"

I shall follow this *discourse of the divine presence* with my earnest prayers that it may from on high be so specially blessed, as that it may issue in the furtherance of the spiritual and eternal good, both of Writer and Reader.

## **A Cabinet of Choice Jewels**

**by Thomas Brooks**

"Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter 1:10.

"Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves, know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except you be reprobates?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

### **Introduction**

### **Eighteen Special Maxims and Directions**

### **Infallible Evidences of True Saving Grace**

I. First, There are some things in regard of SIN, and a Christian's actings about it—which manifests a gracious estate, and which discovers a saving principle of grace to be in the soul.

II. Secondly, Where the constant, ordinary, standing, and abiding purpose, disposition, frame, and general bent of a man's heart, soul, spirit, desires, and endeavors—are fixed and set for God, for grace,

for holiness in heart and life—there is a most sure and infallible work of God passed upon that man's soul.

III. Thirdly, If your OBEDIENCE be the obedience of faith, then your estate is good, then you have assuredly an infallible work of God upon your souls.

IV. Fourthly, A gracious heart is an UNIFORM heart.

V. Fifthly, A gracious heart sets himself most against his darling sin, his bosom-sin.

VI. Sixthly, True desires of grace is grace; true desires after Christ, and grace, and holiness—is grace.

## **Saving Repentance**

## **How Far Can a Hypocrite Go?**

## **Directions and Applications**

Being a plain discovery of, or, what men are worth for Eternity, and how it is likely to fare with them in the eternal world. Here is also a clear and large Discovery of the several rounds in Jacob's Ladder, that no hypocrite under Heaven can climb up to. Here are also such close, piercing, distinguishing and discovering evidences as will reach and suit those Christians who are highest in grace and spiritual enjoyments; and here are many evidences, which are suited to the capacities and experiences of the weakest Christians in Christ's school: And here Christians may see as in a mirror, what a sober use and improvement they ought to make of their evidences for Heaven; and how in the use of their gracious evidences they ought to live. First, upon the free grace of God. Secondly, upon the Mediatorial righteousness of Christ. Thirdly, upon the Covenant of Grace. With several other points of grand importance, etc.

"Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter 1:10.

"Examine your selves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves, know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except you be reprobates?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

### **Epistle Dedicatory**

Honored and Beloved in our Lord Jesus,  
All confluence of blessings, both for this life and for that which is to come, from the Father of mercies and God of all consolations. I owe more than an epistle to each of you. But the Lord having made you near and dear one to another more ways than one, I take the boldness to present this treatise to you jointly. Here is nothing in this book that relates to government of church or state. The design of this treatise is to show what men are worth for eternity, and how it is likely to go with them in the eternal world. There are none but bear about with them, precious and immortal souls, which are more worth than ten thousand thousand worlds. If the soul is safe—all is safe. If the soul is well—all is well. If the soul is lost—all is lost. The first great work that men are to attend in this world is the eternal safety and security of their souls; the next great work is to know, to be assured, that it shall go well with their souls forever. [Granctensis tells of a woman who was so affected with souls' miscarryings, that she besought God to stop up the passage into hell with her soul and body, that none might have entrance. O divine soul! invested with the image of God, espoused to him by faith, etc. —Bernard.] And these are the main things which are aimed at in this discourse.

The soul is the better and more noble part of man. Upon the soul the image of God is most fairly stamped. The soul is first converted, and the soul shall be first and most glorified. The soul is that spiritual and immortal substance, which is capable of union with God, and of communion with God, and of an eternal fruition of God. Plato, though a heathen, could say that he thought the soul to be made all of eternity, and that the putting the soul into the body was a sign of great wrath from

God.

"Each living corpse must yield at last to death,  
And every life must lose his vital breath.  
The soul of man—which only lives on high,  
And is an image of eternity." (Pindar)

The Romans, when their emperors and great ones died, and their bodies were buried, they caused an eagle to mount on high, thereby to signify the soul's immortality and ascent. A Scythian captain, having for a draught of water delivered up his city, cried out, What have I lost, what have I betrayed? So many at last will cry out, "Oh, what have I lost! I have lost God, and Christ, and heaven, and have betrayed my precious and immortal soul into the hands of divine justice, and into the hands of Satan!" Who these men are, who will at last thus cry out, this treatise does discover.

I have read that there was a time when the Romans wore their jewels on their shoes. Most men in this day do worse, for they trample that matchless jewel of their souls under feet; and who these are this treatise does discover. Chrysostom well observes, "That whereas God has given many other things double; two eyes to see with, two ears to hear with, two hands to work with, and two feet to walk with, to the intent that the failing of the one might be supplied by the other. But he has given us but one soul, and if that be lost, have you another soul to give in recompense for it?"

Now, who those are whose souls are in a safe estate, and who those are whose souls are in danger of being lost forever, this treatise does plainly and fully discover. To describe to the life, who that man is, who is truly happy in this world, and who shall be blessed forever in the other world—is the work of this ensuing treatise, Psalm 15, 144:15. The grace of the covenant in us is a sure evidence of God's entering into the covenant of grace with us. **To be in a gracious state is true happiness—but to know ourselves to be in such a state is the top of our happiness in this world.** A man may have grace, and yet, for a time, not know it, 1 John 5:13. The child lives in the womb—but does not know it. A man may be in a gracious state, and yet not see it; he may have a saving work of

God upon his soul, and yet not discern it; he may have the root of the matter in him, and yet not be able to evidence it, Psalm 77:6, Psalm 88. Now to help such poor hearts to a right understanding of their spiritual condition, and that they may see and know what they are worth for another world, and so go to their graves in joy and peace, I have sent this treatise abroad into the world. Will you give me leave to say,

**(1.) First,** Some men of name in their day have laid down such things for evidences or characters of grace, which, being weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, will be found too light. But here, a mantle of love may be of more use than a lamp; and therefore,

**(2.) Secondly,** Many, yes, very many there are, whose graces are very weak, and much buried under the earth and ashes of many fears, doubts, scruples, strong passions, prevailing corruptions, and diabolical suggestions, who would give as many worlds as there are men in the world, had they so many in their hands to give, to know that they have grace, and that their spiritual estate is good, and that they shall be happy forever. Now this treatise is fitted up for the service of these poor hearts; for the weakest Christians may turn to many clear and well-bottomed evidences in this treatise, and throw the gauntlet to Satan, and bid him prove if he can, that ever any profane person or cunning hypocrite under heaven, had such evidences, or such fair certificates to show for heaven, which he has to show.

The generality of Christians are weak. They are dwarfs—rather than giants; they are bruised reeds—rather than tall cedars; they are babes—rather than strong men; lambs—rather than sheep, etc. [1 Peter 2:2, 3; 1 John 2:12-14; Isaiah 40:11.] Now, for the service of their souls, I have been willing to send this treatise into the world; for this treatise may speak to them when I **may** not; yes, when I **cannot**; yes, which is more, when I **am** not.

Mr. Dod would frequently say, he cared not where he was if he could but answer these two questions:

1. Who am I?

2. What am I doing here? Am I a child of God? and am I in my way? But,

**(3.) Thirdly,** Some there are who are so excessively and immoderately taken up with their signs, marks, and evidences of grace, and of their gracious state, etc., that Christ is too much neglected, and more rarely minded by them. Their hearts do not run out so freely, so fully, so strongly, so frequently, so delightfully towards Christ as they should do, nor as they would do, if they were not too inordinately taken up with their marks and signs. Now, for the rectifying of these mistakes, and the cure of these spiritual maladies, this treatise is sent into the world. We may and ought to make a sober use of characters and evidences of our gracious estates, to support, comfort, and encourage us on our way to heaven—but still in subordination to Christ, and to the fresh and frequent exercises of faith upon the person, blood, and righteousness of Jesus. But oh how few Christians are there who are skilled in this work of works, this art of arts, this mystery of mysteries. [Where Christ was born, they were all so taken up with their guests, that he was not minded nor regarded; when others lay in stately rooms, he must be laid in a manger, Luke 2:7.] But,

**(4.) Fourthly,** Some there are who in those days are given up to enthusiastical fancies, strange raptures, revelations, and to the sad delusions of their own hearts; crying down with all their might all discoveries of believers' spiritual estates by Scripture characters, marks, and signs of sanctifications, 2 Thes. 2:9-11, as carnal and low; and all this under fair pretenses of exalting Christ, and maintaining the honor of his righteousness and free grace, and of denying ourselves and our own righteousness. Though sanctification is a branch of the covenant of grace as well as justification—yet there are a sort of people who would not have Christians to rejoice in their sanctification, under a pretense of reflecting dishonor upon their free justification by Christ, Jer. 33:8, Ezek. 36:25-27. There are many who place all their religion in opinions, in brain-sick notions, in airy speculations, in quaint disputations, in immediate revelations, and in their warm zeal for this or that form of worship. Now, that these may be recovered, and healed, and prevented from doing further mischief in the world, I have at this time put to a helping hand. But,

**(5.) Fifthly,** no man can tell what is in the womb of divine Providence.

No man can tell what a day, a night, an hour, may bring forth. [The Brachmanni had their graves before their doors. The Sybarites at banquets had a skull moved from hand to hand by every guest at the table. The Egyptians, in the midst of their feasts, used to have the skeleton of a dead man set before them, as a memorandum to the guests of their mortality. The poor heathen could say that the whole life of man should be a meditation of death. Dwell upon that. Deut. 32:29, Proverbs 27:1.]

Who can sum up the many possible deaths which are still lurking in his own bodies, or the innumerable hosts of external dangers which beleaguer him on every side, or how many invisible arrows fly about his ears continually! How soon he may have his mortal wound given him by one or other of them—who can tell? Now, how sad would it be for a man to have a summons to appear before God in that eternal world, before his heart and life are changed, and his evidences for heaven cleared up to him! The life of a man is but a shadow, a runner, a span, a vapor, a flower, etc. **Though there is but one way to come into the world—yet there are many thousand ways to be sent out of the world;** and this should bespeak every Christian to have his evidences for heaven always ready and at hand, yes, in his hand as well as in his heart, and then he will find it an easy thing to die. The king of terrors will then be the king of desires to him, and he will then travel to glory under a spirit of joy and triumph.

We carry about in our bodies, the material for a thousand deaths, and may die a thousand different ways in several hours. As many senses, as many members, nay, as many pores as there are in the body, so many windows there are for death to enter in at. Death needs not spend all his arrows upon us; a worm, a gnat, a fly, a hair, a seed of a raisin, a skin of a grape, the stumbling of a horse, the trip of a foot, the prick of a pin, the cutting of a fingernail, the cutting out of a corn; all these have been to others, and any of them may be to us, the means of our death within the space of a few days; nay, of a few hours; nay, of a few moments!

Does not it therefore highly concern us to have our evidences for heaven cleared, sealed, shining, and at hand? Naturalists tell us that if a man sees a cockatrice first, the cockatrice dies. But if the cockatrice sees a man

first, the man dies. However that may be; certainly if we so see death first as to prepare for it, as to get our evidences for heaven ready, we shall kill it. But if death sees us first, and arrests us first before we are prepared, and before our evidences for heaven are cleared, it will kill us everlastingly, it will kill us eternally. Time travails with God's decrees, and in their season brings them forth. But little does any man know what is in the womb of tomorrow, until God has signified his will by the event: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." Proverbs 27:1. That man who knows what he himself intends to bring forth—does not know what the day will bring forth; the next day is not so near the former in time as it may be remote from it in the effects of it.

Providence in this life is the map of changes, the picture of mutability. Who can sum up the strange circumferences, and rare circuits, and labyrinths of providence? Providence is as a wheel in the midst of a wheel, whose motion, and work, and end in turning is not discerned by every common eye, Ezek. 1:16.

Three dreadful judgments God has lately visited us with, namely, sword, pestilence, and fire. But who repents; who smites upon his thigh; who finds out the plague of his own heart; who says, What have I done? who ceases from doing evil; who learns to do well; who turns to the Most High; who lays hold on everlasting strength; who makes peace with God; who throws himself into the gap? etc., Isaiah 1:16-17, Psalm 106:23. Are not multitudes grown much worse after judgments, than they were before? Do not they bid higher defiance to heaven than ever? And, therefore, who can tell what further controversy God may have with such a people, especially considering that solemn scripture, Lev. 26:14th to the 34th verse, with scores of others that sound that way? Were our forefathers alive, how sadly would they blush to see such a horrid, degenerate posterity as is to be found in the midst of us! How is our forefathers' thriftiness converted into riot and luxury; their frugality into pride and prodigality, their simplicity into subtlety, their sincerity into hypocrisy, their charity into cruelty, their chastity into lust and wantonness, their sobriety into drunkenness, their plain-dealing into deceit, and their works of compassion into works of oppression, etc. And

may we not fear that even for these things God may once more visit us?

The nations are angry, and we are weak in their eyes; our enemies are not asleep abroad, and are not we too secure at home? And what further confusions may be in the world, who can tell? I point at these things only to provoke all those into whose hands this treatise may fall—to make sure work for an eternal world, to make sure their evidences for heaven, and to keep their evidences for life and glory always sparkling and shining. And then I am sure that the worst of calamities, the sorest of judgments—shall but translate them from earth—to heaven, from a wilderness—to a paradise, from misery—to glory, and from mixed and mutable enjoyments—to the pure and everlasting enjoyments of God, Christ, the angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. 12:22-24. But,

**(6.) Sixthly** and lastly, In this treatise, as in a mirror—all sorts of profane people, and all sorts of self-flatterers, and all sorts of hypocrites, may see—

[1.] That their present state and condition is not so safe, nor yet so happy, as they judge it to be.

[2.] Again, in this treatise, as in a mirror, all sorts of profane people, and all sorts of self-flatterers, and all sorts of hypocrites, may see the happy and blessed state of the people of God, against whom their spirits rise and swell, etc.

[3.] Again, in this treatise, as in a mirror, all sorts of profane people, and all sorts of self-flatterers, and all sorts of hypocrites, may see what those things are, which they need, and that they ought to beg of God.

[4.] Again, in this treatise, as in a mirror, all sorts of profane people, and all sorts of self-flatterers, and all sorts of hypocrites, may see what those things are without which they can neither be happy here nor hereafter. Now, were there no other reasons for my sending forth this treatise into the world, this alone might justify me.

But, beloved, before I close up this epistle, give me permission to say, that **there are two sorts of men** that all are bound (1.) highly to prize, (2.)

cordially to love, and (3.) greatly to honor above all other men in the world; and they are these: First, Christians of public spirits; secondly, Christians of charitable spirits, men of merciful spirits, men of tender and compassionate spirits.

**(1.) First, Christians of public spirits,** myself and all others are bound, 1, highly to prize; 2, cordially to love; and, 3, greatly to honor above all other men in the world; and that,

**1. First,** because a public-spirited man is a common good, a common blessing. All in the family, all in the court, all in the city, all in the country, fare the better for that Christian's sake that is of a public spirit. All in Laban's family did fare the better for Jacob's sake; and all in the city of Zoar did fare the better for Lot's sake; and all Pharaoh's court and the whole country of Egypt did fare the better for Joseph's sake, Gen. 30:27, and 19:21-24, and Gen. 41, etc. Sodom was safe while Lot was in it. Elijah was a man of public spirit, and he was "the chariots and horsemen of Israel," 2 Kings 2:12. Moses was a man of public spirit, and he often diverted ruining judgments from falling upon Israel, Psalm 106:23. Phinehas was a man of public spirit, and he takes up his censer, and stands between the living and the dead, and the plague was stopped, Num. 16:46, 49.

Christians of public spirits are public mercies, public blessings. They are a public diffusive blessing in the places where they live. Christians of public spirits are the true Atlases both of church and state; they are the pillars on whom all do rest, the props on whom all do lean. [Though I do not, I dare not, say, that every public spirit is a gracious spirit. Yet this I must say, that every gracious spirit is a public spirit.] Do but overturn these pillars and all will fall about your ears, as the house did on the Philistines when Samson shook it. Rack but these, and kingdoms and commonwealths shall be quickly racked themselves.

**2. Secondly,** Because public-spirited Christians are most like Christ, and to the choicest and most excellent saints. [John 1:7, Heb. 2, Psalm. 63:8, Romans 8:30-38; Heb. 7:25; John 14:1-4; Acts 10:88; Philip. 2:4, 6. Christ made himself poor to make others rich—but men of narrow souls make others poor to make themselves rich, 2 Cor. 6:8, 8:9.] Christ left his

Father's bosom for a public good; he assumed our nature for a public good; he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath for a public good; he died for a public good, and he rose for a public good; he ascended to heaven for a public good, and he continues in heaven for a public good. When he was in this world he went up and down doing good. He healed others—but was hurt himself; he fed and filled others—but was hungry himself. Christ was all for a public good: "Look not every man on his own things—but every man also on the things of others." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," Philip. 2:4-5. Though SELF be a great stickler—yet he who will write after Christ's copy, must neglect himself to serve others. That Christian acts most like Christ, who prefers the public a saving interest before his own private interest.

The stars have their brightness, not for themselves—but for the use of others; and the sun has her shining light—but not for herself—but for others. In the natural body every member is diffusive; the eye conveys the light, the head thoughts, the liver blood, etc. And why should it not be so in the politic body also?

And as Christ, so Moses was a man of a public spirit, when God made a very fair offer to him, that he would make him a great nation if he would but stand neutral until God had revenged himself upon a rebellious people. But Moses had no mind to preferment upon those terms; he preferred the public good before his own honor, profit, and advancement, and therefore follows God close, and never gives over pleading for them until he had procured their pardon, and turned away the wrath of God from them, Exod. 32:10-12; so Num. 14:4, 10, 13-14.

So Joshua was a man of a public spirit: "When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them," Joshua 19:49. Joshua might have served himself first, and he might have taken as large an inheritance as he had pleased—but he preferred the good of the people before his own. He who had divided the land to others, was himself contented with very poor portion, for his inheritance was among the barren mountains, as some observe.

So Jehoiada was a man of a public spirit. You read that they "buried him

in the city of David among the kings, because he had done so much good in Israel," 2 Chron. 24:16. Men of public spirits shall be honored both living and dying.

So Nehemiah was a man of a brave public spirit. He continues twelve years in public work—at his own cost and charge, Neh. 5:14-15. So Esther was one of a public spirit, and therefore she takes her life in her hand, and goes in to the king with an If I perish, I perish! And so Mordecai was a man of public spirit. "Mordecai the Jew became the prime minister, with authority next to that of King Xerxes himself. He was very great among the Jews, who held him in high esteem, because he worked for the good of his people and was a friend at the royal court for all of them," Esther 10:3. Mordecai was more mindful and careful of his people's peace, prosperity, and welfare—than he was of his own concerns.

And so David was a man of a public spirit, for "after David had served his generation according to the will of God, he died and was buried," Acts 13:36. The Spirit of the Lord has put this upon record for David's honor and our imitation. David's soul did not live in a narrow bowling-alley. He was not a man of so poor, low, and narrow a spirit as to make himself the center of his designs and actions. David was a man of a generous, noble spirit. The public good lay nearest his heart, and to serve his generation he was willing to spend and be spent.

The public-spirited man, of all men, is most like to Christ! Those worthies who were once glorious on earth—are now triumphing in heaven! The apostle speaks of some who are lovers of themselves, 2 Tim. 3:2, and who are seekers of themselves, Philip. 2:21, and who are minders of themselves, Philip. 3:19. "They mind earthly things." Of all these we may say, as God speaks of Israel, "Israel is an empty vine; he brings forth fruit unto himself," Hosea 10:1; yes, of all these we may say that light is not more contrary to darkness, heaven to hell, glory to shame—than these are contrary to Christ, and to those precious servants of his who are crowned and chronicled in the blessed Scriptures for their public spiritedness and public usefulness in the world. But,

**3. Thirdly,** Men of public spirits are rare men, excellent men; of all men they most resemble God, who does good to all, Mat. 5:45. There are none

so excellent and truly honorable as these. All the instances just cited, make good the second particular evidences this. To which I may add that of Daniel, who was a man of a public spirit, and of that excellent spirit, as that he carried the bell from all the presidents and princes of Darius's court, Dan. 6:3. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because "an excellent spirit was in him," and the king set him over the whole realm.

I might give you many other instances from the patriarchs and apostles—but what need that, when these obvious examples speak so loud in the case. Men of public spirits have been very excellent and honorable in the very eyes of all the heathen. Take a few instances among the many hundreds that might be produced. Attilius Regulus was a man of that public spirit, that he valued not life, to serve his country; he got very much for his country—but little for himself; seven acres of land being all that ever he had. He was a man highly honored among the Romans. [In Austin's account he was the gallantest of all the old Romans.]

Titus Vespasian was a man of a public spirit. He governed so sweetly, moderately, and prudently, that he was generally termed the delight of mankind. He was greatly honored while he lived, and when he died the people wept so bitterly for him as if they had been resolved to have wept out their eyes.

Curius Dentatus was a man of public spirit, and very victorious. When his country was settled, he was found at dinner feeding on a few parched peas, when the ambassadors were sent to offer him a great sum of gold, which he refused, saying, "He had rather be at his peas, while they whom he ruled over had the gold, than he to have the gold and they the peas." When some unworthy people once accused him for keeping back something from the public, he brought forth a wooden platter, and did swear, that it was all he had reserved to himself of the spoils. He was kept in great honor and reputation among the people.

"That pilot dies nobly," says Seneca, "who perishes in the storm with the helm in his hand."

Aristides was a man of a public spirit. After the overthrow of the Persians,

when there was a mass of treasure, gold, silver, and rich apparel, he would not touch it, nor take so much as one penny of it for himself. He was in high esteem among the people.

Tully in his book, brings in a dead father, now in heaven as he supposed, encouraging his son to do service for his country, wherein himself had given him a most noble and notable example, upon a very high consideration, namely, There is a most sure and certain place in heaven for every Christian who shall procure the good of his country, either by freeing it from peril, or increasing the happiness of it any way. To hear a Gentile tell of heaven as of a thing certain; to hear him tell of certain places provided there for those who should do virtuously; to have the service of one's country pressed on his soul with so celestial an argument, what matter of wonder and admiration is it!

Cicero, speaking of men of public spirits, says, "Such ennobled spirits are the dear offspring, the delight and care of God; a divine race it is; from the heavens they come down to us, and to the heavens again, whenever they take their leaves of us, shall they triumphantly return."

A Catiline, that is—a trouble of mankind, grows as the weed, almost everywhere. But a Brutus, a worthy patriot, who bears the welfare of others, the true prosperity of his native land, upon his heart; and sets his eyes perpetually thereon for good—such a one is a rare jewel, worthy of all honor and embraces wherever he is found.

Christians of public spirits, of all men, do most exalt the Lord, and honor the Lord; and therefore the Lord, first or last, will most exalt them and honor them, "Those who honor me I will honor," 1 Sam. 2:30. In all the ages of the world, and in all the nations of the world, men of most public spirits have been best beloved, and most highly honored. A man of narrow spirit is like the hedge-hog, which never goes abroad but to gather what he can for himself, whoever suffers by it. But a man of a public spirit is like the pelican, which draws out her own blood for the good of others. And therefore the light of nature, as well as the law of grace, will lead men by the hand to honor such. "All of you, serve each other in humility." 1 Peter 5:5

**4. Fourthly,** Men of public spirits do most and best answer to one of the noblest and highest ends of their creation. [Does the bee gather honey for itself? Does the sheep yield wool for itself? Do not all creatures serve the community?] By the law of creation every man is bound to serve the public—to serve his generation. A narrow, a selfish-spirited man is a shame to his creation, because he walks so contrary to the great intendment of God in it. It is base and unworthy—for a man to make himself the center of all his actions. The very heathen man could say, "That a man's country, and his friends, and others, challenge a great part of him."

**That man sins against the very law of his being—who is swallowed up in his own private interests.** Men of public spirits should not bear the sword of justice in vain, for by the law of creation they are bound so to handle it as to be "a terror to evil-doers and a praise to those who do well," Romans 13:3-4. It is cruelty to the good—to spare the evil; it is wrong to the sheep—to let the wolves alone; it is the death of the lambs—to spare the lions. Better have one injurious person sit mourning—than a whole nation languishing, etc.

Men of public spirits should be for the consolation of all, and the peace of all, and the comfort of all, and the encouragement of all, and the safety of all. But this age is full of drones and ciphers, and of selfish, lifeless men—who look at nothing, who design nothing, who aim at nothing, and who endeavor nothing—but how to raise themselves, and greaten themselves, and enrich themselves, and build up themselves, though it be upon other's ruins. How many are there who are so swallowed up in their own interests and private concerns, that Gallio-like, Acts 18:17, they care not whether the public sink or swim. These put me in mind of Jotham's parable, Judg. 9:8-11, etc. The trees went forth to anoint a king over them. They go to the olive, to the fig tree, and to the vine. But shall I leave my fatness? says the olive; shall I leave my sweetness? says the fig-tree; and shall I leave my wine? says the vine, and go up and down for other trees?

This is the very temper, spirit, and demeanor of many in our day. If you go to them and desire them to lay out themselves for the public good, What!" they say, "Shall we leave our ease, our pleasure, our profits—to

serve others? We cannot do it! We will never do it!"

Learned Tully was a zealous patriot and lover of his country; he wished two wishes, though he never saw either of them effected. One was, that he "might see Rome settled in its just liberties;" and the other was, that he "might see every man's estate proportionable to his service and love to the public." Doubtless if Tully's wish might take place in our times, the purses of many would be more empty, and the charitable coffers would be more full. But,

**5. Fifthly,** Of all men on earth, there are none who have such a stock of prayers going for them as men of public spirits. Men of public spirits are not only highly prized, and cordially loved, and greatly honored—but they are also most upon the hearts of all sober and serious Christians, when they are in the mount with God. The lives of such are most desirable, and the deaths of such will be most lamented, who make it their business to serve their generation. Men of public spirits shall never die, as Jehoram did, undesired and unlamented, 2 Chron. 21:20. Men of public spirits lie most open to snares, temptations, and oppositions, etc. This all sober Christians well understand, and therefore they cannot but pray hard for such. The names, the lives, the liberties, the estates, and all the concerns of men of public spirits, always lie nearest their hearts, who lie nearest to the heart of Christ. Men of the greatest name, and of the greatest renown, and who have had the greatest stock of prayers going for them all the world over—have been men of public spirits. But,

**6. Sixthly** and lastly, When Christians of public spirits come to die, their public spiritedness and general usefulness will be no small comfort and cordial to them. Nehemiah was a man of a public spirit, and accordingly he pleads it with God. "Think upon me, oh my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people," Neh. 5:19. [See chapter 13:22.] This was that which sweetened death to Hezekiah, "I beseech you, O Lord, to remember now how I have walked before you in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in your sight," 2 Kings 20:3. And when David had "served his generation, he fell asleep," Acts 13:36. Sleep is not more welcome and sweet to a laboring man than death is to him who has made it his business, his work, sincerely and faithfully to serve his generation.

Such Christians who have made it their business, according to their different measures, faithfully to serve their generation, have found the king of terrors to be but the king of desires to them, 2 Tim. 4:7-9; when death to men of narrow, selfish spirits, has been like the handwriting upon the wall—very dreadful, Dan. 5:5-6. Many clear instances might be produced out of history to evidence this. Take one for all. Henry Beaufort, that rich and wretched cardinal, bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England—a man swallowed up in self-interest—in the reign of Henry the Sixth, when he perceived that he must die, and that there was no remedy, oh, how terrible was death to him! and oh, how did he murmur and fret, and vex at death, that his riches could not relieve him until a further time! For, says he, "why should I die, being so rich? if the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it." "Fie upon death," says he, "will not death be hired? will money do nothing?" I might instance in men of a higher rank—but then I should exceed the bounds of an epistle.

(2.) The second sort of men, that myself and all others are bound, (1.) highly to prize, (2.) cordially to love, and (3.) greatly to honor, are **men of charitable spirits, men of merciful spirits, men of tender and compassionate spirits**. The Hebrew word for godly signifies merciful, to note that the godly man is the merciful man, and the merciful man is the godly man. Loving-kindness is an ingredient unto godliness. The godly man is frequently called gracious or merciful. It notes one that has obtained mercy, goodness, grace, piety, and benignity from the Lord—and that is pious, kind, gracious, and merciful to others. Though charity, bounty, is the most compendious way to plenty, and giving to getting, and scattering to increasing, and layings out to layings up—Proverbs 11:24, "There is one who scatters, and yet increases." Ver. 25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he who waters shall be watered also himself," —yet how few in our days honor the Lord with their substance! How few look at this as a duty, to consecrate any part of their gain unto the Lord—or of their substance to the Lord of the whole earth! Proverbs 3:9, Micah 4:13.

Most men now behave as if God himself had lost his propriety, and as if there were no rent-money due to his poor. But yet some there are, who have liberal hearts and open hands. And some there are who **do** open

their hands wide to the poor and needy, Deut. 15:11. Now, here give me permission to say that these—

[1.] Discharge their consciences in the duty of charity, Mat. 25:25, seq., Proverbs 31:8, 9.

[2.] These rightly improve the talents of mercy, with which they are entrusted, Job 29:13, 2 Tim. 1:16.

[3.] These treasure up a stock of prayers, both for themselves and theirs; the blessing and the prayers of those who were ready to perish will come upon them and theirs.

[4.] These evidence the liveliness of their faith: James 2:17, "Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." Ver. 18, "But someone will say—'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do." Ver. 26, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

[5.] These take the surest way, the readiest course, to assure their own souls of God's eternal favors and mercies to them: "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." 1 Timothy 6:17-19. Charitable Christians are as wise merchants, happy usurers, **parting with that which they cannot keep, that they may gain that which they cannot lose.**

[6.] These take surest way to draw down more outward mercies upon themselves. The fountain is not diminished—but augmented, by giving water to the thirsty. The widow's oil did increase by pouring out. We do not lose—but increase our mercies by imparting of them for God's honor, and the comfort and benefit of others.

"Give," says Christ, "and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed

down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Luke 6:38. The Jews wore large and loose garments, so that they could take away much in their laps. Hence this expression, "into your lap." The meaning is, that the Lord will largely reward the beneficence of his people; yes, that he will so reward them, that they shall perceive that they are rewarded. "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything your land produces. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with the finest wine," Proverbs 3:9-10. God will certainly bless their substance who honor him with their substance.

The Jews at this day, though they are not in their own country, and though they have not a Levitical priesthood—yet those who will be reputed pious among them, distribute the tenth of their increase to the poor, being persuaded that God does bless their increase the more; for they have among them a very elegant proverb to that purpose, Pay your tithes that you may be rich. The poor man's hand is Christ's treasury, and he shall not lose his reward that casts his mites into that treasury. [The safest chest is the poor man's box. God will never forget your charity to his people, Heb. 6:10. Cicero could say, that to be rich is not to possess much—but to give much. And Seneca could rebuke those who so studied to increase their wealth—that they forgot to use it.]

It is fabled of Midas, that whatever he touched he turned it into gold. But this is most sure, that whatever the hand of charity touches, it turns it into gold—be it but a cup of cold water—nay, into heaven itself: Mat. 10:42, "And whoever shall give a drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, truly I say unto you, he shall never lose his reward." Cold water, having not fuel to heat it, cold water which cost not the charge of fire to warm it. A sea of pleasures, a heaven of blessings attends men of charitable minds, though their charity can extend no further than to a cup of cold water; for God measures men's deeds by their minds, and not their minds by their deeds.

The Kenites in Saul's time, who were born many ages after Jethro's death, received life from his dust, and favor from his hospitality; nay, the very Egyptians, for harboring and at first dealing kindly with the Israelites, though without any respect to their righteousness, were preserved by

Joseph in that severe famine, and kindly dealt with ever after by God's special command. I have read a story of one Evagrius, a rich man, who lying upon his deathbed, and being importuned by Synesius, a pious man, to give something to charitable uses, he yielded at last to give three hundred pounds—but first took bond of Synesius—that it should be repaid in the eternal world. But before he had been one day dead, he is said to have appeared to Synesius, delivering in the bond cancelled, as thereby acknowledging that what was promised was made good. Whether the story be mythological or not, I shall not now stand to determine. But this is certain, that all acts of Christian charity shall be certainly and eminently rewarded.

Several writers observe that the ground is most barren nearest the golden mines; and experience tell us that many who are enriched with fair estates, are most barren in good works. But this will be bitterness in the end. He who shall consult two scriptures, among many others, will conclude that he who has a withered hand has no honest heart, 2 Chron. 31:10, 1 John 3:17. The wealth that such men have, is but as Aristotle calls it a happy madness, because they are so taken up with their wealth, that they neither know what they are, nor what they do. Josephus, writing of the waters of Egypt, says, that "they were blood in the hands of an Egyptian—but water in the hand of an Israelite." Wealth in the hand of a worldling is like blood in the hand, which is good for nothing. But wealth in the hand of a charitable Christian is like water in the hand, which may be of use both to a man's self and others. By what has been said, there is nothing more evident than this, namely—that men of public spirits, and men of charitable spirits, of all men on earth are,

- (1.) to be most highly prized;
- (2.) most cordially loved; and
- (3.) most greatly honored, etc.

Christians, this will be your honor and comfort, both in life and death, and in the day of your account—that you have laid out your time, your strength, your estate, for the public good. When others have been serving themselves upon the public, you have been a-serving of the public. It is

your great mercy and happiness that you can stand forth and say, as once Samuel did, "Behold, here I am, witness against me, whose ox have I taken? or whose donkey have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?" 1 Sam. 12:3.

French history tells us, that when an old courtier would needs depart from the court, and retire himself to a private life, the king desired him to leave his advice in some general rules, about the government of his kingdom. Upon this motion of the king, the old courtier took a sheet of white paper, and writ upon the top of the leaf, Moderation, and in the middle of the leaf, Moderation, and at the bottom of the leaf, Moderation, intimating to the king, that the only way to keep his kingdom in peace and prosperity, was to manage his government throughout with a spirit of moderation.

"But when you give to someone, don't tell your left hand what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in secret, and your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you." Matthew 6:3-4. The angels have their hands under their wings; they do much good, and yet make no noise, Ezek. 1:8, and 10:8. There are some in the world who are like them. The violet grows low, and covers itself with its own leaves, and yet of all flowers yields the most fragrant smell to others. There are some charitable Christians who resemble this sweet flower.

"Now, the God of all grace fill all your hearts with all the fruits of righteousness and holiness, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, and of faith and hope in this life," 1 Peter 5:10; and at last crown you all with ineffable glory in the life to come, Gal. 5:22-23, Heb. 10:22-23. To the everlasting arms of his protection, and to the perpetual influences of his grace and mercy in Christ, I commend you to him who is all.

Your much obliged and affectionate friend and soul's servant in our dear Lord Jesus,  
Thomas Brooks

**Chapter I. Containing eighteen special Maxims, Considerations, Rules, and Directions which are seriously to be minded and observed, in order to the clearing up of a man's saving interest in Christ; the saving work of God upon his own soul; and his title to all the glory of the eternal world.**

**1. The first maxim or consideration.** Consider—some have made the **internal witness** of the Spirit to be the only mark or evidence of our saving interest in Christ, and deny all signs from the **fruit** of the Spirit—but this is to deny that the fruit growing upon the tree to be a sign that the tree is alive; whereas our Savior expressly tells us, that "the tree is known by his fruit," Mat. 12:33. Certainly it is one thing to *judge* by our graces, and another thing to *rest* on our graces, or to put *trust* in our graces, or to make a *savior* of our graces. There is a great deal of difference between *declaring* and *deserving*. Doubtless, Christians may look to their graces as *evidences* of their saving interest in Christ, justification and salvation; though not as *causes* of their saving interest in Christ, justification and salvation. O sirs! we must always carefully distinguish between the *root* and *ground* of our comfort; and between the testimonies or *evidences* of our saving interest in the *root* of our comfort.

Now it must be readily granted that Jesus Christ is the only root and ground of a Christian's comfort and triumph. And, therefore, says Paul, "God forbid that I should rejoice in anything—but in the cross of Christ," Gal. 6:14; and so in that, 2 Cor. 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ." So that, if at any time we behold this or that saving grace, or this or that part of holiness shining in our hearts or lives, we take comfort in it—not as the *cause*, or *root*, or *ground* of our comfort or triumph—but as in a testimony or *evidence*, because it does *manifest* our saving interest in him, who is our comfort, our peace, our joy, our salvation, our "all in all," Luke 2:25; Col. 3:11.

Look! as the rainbow is not a cause why God will not drown the world—but a sign that God will not drown the world. And as it is a sign that God

will not drown the world, we may and ought to rejoice in it, and to take comfort from it, Gen. 9:13-14, 16. So here, etc. It is agreed on all hands, that sanctification is a precious benefit of the covenant of grace, as well as justification. And what crime can it then be to evidence one benefit of the covenant of grace, by another benefit of the same covenant? Jer. 33:8-9; Ezek. 36:25-26; Heb. 8:10, 12, etc. That he who is justified, is also sanctified, and that he who is sanctified is also justified, is so clear, so bright, so sparkling, and so full a truth contained in the covenant of grace, that no man or devil can deny.

Now what evil or error can it be for a man to assert, that he who is certainly sanctified, is certainly justified—it being the very language of the covenant of grace—and that therefore he who knows himself to be sanctified, may also know thereby that he is justified. Certainly, those people who shall deny sanctification to be a most sure, sweet, and comfortable evidence of man's justification, they must not only blot out, and abolish the epistles of James and John—but must also raze out and abolish all those evangelical promises of grace and mercy, of happiness and blessedness, which are made to such people as are invested, enriched, and bespangled with the several graces of the Holy Spirit. This might be made evident by many hundred scriptures—but take that one for all, Mat. 5 where our Savior himself, who was the most evangelical preacher who ever was in the world, makes eight or nine promises of mercy and blessedness to those very people who had the graces of the Spirit inherent in them—as poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

O sirs! why should we be so frequently and earnestly called upon to try and examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith or not, 2 Cor. 13:5, if we were not to come to the knowledge of our faith, in a discursive way, arguing from the effect to the cause? Have not the saints of old come to assurance, and the knowledge of the goodness of their estates, this way? Ponder seriously on that: 2 Cor. 1:12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our lives in the world." Mark, their joy was founded on the testimony of their conscience, and their conscience gave in this testimony from the sincerity of their lives in this world. So Paul in that, 2 Tim. 4:7-

8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." How plainly, how fully, how with open mouth, as I may say, does he conclude his right to the crown of righteousness—so called, partly because it is purchased by the righteousness of Christ; and partly because he is righteous who has promised it; and partly because it is a just and righteous thing with God to crown them with glory at last, who have for the gospel sake, and his glory sake, been crowned with shame and reproach in this world; and partly, if not mainly, because it is a crown that can only be had or obtained in a way of righteousness and holiness, from his graces and gracious actings in this world. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Yes, it is further observable, that in the blessed Scripture, we are strongly pressed to do good works, that by them we may make our calling, election, and salvation sure: 2 Peter 1:10, "Therefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure—by good works." So say all the Latin copies, and so say some Greek copies, though not those which our English translators have been pleased to follow, and that is the reason why those words, "by good works," are not in our English Bibles. But he who shall seriously weigh the scope of the apostle in this place, he must of necessity grant, that good works are to be understood, though they are not expressed in the text; and that of the apostle in 1 Tim. 6:16-18, seems plainly and strongly to sound the same way.

**2. The second maxim or consideration.** Consider—that true, sound, solid marks, signs, and evidences, are the best way to prevent delusions. There is no such deceit in sound and solid evidences, as there is in flashy joys, and in high and strange raptures, by which many glistening professors have been sadly deceived and deluded. Young Samuel, being not acquainted with any extraordinary manifestations of the presence and power of God, took the voice of God from heaven to be the voice of old Eli, 1 Sam. 3:5. Ah! how many have there been in our days, who have taken the irregular motions of their own hearts, and the violent workings of their own distempered fancies, and imaginations, and Satanical delusions—to be the visions of God, celestial raptures, divine breathings, and the powerful impulses of the Spirit of God; and so have been stirred

up to speak, write, and act such things that have been, not only contrary to the holy word of God—but also contrary to the very laws of nature and nations. Satan, by transforming of himself into an angel of *light*, has seduced and ruined many professors, against whom, as an angel of *darkness*, he could never prevail, 2 Cor. 11:14.

Gerson tells a remarkable story of Satan's appearing to a holy man, in a most glorious and beautiful manner, professing himself to be Christ; and because he, for his exemplary holiness was worthy to be honored above others, therefore he appeared unto him. But the good old man readily answered him, that he desired not to see his Savior in this wilderness; it would suffice him to see him hereafter in heaven; and withal added this pithy prayer, "Oh let your sight be my reward, Lord, in another life, and not in this;" and so he became victorious over Satan, though he had transformed himself into a glorious angel of light. But such a victorious crown has not been set upon everyone's head, to whom Satan has appeared as angel of glory. Certainly, those who stand so much, so mightily, for an immediate testimony, seem to open such a gap to enthusiasm, as will not be easily shut.

Yes, how will they be ever able to recognize these sad delusions? for how easy a thing it is for Satan—who is the father of lies, John 8:44; who is an old deceiver, Gen. 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:14; who is the grand deceiver, Rev. 12:9; 13:14; 19:20; 20:10; who has his devices, 2 Cor. 2:11; his wiles, Ephes. 6:11; his snares, 1 Tim. 3:7; his depths, Rev. 2:24—to find various artifices to counterfeit this immediate testimony, and bear witness in the Spirit's stead; so that, when poor souls think that they have the spirit of grace and truth to assure them that all is well, and shall be forever well with them, they have none but "the father of lies" to deceive them, they have none but the devil in Samuel's mantle, to put a soul-murdering cheat upon them.

I am not fond of advising any poor souls to lay the stress of their hopes in heaven and salvation merely upon immediate impressions, lest they should subject themselves to infinite delusions. O sirs! the way of immediate revelation is more fleeting and inconstant. Such actings of the Spirit are like those outward motions which came upon Samson, Judges 13:25. The Spirit came upon him at times. And so upon every

withdrawment, new doubts and scruples arise. But the trial of a man's estate by grace is more constant and durable, saving grace being a continual pledge of God's love to us. Flashes of joy and comfort are only sweet and delightful while they are felt—but grace is that immortal seed which abides forever, 1 John 3:9. But,

**3. The third maxim or consideration.** Consider—in propounding of evidences for men to try their spiritual and eternal estates by, there are two special rules forever to be minded and remembered:

1. That he who propounds evidences of grace, which are only proper to *eminent* Christians, as belonging to all true Christians, he will certainly grieve and sadden those precious lambs of Christ that he would not have grieved and saddened. Look! as there is a *strong* faith and a *weak* faith, so there are evidences which are proper to a strong faith, and evidences which are proper to a weak faith. Now, he who cannot find in himself the evidences of a *strong* faith—he must not conclude that he has *no* faith; for he may have in him the evidences of a weak faith when he has not the evidences of a strong faith. [Mat. 15:28, and chapter 8:26. It is one thing to show you the properties of a man, and another thing to show you the properties of a strong man, 1 Peter 2:3, 1 John 2:1, 12-14.] In Christ's school, house, church, there are several sorts and ranks of Christians—such as babes, children, young men, and old men. And accordingly ministers, in their preaching and writing, should sort their evidences that so babes and children may not be found bleeding, grieving, and weeping, when they should be found joying and rejoicing.

2. No man must make such characters, marks, or evidences of a child of God which may be found in a hypocrite, a formalist, etc. For this were to lay a stumbling-block before the blind, this were to delude poor souls, and to make them glad—whom God would not have made glad. Yes, this is the highway, the ready way, to make them miserable in both worlds, Ezek. 13:22. The rule or evidence that every Christian is to measure himself by must be neither too long nor too short—but adequate to the state of a Christian; that is, it must not be so long, on the one hand, as that all Christians cannot reach it, nor yet so short, on the other hand, as that it will not reach a true Christian. But the rule or evidence must be such as will suit and fit every sincere believer, and none else.

Some Christians are apt to judge of themselves, and to try themselves, by such rules or evidences as are competent only to those who are *strong* men in Christ, and who are grown to a high pitch of grace, of holiness, of communion with God, of spiritual enjoyments and heavenly attainments, and sweet and blessed ravishments of soul; and by this means they come to conclude against the works of the blessed Spirit in them, and to perplex and disquiet their own souls with needless fears, doubts, and jealousies. Others, on the other hand, are apt to judge of themselves, and to try themselves, by such things, rules, or evidences which are too short—and will certainly leave them short of heaven; as a fair, civil deportment among all sorts and ranks of men; a good nature, paying every man their due; charity to the poor; a good name or fame among men, yes, even among godly men; outward exercises of religion, such as hearing, praying, reading, fasting; or that they are good *negative* Christians, that is to say, that they are no drunkards, swearers, liars, adulterers, extortioners, oppressors, Sabbath-breakers, persecutors, etc., Mat. 23:4, seq., Luke 18:9-12, Isaiah 1:2-5.

Thus far Paul attained before his conversion—but if he had gone no further, he would have been a lost man forever, Philip. 3:4-6, Gal. 6:3, Isaiah 33:14. And by this means they flatter themselves into misery, and are still a-dreaming of going to heaven until they drop into hell, and awake with everlasting flames about their ears! And oh that all who preach or print, read or write, would seriously lay this to heart! Some, in describing the state of a Christian, show what it *should be*—rather than what indeed it *is*; they show what Christians *ought to be*—rather than what they find themselves to be; and so they become a double-edged sword to many Christians. But,

**4. The fourth maxim or consideration.** Consider—where there is any one grace in truth, there is every grace in truth, though every grace cannot be seen. Look! as a man may certainly know a wicked man by his living under the reign and dominion of any one sin, though he does not live under the power of other sins, because there is not any one sin mortified in that man who has any one sin reigning in him, and who does not set himself in good earnest against it as his greatest enemy. So when a Christian can but find any one grace in him, as love to the saints for grace

sake, for godliness sake, he may safely conclude that there is in him all other graces. **Where there is but one link of this golden chain, there are all the links of this golden chain.**

John 13:35, "By this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you love one another." He does not say if you work miracles, if you raise the dead, if you give eyes to the blind, or ears to the deaf, or tongues to the dumb, or feet to the lame—but "if you love one another." [As they say of the cardinal virtues, The virtues are chained together; so we may say of the graces of the Spirit, etc. Mark, says Chrysostom, it is not working of miracles, casting out of devils—but love to our brethren, that is the infallible proof of being a disciple.] There have been many, yes, very many, precious Christians who have lived and died with a great deal of comfort and peace from the application of that text to their own souls: 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." Sincere love to the brethren is a most evident sign of a Christian's being already passed or translated from death to life. Observe, the apostle does not say, we *think* we have passed from death to life—but we *know* we have passed from death to life. Nor he does not say, we *conjecture* we have passed from death to life—but we *know* we have passed from death to life. Nor he does not say, we *hope* we are passed from death to life—but we are *assured* that we are passed from death to life—that is, from a state of nature into a state of grace, "because we love the brethren." Forever remember this, when all other evidences have failed many gracious Christians, and all other texts of Scripture have afforded them no comfort, here they have anchored, here they have found rest for their distressed souls. And upon this one single plank, this one evidence, they have swam safely and comfortably unto the haven of eternal happiness.

**Every real Christian has in some measure, every sanctifying grace in him.** As a child so soon as it is born is a perfect man for integrity of parts and entireness of limbs, though not for bigness and bulk of body; so every regenerate person, at the very first hour of his conversion, he is *in part* renewed in all parts; all the habits of grace are infused into the soul by the Spirit at once. At first conversion the soul is bespangled with every grace, though every grace is not then grown up to

its full proportion or perfection; so that where there is one grace in truth, there is every grace in truth. That soul who can truly and seriously conclude that he has any one grace in him—that soul ought to conclude that there is every grace in him. [1 Thes. 5:28; John 3:5-8, and chapter 1:16; Psalm 45:13. The new creature has all the parts and lineaments, as in the body there is a composition of all the elements, and a mixture of all the humours.]

Such as diligently search the Scripture shall find that true blessedness, happiness, and salvation is attributed to several signs: sometimes to the fear of God, sometimes to faith, sometimes to repentance, sometimes to love, sometimes to meekness, sometimes to humility, sometimes to patience, sometimes to poverty of spirit, sometimes to holy mourning, sometimes to hungering and thirsting after righteousness; so that if a godly man can find any one of these in himself, he may safely and groundedly conclude of his salvation and justification, though he cannot see all those signs in him. [Mat. 5:3-6, etc. Every child of God has all the graces of the Spirit in him really, though not fully developed.] There is no saint but may perceive one sign in him, when he cannot another. Now, he who can groundedly be persuaded of any one sign of grace, he may safely conclude he has all the rest, though for the present he can neither see them nor feel them in himself. But,

**5. The fifth maxim or consideration.** Consider—the promises of God are a Christian's magna charta, his chief evidences for heaven. Divine promises are God's deed of gift; they are the only assurance which the saints have to show for their right and title to Christ, to his blood, and to all the happiness and blessedness that comes by him. Look! as Tamar by pleading and bringing forth the signet, the bracelets, and the staff, saved her life, Gen. 38:18-27; so we by believing, pleading, and bringing forth the promises, must save our own souls. The promises are not only the food of faith—but also the very life and soul of faith; they are a mine of rich treasures, a garden full of the choicest and sweetest flowers; in them are enrap't up all celestial contentments and delights. And this is most certain, that all a Christian's conclusions of saving interest in any of those choice and precious privileges which flow from the blood of Jesus Christ ought to be bottomed, grounded, and founded upon the rich and free

promises of grace and mercy.

Question. **But how may a person come to know whether he has a real and saving interest in the promises, or not?** Now, to this great question, I shall give these nine following answers:

**[1.] First,** A holy reliance, a holy resting, a holy staying of your soul upon the promises, makes the promises your own; yes, it makes all the good, and all the sweet, and all the happiness and blessedness that is wrapped up in the promises yours. Even as your staying, relying, and resting on Christ makes Christ yours, and all that is in him, and that comes by him, yours; so your staying and resting upon the promises makes them yours.

**[2.] Secondly,** If your heart ordinarily, habitually, lies under the word of command, then the word of promise does assuredly belong to your soul, Psalm 119:6; Acts 13:22; Luke 1:5-6. [It was a good saying of Augustine, Give what you command, and command what you will. To such a person the promises belong, Num. 13:28 to the end.] There is no soul under heaven who commonly lies under the commanding power of the word—but that soul that has a saving interest in the word of promise. Men who have no saving interest in the word of promise, commonly live in the neglect of the word of command. If the word of command commonly rules over your soul, then the word of promise, without all question, belongs to your soul.

Many deal with the commands of God as the heathens dealt with the commands of their gods; when their gods called for a man, they offered a candle; or as Hercules offered up a painted man, instead of a living man. Such as deal thus with the commands of God, they have no saving interest in the promises of God. Flesh and blood looks upon the commands of God as impossible to be obeyed, like the unbelieving spies; "Oh we cannot conquer the land;" but faith and love, like Caleb and Joshua, conclude the land may be conquered, the commands may be evangelically obeyed; and accordingly they readily undertake it. Now, to such a frame of heart the promises are entailed. But,

**[3.] Thirdly,** If in the face of all objections, discouragements, and

difficulties, your soul is kept up in a waiting frame, for the fulfilling of the promises, as Abraham's was, Romans 4, then certainly the promises belong to you. [The longer, said the emperor's son, the cooks are preparing the food, the better I shall enjoy it. His meaning was, that the longer he staid for the empire, the better and greater it would be; so the longer the soul waits for a mercy, the better and greater it will be when it comes, etc.] There are some promises that relate to the subduing of sin, as that, Jer. 33:8; Ezek. 36:25-27; Micah 7:19; Psalm 65:3. And there are other precious promises that relate to a growth in grace, as that, Malachi 4:2; Job 17:9; Psalm 92:12-14; Proverbs 4:18; Hosea 14:5-7. Now, if your heart be kept up in a waiting frame for the accomplishment of these promises, then they do certainly belong to you. The same I may say of all other promises; the waiting soul shall be sure to speed, Psalm 40:1-3; Isaiah 40:29-31, 30:18; Heb. 6:12, etc. God never did, nor never will, frustrate the expectations of the patient waiter, etc. But,

**[4] Fourthly,** He who has those divine qualities or supernatural graces in him, to which the promises are made—such as faith, repentance, love, fear, hope, uprightness, patience, a waiting frame, etc., he has an undoubted saving interest in the promises. He may lay his hand upon any promise, and say, *this promise is mine! And all the blessings, the benefits, the heavenly treasure which is laid up in it, is mine!* But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** He who lives upon the promises as his daily food, he has an unquestionable saving interest in the promises. Wicked men may make use of promises like *medicine*, in some cases, as when they are under anguish of spirit, or gripes of conscience, or in fear of hell; or else when they are under some outward needs or straits, etc. But he who lives upon them as his *daily food*, he has a most assured saving interest in them. We do not live upon sweets, though now and then we may taste of them—but we live upon wholesome food. Just so here, no man lives upon the blessed promises as his appointed food—but he who has a real saving interest in the promises. Look! as there is a nourishment proper to every animal, spiders feed on flies, moles on worms, the horse on grass, the lion on flesh, etc.—so there is food, nourishment, that is proper for men's souls, namely, the precious promises and Christ's "flesh," which is food indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed, John 6:53, seq.; and he who daily

feeds on this food will be happy forever. But,

**[6.] Sixthly,** If you are united and married to Christ by faith, then you have a real, a saving interest in the promises: Gal. 3:29, "And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Col. 4:28; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 21:7. Faith is the grace of graces, by which the soul gives both its assent and consent to take the Lord Jesus Christ, as he is offered and offered in the gospel, and is therefore called sometimes a receiving of Christ, John 1:12. The only way to enjoy the promise of Christ, is to be willing to marry the person of Christ. It is our marriage union with Christ that gives us a right and title to all the promises of Christ: 2 Cor. 1:20, "For all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him, Amen." All absolute and conditional promises, either of grace or unto grace, are made to us in Christ, and only enjoyed by our enjoying of Christ.

**[7.] Seventhly,** He who can clear his right to any one promise, he may safely and boldly conclude his saving interest in every promise. The promises are a golden chain, and he who has a right in one link of the chain, has a right in every link of the chain, 2 Peter 1:5-7; Eph. 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:4. As there is a chain of *graces*, so there is a chain of *promises*. He who can lay his hand upon any one promise, and truly say, *This is mine*, he may safely lay his hand upon every promise, and say, *These are mine!* He who is an heir to any one promise, he is an heir to every promise. Hence it is they are called "heirs of promise," Heb. 6:17; not heirs of this promise or that—but of promise; that is, of every promise, or the covenant which comprehends all the precious promises of the gospel in it.

Though the promises may be distinguished one from another—yet they may not be severed one from another; he who has a right to any one promise, he may safely infer his right to every promise. The whole covenant, which is a bundle of promises, is certainly yours, if any one promise be yours. The promises by a divine hand are mutually tied and linked together; and that which God has joined together, no man may put asunder. The promises can be no more divided than Christ can be divided, or than heaven can be divided. The promises are not like loose and unstrung pearls—but as pearls made into one entire chain. He who can lay his hand upon that promise, Mat. 5:6, "Blessed are those who

hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be satisfied," and truly say, This promise is mine, he may safely lay his hand upon that promise, verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," and say, This promise is mine! And the same he may say of the rest of the precious promises which are specified in vers. 3- 5, 7, 9, 10-11 of that chapter.

He who can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to those who **love** him, and truly say, *This promise is mine*, he may safely lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to those who love him, and say, *These are all mine!* He who can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to those who **fear** him, and truly say, *This promise is mine*, he may assuredly lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to those who fear him, and say, *These are all mine!* He who can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to **faith** in Christ, to believing in Christ, and truly say, *This promise is mine*, he may safely lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to faith in Christ, to believing in Christ, and say, *All these promises are mine!* He who can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to the **returning sinner**, and truly say, *This promise is mine*, he may securely lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to the returning sinner, the repenting sinner, and say, *All these are mine!* He who can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to the **waiting soul**, and truly say, *This promise is mine*, he may without all perhaps lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to the waiting soul, and say, *All these are mine!* Prove but your right in one promise, and you may safely infer your right to all. But,

**[8.] Eighthly,** If in the times of your greatest outward and inward straits and trials, when you are most sadly and sorely put to it, you fly to the precious promises, as to your surest and choicest city of refuge, then certainly you have a saving interest in them. Thus *Abraham* did, Romans 4:17-22. And thus *Jacob* did, Gen. 32:6-12 compared. And thus *Sarah* did, Heb. 11:11. And thus *Moses* did, Num. 10:29. And thus *Jehoshaphat* did, 2 Chron. 20:1, 10 compared with the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses of that chapter. And this was *David's* common practice: Psalm 27:12-13, and Psalm 60:1-10, compared, and Psalm 119:49-50. Turn to these scriptures,

and ponder upon them.

And so when a man is under the *guilt of sin*, he flies to promises of pardon and forgiveness, as to his surest and choicest city of refuge, Num. 14:19, Isaiah 55: 7; Jer. 33:8; Isaiah 40:1-2; chapter 43:25; Micah 7:18; Jer. 31:34; Exod. 34:7; Dan. 9:9. And so when a man is under the *strength, power, and prevalency of sin*, he runs to such promises wherein God has engaged himself to subdue the sins of his people, and to purge and cleanse away the sins of his people, Micah 7:19; Romans 6:14; Psalm 65:2; Isaiah 1:25; Mal. 3:3; Zech. 13:9; Isaiah 27:9; Mat. 3:12; Ezek. 36:25, 33; Jer. 33:8, as to his surest and choicest city of refuge. And so when a man is *deserted by God*, he runs to such promises as are proper to that state, as to his surest and choicest city of refuge, Micah 7:19; Isaiah 54:7-10; Psalm 5:12; Psalm 84:10; Psalm 97:11; Psalm 112: 4; Isaiah 49:14-16. And so when a man is *tempted*, he runs to such supporting and encouraging promises as are most suitable to that state, as to his surest and choicest city of refuge, 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 2:18; Romans 16:20; James 4:7.

Now certainly, such as in all their inward and outward straits run thus to the promises, as to their surest and choicest city of refuge, they have an unquestionable saving interest in the promises. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, Proverbs 10:15. Wealthy worldlings, in times of distress and danger, do run to their hoards and heaps of riches, as to a strong city that is able to withstand all sieges and assaults, and to be safety and security to them; so when once a man makes the precious promises to be his strong city, and runs to them in the day of his distress and dangers, as his only safety and security, then he has doubtless a saving interest in them. But,

**[9.] Ninthly** and lastly, If you daily present a greater and a choicer good in the promises to your souls than any that this world affords—then certainly you have a saving interest in the promises. If when honors, or riches, or pleasures, or the applause of men do present themselves unto you, you can readily present to your own souls higher honors in the promise, 1 Sam. 2:30; Luke 12:32; Rev. 2:17, 26-27; chapter 3:5, 12, 21; chapter 5:10. And more durable riches in the promise, Proverbs 8:18; 1 Pet. 3:4; and sweeter and choicer pleasures in the promise, Psalm 16:11;

Isaiah 12:3, chapter 35:2, 10; Jer. 33:9, 11; Psalm 132:16; and greater worth in the promise, Mat. 10:32, "Whoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven;" ay, and before the angels too, Luke 12:8; Mat. 25:31-41; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Thes. 1:6-10; Rev. 3:9; Isaiah 60:12-14; then certainly you have a saving interest in the promise.

When a man can show his own heart daily, in the mirror of the promises, a greater worth, excellency, and glory, than all this world affords, without all controversy he has a saving interest in the promises. Thus those worthies, of whom this world was not worthy, Heb. 11, and the martyrs in all ages, did commonly present better, higher, and greater things to their own souls in the promises, than any their adversaries were able to propose to draw them off from Christ, their profession or principles, etc., and by this means they did very courageously and honorably maintain their ground in the face of all the mirthful and golden temptations that they met with. *Your cruelty is our glory*, said they in Tertullian; *and the harder we are put to it, the greater shall be our reward in heaven*. Basil will tell you, that the most cruel martyrdom is but a crafty trick to escape death, to pass from life to life, as he speaks. [Mat. 5:10-12. *Burn my foot if you will*, said that noble martyr Basil, *that it may dance everlastingly with the angels in heaven*.] It can be but a day's journey between the cross and paradise. Though the cross be bitter—yet it is but short. "A little storm," as one said of Julian's persecution, "and an eternal calm follows."

Adrianus, seeing the martyrs suffer cheerfully such grievous and dreadful things, asked, *Why they would endure such misery, when they might, by retracting, free themselves*. Upon which one of them alleged that text, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him," 1 Cor. 2:9. The naming of the text, and seeing them suffer such hard things cheerfully, did, by a blessing from on high, so really and effectually convert him, that afterwards he became a martyr too. When we see poor, weak, feeble Christians defying their torments, conquering in the midst of sufferings, singing in prison, as Paul and Silas did, Acts 16:25; kissing the stake, as Henry Voes did; clapping their hands when they were half consumed with fire, as Hawkes did; blessing God that ever they were

born to see that day, as John Noyes did; calling their execution day their wedding day, as Ridley did; we cannot but conclude that they had an eye to "the recompense of reward," and they saw such great, and sweet, and glorious things in the promises, that did so refresh, delight, and ravish their hearts, and transport their souls, that all their heavy afflictions seemed light, and their long afflictions short, and their most bitter afflictions sweet and easy to them. But,

**6. The sixth maxim of consideration.** Consider—that the least degree of grace—if it is true grace—is sufficient to salvation; for the promises of life and glory, of remission and salvation, of everlasting happiness and blessedness, are not made over to high degrees of grace—but to the reality and truth of grace; not to faith in triumph—but to faith in truth. Therefore the sense and evidence of the least grace, yes, of the least degree of the least grace, may afford some measure of assurance. Grace is the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22. And the tree is known by his fruit, Mat. 12:33; Mark 16:16; John 3:16, 36; Mat. 5:1, seq.; John 6:40. I do not say, that weak grace will afford a strong assurance, or a full assurance, for that rather arises from strength of grace than from truth of grace—but I do say, weak grace may afford some assurance. [An eminent minister, who was a famous instrument of converting many to God, was accustomed to say, that for his own part, he had no other evidence in himself of being in the state of grace, than that he was sensible of his spiritual deadness.] Oh, that all weak Christians would seriously lay this to heart, for it may serve to relieve them against many fears, doubts, discouragements, and jealousies, which do much disturb the peace and comfort of their precious souls.

Though the least measures of grace cannot satisfy a sincere Christian—yet they ought to quiet his conscience, and cheer his heart, and confirm his judgment of his saving interest in Christ. The least measure of grace is like a diamond, very little in bulk—but of high price and mighty value; and accordingly we are to improve it for our comfort and encouragement. A goldsmith makes reckoning of the least filings of gold, and so should we of the least measures of grace. A man may read the king's image upon a silver penny, as well as upon a larger piece of coin. The least grain of grace bears the image of God upon it; and why then should it not

evidence the goodness and happiness of a Christian's estate? Slight not the lowest evidences of grace!

It is a true saying, that the assurance of an eternal life is the epitome of this temporal life. I have read that Mr. Jordain would ask professors, whether they had any assurance; which if they denied, he would tell them, that he was even ashamed of them. "In good earnest," says he, "I would study the promises, and go into my closet, and lock the door, and there plead them to God, and say, that I would not go forth until he gave me some sense of his love." He would often mention and try himself by these three marks:

First, a sincere desire to fear the name of God, which he grounded upon Neh. 1:11.

Secondly, a sincere desire to do the will of God in all things required, which he grounded upon Psalm 119:6.

Thirdly, a full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord, which he grounded upon Acts 11:23.

These he would often press upon others, and these he frequently tried himself by, and from these he had much assurance and comfort.

*[The discovery of grace in your heart, though but one grain, and that of mustard-seed, will assure you of your election and final salvation. Ford's "Spirit of Adoption."]* Stephen Marshal, in a sermon of his on Isaiah 9:2, says, "Look and examine, whether you do not loathe yourself as a base creature; and do you make this nothing? Secondly, Do you not in your heart value and prize the poorest child of God more than the greatest man in the world, who has not the image of God, the image of grace and holiness stamped upon them? Many of God's people do not lack these evidences."

"If our souls," says another, "shall desire Christ for a suitor, when we find no other jointure but the cross, we may be sure we are Christians. A man may lack the feeling of his faith, and cry and call again and again for it, and feel nothing all this while, and yet nevertheless have true and sound

faith; for the feeling of and mourning for the lack of faith, and the earnest and constant desire of it, is an infallible sign of faith. For this is a sure rule, that so long as one feels himself sick he is not dead. And the high estimation of faith, joined with a vehement desire of it, is a singular evidence that there is a sound and lively root of faith in our hearts."

"All the elect of God," says another, "shall have the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon their hearts, more or less. I do not press the having of these things *perfectly*—but *sincerely*; an elect person may lack many a degree of grace—but if he have them in sincerity, though in the least measure, it is a sufficient evidence of his election."

Says Sibbes, "A spark of fire is but little—yet it is fire as well as the whole element of fire. And a drop of water is but little—yet it is water as well as the whole ocean. When a man is in a dark place, perhaps in a dungeon, if he has but a little light shining in to him from a little crevice, that little light discovers that the day is broke, that the sun is risen. If there is but one grape on a vine, it shows that it is a vine, and that the vine is not dead. If there is but the appearance of a little grace in a Christian, perhaps the Spirit of God appears but in one grace in him at that time—yet that one grace shows that we are vines, and not thistles, or thorns, or base plants, and it shows that there is life in the root."

That friend who writes the life and death of Mr. John Murcot, once preacher of the gospel at Dublin, says, "That in preparation for the supper ordinance, he would bring himself unto the test, and was very clear in the discovering and making out his own condition, being well acquainted with the way of God's dealing with the soul, and with the way of the soul's closing with Christ.

Upon search I find:

1. Myself an undone creature.
2. That the Lord Jesus sufficiently satisfied as mediator the law for sin.
3. That he is freely offered in the gospel.

4. So far as I know my own heart, I do through mercy heartily consent that he alone shall be my Savior; not my works or duties, which I do only in obedience to him.

5. If I know my heart, I would be ruled by his word and Spirit." "Behold, in a few words," says he who writes his life and death, "the sum and substance of the gospel." By these instances we may see that some of the precious servants of God have found a great deal of comfort, support, rest, contentment, and some measure of assurance, from a lower rank of evidences, than those who many strong Christians do reach unto, etc. But,

**7. The seventh maxim or consideration.** Consider—that all who are desirous to know how it will go with them in another world, they must peremptorily resolve to be determined by Scripture in the great matters of their saving interest in Christ. The blessed Scriptures are the great uncontroverted rule, and therefore if a person can prove from Scripture that his graces are true, or that he is in a gracious estate, or that he has a saving interest in Christ, or that he has savingly, graciously stricken covenant with God—then he must resolutely and peremptorily resolve to grant so much as unchangeably to acquiesce in it, to stick fast to it, and to hear nothing against it from the world, the flesh, or the devil.

God has plainly told us in his blessed word who shall be saved, and who shall be damned; though not by name—yet by the qualifications by which they are described in the Bible. These are the statute laws of heaven, and the standing rule by which all must be tried. Every man must stand or fall, be eternally blessed or eternally miserable, as his condition is consonant to or various from the infallible characters of saving grace contained in the holy Scripture. Witness that Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." So John 12:48, "He who rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." Mat. 5:18, "For truly I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass, not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law until all be fulfilled." So John 10:35, "And the Scripture cannot be broken," or violated, or made void.

But though this is an indispensable duty—yet certainly there is, especially in times of great afflictions, temptations, desertions, fears, and doubts, a very great aptness and proneness in Christians to expect strange means rather than right means; and new means rather than old means; and self-invented means rather than appointed means; and to build their faith upon something beside the word, or on that which is outside the compass of the word, rather than upon the plain and naked word itself; being in this very like to many weak, crazy, distempered, and diseased patients, who are more ready to employ every new medicine and new doctor they hear of, than to expect a recovery, by going through a course of remedy prescribed by the physician who best understands their diseases, and the most proper and effectual means for their recoveries.

You know when Naaman the Assyrian came to the prophet Elisha to be cured of his leprosy, he only sent out a messenger to him, who bid him go and wash seven times in Jordan, and his flesh would come again unto him, and he would be clean, 2 Kings 5:10. But Naaman's blood boils, and his heart swells, and he grows very angry. And all because he did not like the means prescribed by the prophet, and because he thought in his own heart that the prophet would have used more likely means to have wrought the cure, verses 11-12.

So many Christians, when they lie under great agonies and sore perplexities of soul, and are encouraged to act faith upon the promises, and to rest their weary souls upon the word of grace, they are ready to think and say that these things, these means, will never heal them, nor comfort them, nor be a relief or support unto them—unless the Lord does from heaven, by extraordinary revelations, visions, signs, and miracles, confirm his promises to them. And hereupon they make light of the blessed scriptures, which are the springs of life, and the only solid bottom upon which all our comforts, peace, and happiness is to be built; yes, they relinquish that more sure word of prophecy, which shines as a light in a dark place, 2 Peter 1:19.

Certainly the acting of faith on the precious promises, and the cleaving of the soul unto those blessed truths declared in the gospel of grace, is the most sure, ready, and compendious way of obtaining a blessed assurance, and a full establishment of heart, in all sound, solid, and abiding joy and

peace, Eph. 1:13. And therefore Luther, though, as he confesses, he was often tempted to ask for signs, apparitions, and revelations from heaven to confirm him in his way—yet tells us how strongly he did withstand them. *I have, says he, asked the Lord my God, that he would never send me dreams, visions, angels, for I am well contented with this gift, that I have the holy Scripture, which does abundantly teach and supply all necessities for this life, and that also which is to come.*

Certainly Austin hit the mark, when he prayed, "Lord, let your holy Scriptures be my pure delights, in which I can neither deceive, or ever be deceived."

Certainly the balance of the sanctuary should weigh all the oracles of God, decide all, and the rule of God's word be the rule and judge of all. Those who would take their parts in promised comforts, they must follow the voice of the word, and subscribe to the sentence of conscience, following that word. If the word approves of you, as sound and sincere with God, assuredly you are so, for that rule cannot err. If the word says that your heart is right with God, you must maintain that testimony against all disputes whatever. Never enter into dispute with Satan, or your own self, about your estate—but by taking and making the Scripture the judge of the controversy.

*When fears rise high, you say you shall never have mercy! But does the word say so? The Lord never gave himself to me! But does the word say so? Never was any as bad as I am! But does the word say so? I cannot see, nor conceive, nor think, that the Lord has any love for me! But does the word say so? "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9.*

*I have not that peace and joy that others have, therefore the Lord intends no good towards me! But does the word say so? Oh! but if my inside were but turned outward, godly men would loathe me, and wicked men would laugh at me! But does the word say so? Oh! but my heart was never right with God! But does the word say so? Oh! but that which I have taken all this while for saving grace is but common grace!*

But does the word say so? *Oh! but the face of God is hidden from me, my sun is set in a cloud, and will never rise more!* But does the word say so? *Oh! but Satan is let loose upon me, and therefore God hates me!* But does the word say so? Does not the word tell you, that those who have been most beloved of God—have been most tempted by Satan? Witness Christ, David, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, etc. *Oh! but I am afflicted, so as never was any before me!* But does the word say so?

Oh! let the word have the determinating voice—and not your own frail distempered reason. Oh! do not only hear what sin, and Satan, and your own deceitful heart can say against you—but hear also what the word of the Lord Jesus can say for you. Let the word of the Lord be judge on both sides, and then all will be well.

I know that the impenitent and unbelieving person, who lives and dies without grace in his heart, and a saving interest in Christ, shall as certainly be damned, as if I saw him this very moment under everlasting burnings; because God in the Scripture has said it, Mark 16:16; John 3:18-36; Rev. 21:8; Romans 2:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Heb. 12:14.

And I know that the holy, humble, true, penitent, believing, self-denying, and sin-mortifying Christian, shall be as certainly saved, as if at this very time I saw him in actual possession of glory; because God in the Scripture has said it, Mat. 5:3-12; Romans 8:1-13; Acts 10:43; John 3:15-16, 36; 6:37-40, etc.

O sirs! no man in his wits dares dispute against the authority of Scripture, or deny it, as false and erroneous. And therefore if the Scripture says a man has grace, he ought in conscience to subscribe to it against all objections or temptations to the contrary. Forever remember this—until a man comes to be willing to have his spiritual and eternal estate to be determined by Scripture, he will never enjoy any settled rest or quiet in his spirit. When once the goodness of a man's estate is cleared up to him by the word, he is never to regard what *Satan* or *carnal reason* objects against him. Satan is a liar and a deceiver of nearly six thousand years' standing; he is full of envy, and full of malice, and full of wiles, devices and tricks. Therefore give no credit to any of his reports against the report of the word—but stand by the testimony of the word, and the

witness of your own consciences, against all Satan's cavils, temptations, objections and suggestions. And then, and not until then, will you find rest to your souls.

He who would hold on cheerfully and resolutely in a Christian course, and go merrily to his grave, and singing to heaven, he must maintain the testimony of the word against all the gainsayings of sense or carnal reason. He must hear nothing, nor believe anything against the word, nor against the goodness and happiness of his own estate or condition, which has been evidenced to him from the word. Men will not be easily baffled out of their estates. If some great man should come and lay claim to your estates, you will not presently give them up, though your title-deeds are not at hand, or though they are blotted, or though perhaps you cannot clearly make out your title—yet you will not tamely and quietly give up your estates. And yet how ready are many Christians, upon every clamor of Satan against their souls and spiritual estates, to give up all, and to conclude that they are hypocrites, and have no true grace and spiritual life in them! etc. But,

**8. The eighth maxim or consideration.** Consider—that a godly man may not only come to a sure knowledge of his gracious estate—but it is also more easily attainable than many—may I not say, than most—do think or believe; for if a gracious man will but argue rationally from Scripture, he shall be forced to conclude that he has grace, and that he has a saving interest in Christ, and that he shall be saved, unless he is resolved beforehand boldly to deny Scripture truths. Sirs! look in what way the *spirit of bondage* does ordinarily works fear, terror, and horror in the hearts of unconverted people, in the same way the *Spirit of adoption* does ordinarily work hope and assurance in the hearts of the saints, Romans 8:15; John 16:8. Now, the spirit of bondage commonly awakens secure sinners, and fills the heart and consciences of poor sinners with fear, horror, and amazement, by setting home upon their souls such practical syllogisms as these:

"Every liar shall have his portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone," Rev. 21:8.

I am a liar—therefore I shall have my portion in that lake that burns with

fire and brimstone.

Or thus: "He who believes not is condemned already," John 3:18.

I believe not—therefore I am condemned already.

Or thus: "He who hates his brother is a murderer, and has not eternal life abiding in him," 1 John 3:15.

I hate my brother—therefore I am a murderer, and have not eternal life abiding in me.

Or thus: "Christ shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of his Son," 2 Thes. 1:7-8.

I know not God, I obey not the gospel of his Son—therefore Christ shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on me.

Or thus: "The wicked shall be turned into hell," Psalm 9:17.

I am wicked—therefore I shall be turned into hell.

Now in like manner the Spirit of adoption brings the "heirs of the promise," Heb. 6:17, to the assurance of hope, by setting home such practical syllogisms as these—

**[1.] First,** Whoever truly and heartily receives the Lord Jesus Christ, are truly and justly reputed to be the sons of God, John 1:12.

I have received Christ all the ways that the word there can import. I am heartily willing to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices, namely— as a *king* to rule me, a *prophet* to teach and instruct me, and a *priest* to offer himself in my place, and intercede for me. I am willing to receive him as a *sanctifier*, as well as a Savior. And to receive him as my *Lord*, as well as to receive him as my Redeemer; and to receive him upon his own terms, namely, of taking up his cross, denying myself and following of him. Therefore I may safely, boldly, plainly and warrantably conclude— that I am a son of God, and that I have a saving interest in God, according

to the scripture last cited: which scripture cannot be broken, nor cannot fail, nor cannot be unbound or loosed, as the Greek word in John 10:35 imports, etc. [The word signifies authority. Such as receive the Lord Jesus, have authority to be called the sons of God. Others may call God Father, and themselves sons—but they have not that right and authority to do it as believers have, Mark 16:16; John 3:16, 18, 36; Mat. 3:2, 8; Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31, Acts 3:19; Luke 13:3.]

**[2.] Secondly,** A gracious soul may argue thus: All the great and precious promises concerning everlasting happiness and blessedness, are made over to faith and repentance, as the Scriptures do abundantly evidence.

Now, he who really finds faith and repentance wrought in his soul, so that he is able to say, *I am a repenting and a believing sinner*, he may truly and safely conclude that he shall be saved; for all the promises of eternal happiness and blessedness do run out with a full stream to faith and repentance.

I readily grant that a strong hope results from the clear evidence it has of both these. We read in Scripture of a threefold assurance: as, first, an assurance of **understanding**, Col. 2:2; secondly, an assurance of **faith**, Heb. 10:22; thirdly, an assurance of **hope**, Heb. 6:11. I do, says the Christian, assuredly know from the word, which cannot deceive me, that the believing and repenting sinner shall be saved; my conscience also tells me that I do sincerely believe and repent, therefore I do firmly hope that I shall, however vile and unworthy otherwise, be saved. Now mark, answerable to the evidence that a man has in his own soul, that faith and repentance is wrought in him, so will his hope and assurance be weaker or stronger, more or less. If a man's evidence for the truth of his faith and repentance is dark, and weak, and low, and uncertain, his hope and assurance, which are born from these parents, as I may say, must needs partake of its parent's weakness and infirmities—and be itself weak, and dark, and low, and wavering, and uncertain, as they are from which it results. **Hope and assurance ebbs and flows, as the evidence of a man's faith and repentance ebbs and flows.**

Assurance cannot be ordinarily had without a serious examination of our

hearts; for assurance is the certain knowledge of the conclusion drawn from the premises, one out of scripture, the other by a reflecting act of the understanding or conscience, thus: He who believes and repents shall certainly be saved, that is the voice of the word of God; then by the search of a man's own heart, he must be able to say—*I believe and repent*. and from these two does result this assurance, that he may safely conclude, *Therefore I shall be saved*. And oh that all Christians were so wise, as seriously to ponder upon these things!

**[3.] Thirdly,** A godly man may argue thus: He who has respect unto all God's commands shall never be ashamed. Psalm 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." [Shame is both the temporal and eternal fruit of sin, Romans 6:21; Dan. 12:2.] He who is so honest and faithful with God, as to do his best—shall find that God will be so gracious as to pardon his worst. And this gospel indulgence David does more than hint at in those words, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments, or, as the Hebrew has it, "Then shall I not blush when my eye is to all your commandments."

The traveler has his eye towards the place where he is going; and though he be yet short of it—yet he is pressing forward all he can, to reach it. Just so, when the eye of a saint is to all the commands of God, and he is still a-pressing forwards toward full obedience, such a soul shall never be put to shame; it shall never be put to the blush—but it shall be able, living and dying, boldly to appear in the presence of the Lord. Mark, the psalmist does not say, when I *obey* all your commandments—but "when I *have respect* to all your commandments." And that implies an inward awe and reverential eye towards every duty which God requires. To have respect unto a thing is this—when that thing sways us more than all other things—as when a master commands such a business, the servant will do it, because he respects him; and at his command he will go and come, though he will not at the command of any other. But I have respect unto all his commandments, therefore I shall never be ashamed.

**[4.] Fourthly,** A godly man may argue thus: He who loves the brethren is passed from death to life, and consequently is in saving union with Christ, 1 John 3:18-19. I love the brethren—therefore I am passed from

death to life, and so consequently am in Christ.

**[5.] Fifthly,** A godly man may argue thus: He who confesses and forsakes his sin shall certainly find mercy, Proverbs 28:13. I confess and forsake my sins:

- 1, in respect of my sincere desires;
- 2, in respect of my gracious purposes;
- 3, in respect of my fixed resolutions;
- 4, in respect of my faithful and constant endeavors.

Therefore I shall certainly find mercy.

**[6.] Sixthly,** A godly man may argue thus: He who has the testimony of a good conscience, he may rejoice in that testimony, 2 Cor. 1:12; Isaiah 38:3. I have the testimony of a good conscience, therefore I may rejoice in that testimony.

**[7.] Seventhly,** A godly man may argue thus, He over whom presumptuous sins has not *dominion* is upright: Psalm 19:13, "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright." Presumptuous sins do not have dominion over me; therefore I am upright. A sincere willingness to part with every sin, and to mortify every sin, is a sure sign of uprightness, a sure sign of saving grace. When a man is sincerely willing to leave every sin, and to indulge himself in none, no, not his darling sin, it is a most certain sign of his integrity and sincerity, as you may evidently see by comparing of these scriptures together, Psalm 17:1, 3-4; 119:1-3, 6; Job 1:8, 2:3.

Psalm 18:23. "I was upright before him." Oh! but how do you know that? how do you prove that? how are you assured of that? Why, by this—that "I have kept myself from sin." Doubtless there is as much of the power of God required, and as much strength of grace required, and as much of the presence and assistance of the Spirit required—to work a man off from his bosom sins, from his darling sins, from his beloved sins, as there is required to work him off from all other sins. A conquest here clearly

speaks out uprightness of heart.

**[8.] Eighthly,** A godly man may argue thus: He whose heart does not condemn him—

1. does not give himself over to a voluntary serving of sin;
2. does not make a trade of sin;
3. does not allow of himself in any settled course or way of sin;
4. does not indulge, connive or wink at any known sin;
5. does not sin, as wicked men sin--who sin studiously, resolutely, ardently, delightfully, customarily, willfully. They sin with their whole will, and with the full consent and sway of their souls.
6. does not live in the daily neglect of any known positive duty against light and conscience, or of an ordinary shifting off of any known service that God requires of him in that place or station wherein God has set him.

Such a man may have confidence, boldness, liberty of speech towards God. He may use the liberty and freedom of a favorite of heaven. He may open his heart to God, as favorites do to their prince, namely, freely, familiarly, boldly. When Austin was converted, and his heart sincere with God, he could bless God that he could think of his former evil ways, which were very bad, without fear. Oh to what a height of holy boldness and familiarity with God had this man of God arrived to! But,

**[9.] Ninthly,** A godly man may argue thus, To such who are "**poor in spirit**, the kingdom of heaven belongs," Mat. 5:3. By poor in spirit is not meant poor in substance, that not being a thing praiseworthy in itself—but the broken and humble in heart, who has no high thoughts or conceits of himself—but is lowly in his own eyes, as a young child.

[There are some who are poor in estate, and others who are poor in spirit. And there are some who are poor-spirited in the cause of God, Christ, the gospel, and their own souls. And there are others who are poor in spirit. There are some who are spiritually poor, as all are who are destitute of

grace, and others who are poor in spirit; there are some who are evangelically poor, and others who are superstitiously poor; as those papists who renounce their estates, and vow a voluntary poverty. The poverty that has blessedness annexed to it is only an evangelical poverty.]

"Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that is, who has no lofty or puffed up spirit. The poor in spirit are those who are lowly, being truly conscious of their own unworthiness. None are poor in spirit but the humble.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that is, blessed are they whose spirits are brought into such an humble gracious frame, as willingly, quietly, and contentedly to lie down in a poor low condition, when it is the pleasure of the Lord to bring them into such a condition.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that is, blessed are they who are truly and sincerely apprehensive and sensible of their spiritual needs, poverty, and misery. They see their need of God's free grace to pardon them. They see their need of Christ's righteousness to clothe them. They see their need of the Spirit of Christ to purge, change, and sanctify them. They see their need of more heavenly wisdom to counsel them. They see their need of more of the *power* of God to support them, and of the *goodness* of God to supply them, and of the *mercy* of God to comfort them, and of the *presence* of God to refresh them, and of the *patience* of God to bear with them, etc. They see their need of greater measures of *faith* to conquer their fears, and of greater measures of *wisdom* to walk holily, harmlessly, blamelessly, and exemplarily in the midst of temptations, snares, and dangers. They see their need of greater measures of *patience* to bear their burdens without fretting or fainting. They see their need of greater measures of *zeal* and *courage* to bear up bravely against all sorts of opposition, both from within and from without. They see their need of greater measures of *love* to cleave to the Lamb, and to follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They see their need of living in a continual dependence upon God and Christ, for fresh influences, incomes, and supplies of grace, of comfort, of strength, whereby they may be enabled to live for God, and walk with God, and glorify God, and bring forth fruit to God, and withstand all temptations that tend to lead the heart from God. They see nothing in themselves upon which they dare venture their everlasting estates, and therefore fly to the free, rich, sovereign, and glorious grace of

God in Christ, as to their sure and only sanctuary! Luke 18:13, Philip. 3:9

"Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that is, blessed are those who are truly apprehensive and sensible of their spiritual poverty—who see themselves fallen in the first Adam from all their primitive purity, excellency, and glory. There are five things we lost in our fall:

- 1, our holy image—and became vile;
- 2, our sonship—and became slaves to sin and Satan;
- 3, our friendship—and became enemies to God;
- 4, our communion—and became strangers from God;
- 5, our glory—and became miserable.

And that see an utter inability and insufficiency in themselves, and in all other creatures, to deliver them out of their fallen estate.

I am poor in spirit—therefore the kingdom of heaven belongs to me.

**[10.] Tenthly,** A godly man may argue thus—Such as are true **mourners** are blessed, and shall be comforted, Mat. 5:4. That is, such as who mourn for sin with an exceeding great mourning. Blessed are those who mourn for sin with a funeral sorrow, as the word signifies. Blessed are those who mourn for sin as a man mourns for the loss of his only son, Zech. 12:10, or as Jacob mourned for Joseph, or as David mourned for Absalom, or as the people mourned for the loss of good Josiah, 2 Chron. 35:24-25. Blessed are those who mourn for secret sins as well as open sins. Blessed are those who mourn for sins against grace as well as for sins against the law. Blessed are those who mourn for sin as the greatest evil in the world. Blessed are those who mourn for his own sins, Ezek. 7:16; as David did, Psalm 51; or as Ephraim did, Jer. 31:18-19; or as Peter did, Mat. 26:75; or as Mary Magdalene did, Luke 7:38; and who mourns for the sins of others as well as for his own, as David did, Psalm 119:136, 158; or as Jeremiah did, Jer. 13:17; or as Lot did, 2 Peter 2:7-8; or as they did in that Ezek. 9:4.

Blessed are those who mourn under the sense of their spiritual needs. Blessed are those who mourn under the sense of their spiritual losses—such as loss of communion with God, loss of the favor of God, loss of the presence of God, loss of the exercise of grace, loss of the joys of the Spirit, loss of inward peace, etc. Blessed are those who mourn not only for their own afflictions and miseries—but also for the afflictions and miseries of other believers, as Nehemiah did, Neb. 1:2-4; or as Jeremiah did, Jer. 9:1-2; or as Christ did when he wept over Jerusalem, Luke 19:41-42. Blessed are those who mourn because they cannot mourn for these things; or who mourn because they can mourn no more; or who mourn because God has so little honor in their hearts, or in their house, or in their life, or in the world, or in the churches.

I am a true mourner, therefore I am blessed, and shall be comforted.

[Blessed are those who mourn. **The way to paradise is through the valley of tears.** Some report of Mary Magdalene, that she spent thirty years in Galba, weeping for her sins.]

**[11.] Eleventhly,** A godly man may argue thus: Those who truly "hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed, and shall be filled," Mat. 5:6; or those who are hungering and thirsting, as the Greek runs, being the participle of the present tense, intimating, that wherever this is the present disposition of men's souls, they are blessed. [They are not therefore blessed because they hunger and thirst—but because they shall be filled. The blessedness is in the *fullness*—not in the *hunger*. But hunger must go before filling, that we may not loathe the loaves. Augustine] He who sees an absolute necessity of the righteousness of Christ to justify him, and to enable him to stand boldly before the throne of God; he who sees his own righteousness to be but as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:4; to be but as dross and dung, Philip. 3:7-8; he who sees the Lord Jesus Christ, with all his riches and righteousness, clearly and freely offered to poor sinners in the everlasting gospel; he who in the gospel-mirror sees Christ, who knew no sin, to be made sin for him, that that he may be made the righteousness of God in Christ, 2 Cor. 5:21; he who in the same mirror sees Christ to be made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, to all who are sincerely willing to make a venture of their immortal souls and eternal estates upon him and his

righteousness. And he who sees the righteousness of Christ to be a most perfect, pure, complete, spotless, matchless, infinite righteousness. And under these apprehensions and persuasions is carried out in earnest and unsatisfied hungerings and thirstings, to be made a partaker of Christ's righteousness, and to be assured of his righteousness, and to put on his righteousness as a royal robe, Isaiah 61:10—he is the blessed soul!

And he who hungers and thirsts after the righteousness of Christ *imparted*, as well as after the righteousness of Christ *imputed*; after the righteousness of *sanctification*, as well as after the righteousness of *justification*—he is a blessed soul, and shall at last be filled. The righteousness of sanctification, or imparted righteousness, lies in the Spirit's infusing into the soul those holy principles, divine qualities, or supernatural graces, that the apostle mentions in that Gal. 5:22-23. These habits of grace, which are distinguished by the names of faith, love, hope, meekness, etc., are nothing else but the new nature or new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4:24. He who hungers and thirsts after the righteousness of sanctification, out of a deep serious sense of his own unrighteousness; he who hungers and thirsts after the righteousness of sanctification, as earnestly as hungry men do for food, or as thirsty men do for drink, or as the innocent person that is falsely charged or accused longs to be cleared and righted, or as Rachel did for children, or as David did after the water of the well of Bethlehem, or as the hunted deer does after the water brooks; he who hungers and thirsts not after *some righteousness* only—but he who hungers and thirsts after *all* righteousness; he who hungers and thirsts not only after some **grace**—but all grace; not only after some **holiness**—but all holiness; he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, out of love to righteousness; he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, from a sight and sense of the loveliness and excellency that there is in righteousness, Philip. 3:10-15; he who hungers and thirsts after the highest degrees and measures of righteousness and holiness, Psalm 63:1, 8; he who primarily, chiefly, hungers and thirsts after righteousness and holiness, Jer. 15:16; he who industriously hungers and thirsts after righteousness and holiness; he who ordinarily, habitually, constantly, hungers and thirsts after righteousness and holiness: Psalm 119:20, "My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto your judgments at all times."

By judgments we are to understand the statutes and commandments of God. Mark that word, "at all times."

Ungodly men have their good moods, as godly men have their bad moods. An ungodly man may, under gripes of conscience, a smarting rod, the approaches of death, or the fears of hell, or when he is pricked with a sermon—cry out to the Lord for grace, for righteousness, for holiness. But he is the only blessed man, who hungers and thirsts after righteousness at all times, and who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, according to the other fore-mentioned short hints. He is certainly a blessed man, heaven is for that man, and that man is for heaven, who hungers and thirsts in a right manner after the righteousness of justification, and after the righteousness of sanctification.

I do truly hunger and thirst after righteousness; therefore I am blessed, and shall be filled, etc.

[Some take hungering and thirsting here literally, comparing of it with Luke 6:21. Others understand the words morally; by hungering and thirsting they understand a moral hunger and thirst, which is, when men hunger and thirst for justice and judgment to be rightly executed. Psalm 119:5, 10, 20, 131; Judges 15:18; 1 Chron. 11:18 Psalm 42:1-2.]

**[12.] Twelfthly,** A godly man may argue thus: Such as are truly and graciously "**merciful**, are blessed, and shall obtain mercy," Mat. 5:7. Mercy is a commiserating of another man's misery in our hearts, or a sorrow for another man's distress, or a heart-grieving for another man's grief, arising out of an sincere love unto the party afflicted. [Micah 6:8; Luke 6:36] Or more plainly thus: mercy is a pitying of another man's misery, with a desire and endeavor to help him to the uttermost of our ability. The Hebrew for *godly*, signifies *gracious, merciful*. The more godly any man is, the more merciful that man will be.

"Blessed are the merciful," that is, blessed are those who show mercy to others, out of a deep sense of the mercy of God to them in Christ. Blessed are such who show mercy—out of love to mercy, out of a delight in mercy; blessed are such as show mercy out of love and obedience to the God of mercy; blessed are such as show mercy to men in misery, upon the

account of the image of God, the glory of God that is stamped upon them; blessed are such as extend their piety and mercy, not only to men's bodies—but also to their precious and immortal souls. **Soul-mercy is the chief of mercies.** The soul is the most precious jewel in all the world; it is a vessel of honor, it is a spark of glory, it is a bud of eternity, it is the price of blood, it is beautified with the image of God, it is adorned with the grace of God, and it is clothed with the righteousness of God.

Such are blessed as show mercy to others, from gracious motives and considerations, namely—it is God's free mercy which every day keeps hell and my soul asunder; it is mercy which daily pardons my sins; it is mercy which supplies all my inward and outward wants; it is mercy which preserves, and feeds, and clothes my outward man. And it is mercy which renews, strengthens, and prospers my inward man; it is mercy which has kept me many times from committing such and such sins; it is mercy which has kept me many a time from falling before such and such temptations; it is mercy which has many a time preserved me from being swallowed up by such and such inward and outward afflictions.

Such as show mercy out of a design to exalt and glorify the God of mercy; such who show most mercy to those to whom God shows most mercy: these are blessed, and shall obtain mercy. Now mark, to such who are thus graciously, thus spiritually, thus divinely merciful—do these precious promises belong: Psalm 41:1, "Blessed is the man who considers the poor and needy." Proverbs 22:9, "He who has a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he gives of his bread to the poor." Proverbs 14:21, "He who despises his neighbor sins: but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he." Proverbs 11:25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he who waters shall be watered also himself."

2 Cor. 9:8 is very remarkable: "And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that you, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Behold, how words are here heaped up to make grace, and all grace, to abound; and who is it to? Unto the liberal man, the merciful man; Job 29:13, "The blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your

bosom." Behold and wonder at the height of these expressions that you have in this text. We account it good measure when it is heaped up. But when it is heaped up and pressed down, that is more. But when it is heaped up and pressed down, and then heaped up and running over again—this is as much as possible can be made, this is as much as heart can wish.

O sirs! those who are of merciful spirits, they shall have mercy heaped up, pressed down, and running over. Certainly that man must needs be in a happy and blessed condition, who can be in no condition wherein he shall not have mercy, yes, mercy heaped up and running over, to supply all his necessities: Mat. 25:35, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." *Come, you who are blessed*—that is their estate; *receive the kingdom*—that is the outcome and reward. And why so? "I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink," etc.

I am truly and graciously merciful; therefore I am blessed, and shall obtain mercy, etc. But,

**[13.] Thirteenthly,** A godly man may argue thus: Those who are "pure in heart are blessed, and shall see God," that is, enjoy him, and live forever with him, Mat. 5:8. I am pure in heart; therefore I am blessed, and shall see God.

By the pure in heart, here in the text, we may safely understand **the sincere and single-hearted Christian**, in opposition to the double-minded professor, as you may easily perceive by comparing these scriptures together—1 Tim. 1:5; James 1:8; 1 Peter 1:22; Proverbs 20:6; Eccles. 2:21; 1 John 1:8; John 3:2; Luke 1:5-6.

Purity is twofold:

First, simple and absolute. And in this sense no man is pure in this life, no not one.

Secondly, respective and in part, and that is the purity here meant. A pure heart is a plain, simple heart, without fraud or deceit—like Nathaniel, in

whom there was no deceit. It is a heart that is evangelically blameless and sincere.

But, secondly, **purity is opposed to mixture**; purity consists in the unmixedness of anything inferior. That metal we account pure metal, which has not any baser than itself mixed with it. If you mix gold with tin, the gold is made impure by the mixture of tin. Remember once for all, namely, that a pure heart is such a one as has cast off and cast out the love and allowance of every known sin, and mingles not with it, though ever so small; such a heart as has renounced every known way of sin. Though there is corruption remaining in it; yet it can solemnly and seriously appeal to God—that there is no known way of sin—but it hates, and abhors, and strives against, and will upon no terms allow it. This heart, in the language of the gospel, is a pure heart; yes, it is such a heart as dares venture upon the trial of God himself. Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me," or any way of pain, or of grief, or of provocation, as the Hebrew has it, or any course of sin that is grievous to God or man.

A gracious heart, a pure heart, can neither allow of any way of wickedness, nor wallow in any way of wickedness, nor make a trade of any way of wickedness, nor give up itself to any way of wickedness. Though sin may cleave to a pure heart, as dross does to silver—yet a pure heart will not mix nor mingle with sin.

"And lead me in the way everlasting," or in the way of eternity, or in the way of antiquity, as the Hebrew has it; that is—that good old way which leads to peace and rest, to heaven and happiness, Jer. 6:16.

Evangelical purity of heart lies in this, that it will not admit any known sin to mingle with the bent and purpose of the heart. A pure heart, like a pure fountain, will still be a-working and a-casting out the mud and filth that is in it. Though sin may cleave to a regenerate man, as dross does to the silver—yet it mingles not with the regenerate part, nor the regenerate part mingles not with it, no more than oil mingles with the water, or water mingles with the oil. Now you know, though the water and the oil touch one another—yet they do not mingle one with another; so though

grace and sin, in a regenerate man, may as it were touch one another—yet they do not mingle one with another.

Dear hearts! look, as we truly say, that **gold** is pure gold that is dug out of the rock, though much dross may hang about it. And as we truly say, that such and such an **air** is pure air, though at times there be many fogs and mists within it. And as we truly say, that such and such **springs** are pure springs, though mud, and dirt, and filth may be lying at the bottom of those springs. And as we truly say, that **face** is a fair face, though it has some freckles in it; so we may as truly say, that such and such a **heart** is a "pure heart," though there may be much sinful dross and filth cleaving to it.

The Jews report, that when Noah sent forth his sons to populate the world, he delivered to everyone of them some relics of old Adam. It may be fabulous for the history—but it is true in the morality; the relics of his sinful corruptions cleaves close to us all.

Beloved! the best, the wisest, the holiest, and the most mortified Christians on earth, do carry about with them a body of sin and death, Romans 7:22-23; they have in them a fountain of original corruption, and from this fountain sin will still be arising, a-bubbling and a-boiling up as the scum in a pot over the fire. But mark, as in wine, or honey, or water, though scum and filth may arise—yet the wine, the honey, the water, will be still a-purging and purifying itself, and a-working and casting it out; so though sin, though corruption, though spiritual filth may, and too often does, arise in a gracious heart—yet there is a spring of grace, a spring of living water in him, there is a holy cleansing and purifying disposition in a regenerate person, which will still be a-working and casting it out.

But now mark, in men of impure hearts and lives, the scum does not only arise—but it seethes and boils in. Ezek. 24:12, "She wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her;" notwithstanding all the threatenings of God, and all the judgments of God upon her—yet her scum and filthiness boiled in. Though God boiled Jerusalem in the pot of his judgments—yet her scum and filth stuck to every side of her. Wicked men's scum and filth does not only arise—but it also seethes and boils in, and mingles together with their spirits. But so does not the scum and filth

which rises in a gracious heart. **A sheep may *fall* into the mire—but a swine delights to *wallow* in the mire.** [John 4:14. All resistance of sin in a Scripture phrase is called conquest; for in the resistance of it, there is as much love showed to God as in the conquest of it, though there be not so much power seen.] But,

**[14.] Fourteenthly,** A godly man may argue thus: Such as sin has not a dominion over me, therefore I am not not under the law—but under grace. Romans 6:14. Sin may *dwell* in a saint—but it shall never *reign* in a saint. Look! as those beasts, in that Dan. 7:12, had their dominion taken away, though their lives were spared and prolonged for a season and a time; so when Christ and grace enters into the soul, they take away the dominion of sin, though they do for a time spare the life of sin. To prevent mistakes, premise with me briefly these few things:

First, that in every regenerate man, there are two men—an old man and a new man; or if you please, flesh and spirit, Romans 7.

Secondly, The old man, the fleshly part, will incline the soul, and bias the soul, as well to sins against the gospel, as to sins against the law, and to great sins as well as small sins; witness Noah's drunkenness, Lot's incest, Asa's oppression, David's murder and adultery, Solomon's idolatry, and Peter's blasphemy.

Thirdly, The old man, the fleshly part, is as much in the will as in any other part of the regenerate man. And therefore, when he falls into heinous sins, he may fall into them with consent, delight, and willingness, so far as his will is unrenewed. Though a real Christian be changed in every part, 1 Thes. 5:23—yet it is but in part and imperfect.

Fourthly, The old man, the fleshly part, is in a regenerate man's members, as well as in his will, and therefore they may be exercised and employed in and about those sins they have consented unto.

Fifthly, High sinnings injure and wound the conscience of a regenerate man, and lay him open to the sore rebukes of God, and call for great repentance, and fresh and frequent applications of the blood of Christ.

These things being premised, a question may be propounded, namely:

**Question. What does the dominion of sin import, and wherein does it consist?** Now to this considerable question, I shall give these eight following answers:

**[1.] First,** Sin is in dominion, when it has the universal and sovereign command of the soul, when it has an absolute power, when it has such an authority in the soul to command it as a king does his subjects, or as the centurion did his servants: Mat. 8:9, "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it." Now when sin has such a universal and easy authority and command over the whole man, body and soul, as that it can use them in the service of

sin, when and where and how it pleases, then sin is in dominion. Where there is a peaceable, uncontrolled, willing, universal subjection of the whole man unto the commands of sin, there sin reigns, Eph. 2:2-3. But,

**[2.] Secondly,** Sin is in dominion, when in a course, when ordinarily, there is a quiet, free, willing, and total yielding of subjection to the authority, law, and command of sin. Mark, it is a full possession, a complete delight, and a constant contentment in sin, that speaks out the reign and dominion of sin, Romans 6:13-16. Dominion of sin imports a complete and universal resignation of the whole will and man to the obedience of it. That man who is wholly addicted and devoted to the ways of sin, that man is under the reign of sin—that man whose whole heart is universally married to his lusts—that man is under the dominion of his lusts. When a man does as freely, cheerfully, universally, and readily obey his lusts, as a child does his father—then sin is in dominion. When a man sins with greediness, when with Ahab he "sells himself to work wickedness," 1 Kings 21:25, when he commits "wickedness with both hands," Micah 7:3, when he gives himself up or over "to all uncleanness and filthiness," Eph. 2:3, when he freely and voluntarily resigns and surrenders up his body and soul to the obedience of sin—then sin reigns, then it keeps the throne.

Where the dominion of sin is erected, there it sits in the heart, as a king in his throne, and gives forth its laws and commands to the soul and body, and those commands are listened to, and consented to, approved and delighted in, etc. [A man may be subject, as a captive, in this or that particular tyranny of sin, who is not obedient as a servant to *all* the government of sin; for that takes in the whole will, and an adequate submission thereof to the peaceable and uncontrolled power of sin, Romans 7:16, 19, 23.] A subject cannot in a course more freely, willingly, universally, and cheerfully obey the commands of his prince, than a sinner does in a course freely, willingly, universally, and cheerfully obey the commands of his lusts. And wherever this sad temper of spirit is—there is sin in dominion.

But now mark, a regenerate man's will rises against his sin, even then when he is worsted by sin and led captive by sin. A tyrant is obeyed unwillingly; the wills of his subjects rise up against his commands, and if

his power were not superior to their wills, they would never obey him. Sin is no *king*—but a *tyrant* in the souls of the saints, and therefore their wills, so far as they are renewed, cannot but rise against it. [The apostle, as Chrysostom and Theodoret observes, on Romans 6:12, does not say, Let not sin *tyrannize*, for that is sin's own work, and not ours. But he says, Let it not *reign* in you; for when a king reigns, the subjects do, as it were, actively obey and embrace his command, whereas they are rather patients than agents in a tyranny.]

O sirs! remember this forever, that the molesting, vexing, and tempting power of sin, does not speak out its dominion; for sin may molest, and vex, and tempt as an enemy—where it does not rule and reign as a king. As you see this day in many nations of the earth, there are many enemies that do molest, vex, and tempt the subjects of those nations, who yet are far enough off from having any rule or dominion over them.

But sin is in dominion, when it commands in the heart as a king in his throne, or as a Lord in his house, or as a general in his army—freely, boldly, universally, cheerfully; and when the soul does as freely, boldly, universally, and cheerfully subject itself to sin's commands. Where men commonly yield up their wills and affections to the commands of sin, there sin reigns. And this is the case of every unregenerate man.

But where the will does commonly make a stout opposition to sin, there it reigns not; now this is the case of every regenerate man. That prince cannot truly be said to reign in that kingdom, where commonly he meets with stout opposition; so it is here. A sincere Christian makes it the great business and work of his life, above all other things—to make all the opposition he can against his lusts, and is thoroughly resolved to die fighting against his sins—as Pietro Candiano, one of the Dukes of Venice, died fighting against the Nauritines—with the weapons in his hand. As Caesar said in a battle he fought against one of Pompey's sons, "At other times I fought for honor—but now I fight for my life!" So a sincere Christian fights against his sins—as for his life.

Castellio's opinion was vain, namely—that Christians have no combat between flesh and spirit, which is quite contrary to Scripture, Romans 7:14-24, Gal. 5:17, etc., and contrary to the experience of all saints, in all

the ages of the world. But,

**[3.] Thirdly,** When a man is usually insistent in his sinnings, in the face of all reprehensions and arguments which tend to dissuade him from sin—then sin is in dominion, Proverbs 29. 1; Jer. 5:3-4; and 44:15-17. When the constant bent of the heart is inflamed towards sin, and when the desires of the soul are insatiably carried after sin, and when the resolutions of the soul are strongly and habitually set upon sin—then sin is in the throne, and then it reigns as a king. When God hedges up the sinner's way with thorns—yet the sinner will break through all to his sin, Hosea 2:6-7; when life and death, heaven and hell, glory and misery, are set before the sinner—yet the sinner will be insistent in his sinnings, though he loses his life, his soul, and all the glory of another world, then sin reigns, Deut. 30:15-19, and 11:26-29. But,

**[4.] Fourthly,** When men ordinarily, habitually, commonly are very careful, studious, and laborious to make provision for sin, then sin reigns: Romans 13:14, "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof;" or, as the Greek has it, "Make no projects for the flesh," or "cater not for the flesh." When a man's head and heart is full of projects how to gratify this lust, and how to satisfy that lust, and how to fulfill the other lust, then sin reigns, then it is in its throne. James 4:3, "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts." [David, in an hour of temptation, once made provision for his lusts, 2 Sam. 11:14-15. But this was not his course, his trade, etc.]

Both the law of God and nature requires me to make provision of shelter, food, clothing, and health for my **body**, and for theirs who are under my charge. But it may cost me my life, my estate, yes, my very soul, to make provision for my **lusts**. Such as ask amiss shall be sure to ask and miss. He who would make God a servant to his lusts, may ask long enough before God will answer. Of all affronts there is none to this—of making God a servant to our lusts. And where this frame of spirit is, there sin is in dominion, Hosea 2:8. He who abuses mercies to serve his lusts, fights against God with his own weapons, as David did against Goliath, and as Benhadad did against Ahab, with that very life that he had newly given him; such a soul, like the waters of Jordan, will at last certainly drop into the dead lake. "But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** When sin is commonly, habitually sweet, and the soul takes a daily pleasure and delight in it, then it reigns; as you may see by comparing these scriptures. [Job 20:12-13; Proverbs 2:14; Amos 6:13; Zeph. 3:11; 2 Thes. 2:12-3 Plutarch.] When a man daily takes as joyful contentment and satisfaction in his lusts, and in walking after the ways of his own heart, as he does in his highest outward enjoyments, or in his nearest and dearest relations, then certainly sin is in dominion. Such men as can go constantly on in a way of wickedness, merely to delight and please the flesh—such men are certainly under the power and reign of sin.

Many of the heathens, who knew what rational delights were, scorned sensual delights as inferior to them. These will one day rise in judgment against many of the professors in our days. I know there is no real pleasure or delight in sin. If intemperance could afford more pleasure than temperance, then Heliogabalus would have been more happy than Adam in paradise; yes, if there were the least real delight in sin, there could be no perfect hell, where men shall most completely sin, and most completely be tormented with their sins.

**What sin is so sweet or profitable, that is worth burning in hell for—or worth being shut out of heaven for?** etc. But,

**[6.] Sixthly,** When men commonly take part with sin, when they take up arms in the defense of sin, and in defiance of the commands of God, the motions of the Spirit, and the checks of conscience—then sin is in dominion. He who readily, resolvedly, and habitually fights sin's battles—is sin's servant, and without all question under the reign and dominion of sin. Look! as we groundedly conclude, that such men are under the reign and dominion of that king, that they readily, resolvedly, and habitually take up arms to fight for him; so when the inward faculties of the soul, and the outward members of the body, do readily resolve, and habitually take up arms to fight for sin, then and there sin is in dominion, as you may plainly see by consulting these scriptures. [Romans 6:19-20; Eph. 2:2-3; Titus 3:3.]

But where the soul readily, resolvedly, and habitually strives against sin, conflicts with it, and makes war against it—there it is not in dominion,

there it reigns not, as you may see by comparing these scriptures. [Romans 7:23-24; Gal. 5:17; Romans 8:13.] That man who can truly appeal to God, and say, *Lord! you who know all hearts and things, you know that there is nothing under the whole heavens that I am so desirous and ambitious of as this—that my sins may be subdued, that my strongest lusts may be mortified, and that those very corruptions that my nature, constitution, and complexion are most inclined to, may be brought to an under control—that man who can appeal to God, and say, O Lord! whatever becomes of me, I will never be reconciled to any known sin; yes, Lord, though I should perish for ever—yet I am resolved to fight against my sins forever; let God do what he will against me, I will do all I can against my sins, and to honor my God—that man is not under the reign and dominion of sin. But,*

**[7] Seventhly,** When sin commonly rises by opposition, then it reigns. Look! as grace, when it is in the throne, it rises by opposition: 2 Sam. 6:22, "I will yet be more vile;" Mark 10:47-48, "And many charged him who he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, O Son of David, have mercy on me"; [ Acts 4:6-34, 5:40-42.] So when sin is in the throne, it rises higher and higher by opposition. As the more water you cast upon lime, the more fiercely it burns; so when sin is in its reign and dominion, it flames out the more by opposition. Witness the Jews' malice and envy against Christ, which, when it received but a little easy, gentle check by Pilate, they cried out so much the more, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Mark 15:12-14.

A man who is under the reign and dominion of sin, is like the rainbow; the rainbow is never on that side of the world that the sun is—but wherever it appears, it is in opposition against the sun: if the sun be in the east, the rainbow is in the west, etc. Where sin has the throne, it will still rise higher and higher by opposition. Reprove a swearer for swearing, and he will swear so much the more; yes, many times he will swear that he did not swear, when indeed he did. And so it holds in all other vices that the sinner is given up to. It is said of Catiline, that he was a compound and bundle of warring lusts and vices; the same may be said of all others, where sin is in dominion. But,

**[8.] Eighthly,** and lastly, If the Lord Jesus Christ has not dominion over

you, then sin has certainly dominion over you, Romans 6:17-18. Christ has no dominion over that soul, which sin has dominion over, and sin has no dominion over that soul, which Christ has dominion over. Christ and sin cannot have dominion over the same soul at one and the same time; Christ's dominion is destructive to sin, and inconsistent with sin's dominion, etc.

Question. "**But how shall I know whether the Lord Jesus Christ has dominion over my soul or not?** How shall I know whether the Lord Jesus Christ is my Lord or not? For if I can but groundedly conclude that Christ is my Lord, then I may very boldly, safely, and undoubtedly conclude—that sin is not my Lord. But if Christ be not my Lord, I may more than fear that sin is certainly my Lord.

Answer. Can you truly say, in the presence of the great and glorious God, who is the trier and searcher of all hearts—that you have given up your heart and life to the rule, authority, and government of Jesus Christ; and that you have chosen him to be your sovereign Lord and King, and are truly willing to submit to his dominion, as the only precious and righteous, holy and heavenly, sweet and pleasant, profitable and comfortable, safe and best dominion in all the world; and to resign up your heart, your will, your affections, your life, your all—*really* to Christ, *wholly* to Christ, and *only* to Christ? [Psalm 139:23-24, 26:2; Jar. 11:20, 17:10; Proverbs 17:3; 1 Thes. 2:4.] Can you truly say, O dear Lord Jesus! other lords, namely—the world, the flesh, and the devil—have too long had dominion over me. But now these lords I utterly renounce, I forever renounce, and do give up myself to you, as my only Lord, beseeching you to rule and reign over me forever and ever, Isaiah 26:13; O Lord, though *sin* rages, and *Satan* roars, and the *world* sometimes frowns, and sometimes fawns—yet I am resolved to own you as my only Lord, and to serve you as my only Lord, Joshua 24:5. My *greatest fear* is of offending you, and my *chief care* shall be to please you, and my *only joy* shall be to be praise and honor you. O Lord, I can appeal to you in the sincerity of my heart, that though I have many invincible weaknesses and infirmities which hang upon me, and though I am often worsted by my sins and overcome in an hour of temptation—yet you who know all thoughts and hearts—you know that I have given up my heart to the obedience of Jesus

Christ, and do daily give it up to his rule and government. You know that it is the earnest desire of my soul, above all things in this world that Jesus Christ may set up his laws in my heart, and exercise his dominion over me.

Now, doubtless there is not the weakest Christian in the world—but can venture himself upon such an appeal to God as this is. And without all question, where such a frame and temper of spirit is, there the dominion of Jesus Christ is set up. And where the dominion of Christ is set up, there sin has no dominion. But where the dominion of Christ is not set up, there sin is in full dominion. Christ's dominion cannot exist with sin's dominion, nor can sin's dominion exist with Christ's dominion, Mat. 6:24.

Now by these eight things, if men are not resolved beforehand to put a cheat upon their own souls, they may know whether their sins have dominion over them or not, and so accordingly conclude for or against themselves. "But,

**[15.] Fifteenthly,** and lastly, A godly man may argue thus: There is no condemnation to those who do not walk after the flesh—but after the Spirit, Romans 8:1. I do not walk after the flesh—but after the Spirit; therefore there is no condemnation to me. [Walking, in Scripture, signifies to hold on a course of life, Gen. 5:22, and 18:1.] Walking after the flesh notes a course of sin. Walking after the Spirit notes a course of godliness. Now, to such as keep off from a course of sin, and that keep on in a course of godliness—there is no condemnation. There is not one condemnation; for God the Father won't condemn such a person; nor will Jesus Christ condemn such a person; nor will the Holy Spirit condemn such a person; nor will the word of grace condemn such a person; nor is there any commandment or threatening which will condemn such a person; no, nor will such a man's own heart or conscience, if it is rightly informed, condemn him. And therefore well may the Holy Spirit say to such a one, *There is no condemnation to such a one; there is not one condemnation!* etc.

Now thus you see, "by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things," and by a rational arguing from Scripture, a man may attain unto a

comfortable certainty of his gracious state, and safely and groundedly conclude his saving interest in Christ. Now this assurance of God's favor, "by the witnessing of our own spirits," is more easily attained than most Christians imagine; for let a gracious man but clear himself of heart-condemning sins, and rationally argue as before has been hinted, and he will speedily reach to some comfortable, supporting, soul-satisfying and soul-quieting assurance, there being an infallible connection between the fore-mentioned graces and future glory, 1 John 3:20-21. These fifteen arguments may well be looked upon as fifteen sure and infallible evidences of the goodness and happiness of a Christian's estate.

Oh that you would often, every day, think on this, namely—that the undoubted verity of God's promises proves an inseparable connection between true faith and eternal glory: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:14-16. "Truly, truly"—these serious asseverations or protestations amount almost to an oath—"I say unto you, He who hears my words, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. But has passed from death to life." John 5:24. "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life." John 3:36. He has it in the promise, he has it in the first-fruits, Romans 8:23; he has it in the pledge, Eph. 1:13-14; and he has it in Christ his head, Eph. 2:6. "He who believes, and is baptized, shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." Mark 16:16. "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he who believes on him shall not be confounded." 1 Peter 2:6. "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:40. Verse 47, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, He who believes on me has everlasting life."

John 11:25, "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in me, though he were dead—yet shall he live." Verse 26, "And whoever lives, and believes in me, shall never die." John 20:31, "But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name." Look! as

certainly as the unbeliever shall be cast into outer darkness, so certainly shall the believer be partaker of the glorious inheritance of the saints in light; for certainly the *promises* are as true as the *threatenings*.

Acts 16:30-31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—and you *shall* be saved." The apostle speaks not doubtingly, *Perhaps* you shall be saved; nor they do not say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and it *may be* you *may* go to heaven. But they speak boldly, confidently, peremptorily, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you *shall* be saved." Joshua 23:14, 21:45. O my soul! what greater certainty and security can any man have than the infallible promise of that God who is truth itself, who will not, who cannot, deny his word? But the same love and free grace that moved him to infuse grace into his children's souls, will move him also to keep the word which has gone out of his mouth, and to make good whatever he has promised. Thus you evidently see that the promises prove an inseparable connection between grace and glory, between faith and everlasting life; so that, let me but prove that I have a saving faith, and the scriptures last cited prove infallibly that I shall be saved.

Oh, labor as for life, daily to give a firm and fixed assent to the truth of those blessed promises last cited, and hold it as an indisputable and inviolable principle, that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, or whoever has received Christ as his Lord and Savior, shall be certainly saved. [1 Tim. 1:15; 1 John 1:9; Heb. 6:17-18; Ezek. 32:11, 18:32; 1 John 5:10-14; James 2:19.] This is the person that has the word, the promise, the covenant, the oath of that God who cannot possibly lie, or die—for the pardon of his sin, and for the salvation of his soul. Now,

O my soul, what more security could you ask, than that which the great Jehovah, the faithful God, of his own accord, has given to you, namely, his word and his oath? Now not to believe God upon his promise and oath, is to make him a liar, yes, the worst of liars; yes, it is to do worse than the devils, for they "believe and tremble." Though the word of the Lord deserves the greatest credit that any mortals can give unto it, he being truth itself who has said it, though it has no oath nor no asseverations to be its surety—yet God, in his infinite condescending love to poor sinners, that he may sink the truth of what he says deeper into the hearts and minds of his people, and leave the fairer and fuller print in our

assents to the same, he sets on the word of promise with the weight of asseverations and oaths; yes, and to all these he has annexed his broad seal, the Lord's supper, and the privy seal of his Spirit. Oh unreasonable unbelief! shall not the oath of God silence all disputes? A man would never desire of any honest man, so much as God has condescended to, for the confirmation of our faith. Witness his promises, his covenant, his oath, and his seals; and therefore let us give glory to him by believing, and quietly rest upon his faithfulness.

O sirs! that soul who dares not take his sanctification as an evidence, yes, as a choice and sure evidence of his saving interest in Christ, and of the Lord's precious love to him, according to the promises of his favor and grace, several of which has been but now under consideration, that soul ought to acknowledge it as his sin, yes, as his great sin, for which he deserves to be smartly rebuked, as making God a great liar. O my friends! it is a spiritual peevishness and sinful crossness that keeps many godly men and women long in a sad, dark, doubting, perplexed, and disconsolate condition. And certainly it is no small sin to set light by any work of the blessed Spirit, and the joy, comfort, and peace that we might have by it. Ah, how many are there who fear the Lord—who quench, grieve, vex, and provoke the Holy Spirit, by denying his work, and by quarreling against themselves, and the blessed work of the Spirit in them! Certainly it is the duty of every Christian to hear as well what can be said for him, as what can be said against him.

Many poor, weak, and yet sincere Christians, are often apt to be too sour, rigid and bitter against their own souls; they love to practice a merciless severity against themselves; they do not objectively, impartially consider how the case stands between God and their own souls. [Psalm 72:2, Psalm 88; Job. 15:11, Job 16:8-9.] It is in this case, as Solomon speaks in another: "One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth," Proverbs 13:7. That is, there be those in the world who pretend they are rich, and make a show before men as if they were men of great estates, whereas indeed they are exceeding poor and needy. [Ever since man ceased to be what he should be, he strives to seem to be what he is not. It is not the outward show, which shows what things are.]

There are not a few that stretch their wing beyond their nest; that bear a port beyond their estates; that dress up themselves with other men's plumes, laying it on above measure in clothes, in high entertainments, in stately buildings, in great attendance, etc., when not worth one groat in all the world. And there are others again who are exceeding rich and wealthy, and yet look upon themselves to be very poor and needy. To apply this spiritually, it is the damning sin of the self-flattering hypocrite, to make himself rich, to make himself significant, to make his condition better than it is, Rev. 3:17. And it is the vanity, the folly of some sincere Christians to make their condition worse than indeed it is, to make themselves more miserable and unhappy than indeed they are. Ah, Christians! it is sad with you, it is night with you, when you read over the evidences of God's love to your souls, as a man does a book which he intends to confute. Is it not sad when Christians shall study hard to find evasions to wheel off all those comforts, refreshings, cheerings, and supports, which are offered to them, which are due to them, and that they may upon gospel grounds justly claim as their portion, as their inheritance? And oh that all such Christians would seriously and frequently lay to heart these eight things.

**[1.] First,** That they highly dishonor the blessed God, and the work of his grace, by denying that which he has done for them and wrought in them.

**[2.] Secondly,** They are spiritual murderers, they are self-murderers, they are soul-murderers; for by this means they stab and wound their own precious souls and consciences through and through with many a deadly dart. Now is there any murder like to spiritual murder, to self-murder, to soul-murder? Surely not. "But,

**[3.] Thirdly,** They are thieves; for by this means they rob their own precious souls of that joy, peace, comfort, rest, content, assurance, and satisfaction which otherwise they might enjoy. Now there is no theft to spiritual theft; and of all spiritual theft, there is none to that which reaches the precious and immortal soul. Even the godly man will walk uncomfortably so long as he concludes and strongly fears that his estate is sinful; for sensible comfort rises or falls, comes on or goes off, according to the strength of our judgment and present apprehensions. Observe, it is

not what indeed our estate is—but what we judge of it, which breeds in us sensible comfort or discomfort. A sound sincere heart be very heavy and disconsolate upon an unsound misconstruction and judging of its true condition. But,

**[4.] Fourthly,** They bear false witness against Christ, his Spirit, their own souls, and the work of grace that is wrought in them. Oh how many dark, doubting, drooping Christians are there, who, if you would give them ten thousand worlds—yet would never be brought to bear false witness against their poorest neighbor, brother, or friend—and that out of conscience, because of that command, "You shall not bear false witness," etc., who yet make no conscience, no bones of it, frequently to bear witness against the Lord Jesus Christ, and his gracious works upon their own hearts! But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** They join with Satan and his work and his suggestions, and with that strong party he has in them, against the Lord Jesus Christ and his work, and his weak party in them. Sin is Satan's work, and grace is Christ's work. Now, how sad is it to see a Christian fall in with Satan's work in him, against the work of Christ that is in him. Satan has a strong party in their souls, and Christ has but a weak party. Now, how unjust is it for them to help the strong against the weak, when they should upon many accounts be a-helping the weak against the strong, a-helping the Lord against the mighty, a-helping weak grace against strong and mighty corruptions. Ah, how skillful and careful are many weak Christians to make headway against the work of Christ in their own souls, and to plead hard for Satan and his works in them, as if they had received a fee from him to plead against Christ and their own souls.

O Christians! that you would be wise at last, and let Baal plead for Baal, let Satan plead for himself—but you plead for Christ and that seed of God that is in you. Well, remember this—that as fire is often hidden under the embers, so grace is often hid under many foul distempers. And as a little fire is fire, though it be even smothered under the embers, so a little grace is grace, though it be even smothered under much corruption, 1 John 3:9.

Now, by these short hints you may easily perceive how many royal commands these poor Christians transgress who deny and belie the

blessed work of the Lord in them. But,

**[6.] Sixthly,** They rob the Spirit of all the honor and glory that is due unto him for that blessed work of grace and holiness that he has formed up in their hearts. Oh what a grief and dishonor must it be to the Holy Spirit, that when he has put forth a power in men's hearts equivalent to that by which the world was created, and by which Christ was raised from the dead, we find it overlooked, and not at all acknowledged, Romans 8:11. The Holy Spirit is very tender. But do these poor doubting souls behave tenderly to him? Surely not.

Dear Christians, the standing law of heaven is, "Quench not the Spirit," 1 Thes. 5:19. You must remember that you may grieve and quench the Spirit:

(1.) not only by your enormities, Isaiah 63:10;

(2.) not only by refusing the cordials and comforts that he brings to your doors, yes, which he puts to your mouths, Psalm 77:2;

(3.) not only slighting and despising his gracious actings in others, Acts 2:13;

(4.) nor only by fathering those sins and vanities upon him who are only the brats and fruits of Satan and your own hearts. But also,

(5.) in the fifth place, by misjudging and miscalling the precious grace that he has wrought in your souls, as by judging and calling your faith fancy, your sincerity hypocrisy, your wisdom folly, your light darkness, your zeal wild-fire, etc.

Now, O sirs! will you make conscience, yes, much conscience, of quenching the Spirit in the four first respects, and will you make no conscience of quenching the Spirit in this fifth and last respect? Oh, how can this be? Oh, why should this be? But,

**[7.] Seventhly,** They hinder grace greatly; for how can grace spring, and thrive, and flourish, and increase in the soul, when the soul is full of daily fears and doubts that the root of the matter is not in it, Job 19:28; or that

the root is still unsound; or that the work that is passed upon it is not a work of God's saving power, 1 Thes. 1:5; or that it is not a special and peculiar work—but some common work of the Spirit, which a man may have and go to hell? But,

**[8.] Eighthly,** and lastly, They very much discourage, dishearten, and disanimate many poor, weak Christians, who observing of them, of whom they have had very high and honorable thoughts for the grace of God that they have judged to be in them, to be still a-questioning of their integrity, and still a-doubting of the graciousness and goodness of their conditions, do begin to question their own estates and conditions; yes, and many times peremptorily to conclude that surely they have no grace, they have no saving interest in Christ, and that all this while they have but put a cheat upon their own souls.

Now, oh that all poor, weak, dark, doubting Christians would never leave praying over these eight things, and pondering upon these eight things, until they are perfectly cured of that spiritual malady that they have been long laboring under, and which has been very prejudicial to the peace and comfort of their own souls.

Dear hearts, a gracious soul may safely, boldly, constantly, and groundedly say that which the word of the Lord says. Now, the word of the Lord says, that "the poor in spirit are blessed, and that those who mourn are blessed, and that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed, and that those who are pure in heart are blessed," Mat. 5:3-4, 6, 8—and therefore he is blessed. And assuredly he who cannot embrace and seal to these as true and blessed evidences of a safe and happy condition, is greatly to lament and mourn over his unbelief, and earnestly to seek the Lord to persuade his heart and to satisfy and overpower his soul in this thing, as the poor man in the Gospel did: Mark 9:24, "And straightway the father of the child cried out with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

O sirs! the condition of the promises last cited being fulfilled, the promises themselves must certainly and infallibly be fulfilled, else the great and blessed God would lie, be unrighteous, unfaithful, and deny himself; [Joshua 21:45, 23:14-15; 1 John 5:10-12.] which is as impossible

as for God to die, or to send another Savior, or to give his glory to graven images. Assuredly the too hard, the too harsh, the too severe, the too jealous thoughts and conjectures; and the too humble, if I may so speak, censures and surmises that many weak, doubting Christians have of themselves, or of the goodness or graciousness of their estates, by reason of the weakness of their graces, or depth of melancholy, or the present prevalency of some unmortified lusts, or the subtlety of Satan—shall never make void the faithfulness of God, or the promises of God, which in Christ Jesus are all yes and amen, 2 Cor. 1:20.

Doubtless God will never shut any poor, weak, doubting Christian out of heaven, because through bashfulness, or an excess of modesty, or the present darkness that is upon his understanding, or through the ungroundedness of some strong fears of an eternal miscarriage, he cannot entertain such good thoughts, such honest thoughts, such gracious thoughts of himself, or of the goodness or happiness of his condition, as he should entertain, and as he would entertain, if once he could but be too hard for the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Oh that you would remember this forever, namely—that the Lord never makes any promises to support, comfort, cheer, and encourage his people against their sadness, darkness, doubts, and droppings—but they shall support, comfort, cheer, and encourage his poor people in that condition; for otherwise the Lord should provide means for an end, out of his infinite wisdom, love, and tender care and compassion towards his people, and yet they should never attain that end. But thus to imagine is no small folly; yes, it is little less than blasphemy. Well, sirs! this is to be forever remembered, namely, that whatever gift or grace of God in man brings him within the compass of God's promises of eternal favors and mercies, that gift, that grace, must needs be an infallible sign or evidence of salvation. But such are the gifts and graces specified in the fifteen particulars but now cited, and therefore that soul that really finds those gifts and graces in himself, or any of them, shall certainly be saved. But,

**9. The ninth maxim or consideration.** Consider this—That in different men there are different degrees of assurance. And in one and the same gracious soul there are different degrees of assurance at different times—but there is in no man at any time in this life perfection of

degrees; for our understanding and knowledge in this life is imperfect both as to the faculty and its acts. 1 Cor. 13:12, "For now we see through a mirror darkly (Gr., in a riddle)—but then face to face. Now I know in part—but then shall I know even [Look! as God knows me after a manner agreeable to his infinite excellency, so shall I know God according to my capacity, not obscurely—but perfectly, as it were face to face.] as also I am known." A clear, distinct, immediate, full, and perfect knowledge of God is desirable on earth—but we shall never attain to it until we come to heaven. This well is deep, and for the most part we lack a bucket to draw with. The best of men can better tell what God is not—than what he is; the most acute and judicious people in divine knowledge have and must acknowledge their ignorance. Witness that great apostle Paul, who learned his divinity among the angels, and had the Holy Spirit for his immediate tutor—yet he confesses that he knew but in part.

Certainly there is no man under heaven who has such a perfect, complete, and full assurance of his salvation—as that one degree cannot be added to the former. Neither is there any repugnancy in asserting an infallible assurance and denying a perfect assurance; for I infallibly know that there is a God, and that this God is holy, just, and true, and yet I have no perfect knowledge of a deity, nor of the holiness, justice, and truth of God, for in this life the most knowing man knows but in part.

Dear friends! in the church of Christ there are believers of several growths: there are fathers, young men, children, and babes, 1 John 1:13-14; 1 Peter 2:2. And as in most families there are commonly more children and babes than grown men, so in the church of Christ there are commonly more weak, staggering, doubting Christians than there are strong ones, grown up to a full assurance. Some think that as soon as they are assured, they must needs be void of all fears, and filled with all joy in believing—but this is a real mistake; for glorious and ravishing joy is a separable thing from assurance; nor yet does assurance exclude all doubts and fears—but only such doubts and fears as arises from infidelity and reigning hypocrisy. But,

**10. The tenth maxim or consideration.** Consider, We have no ground from Scripture to expect that God should, either by a voice from heaven, or by sending an angel from about his throne, or by any glorious

apparitions or strong impressions, or by any extraordinary way of revelations—assure us that we do believe, or that our grace is true, or that our saving interest in God and Christ is certain, or that our pardon is sealed in heaven, or that we are in a justified state, and that we shall be at last undoubtedly saved. Oh no! But we are to use all those blessed helps and means which are appointed by God, and common to all believers, for the obtaining of a particular assurance that we are believers, and that our state is good, and that we have a special propriety in Christ and in all the fundamental good that comes by him.

Mark—he who will receive no establishment, no comfort, no peace, no assurance, except it be administered by the hand of an angel, and witnessed to by some voice from heaven, etc., will certainly live and die without establishment, comfort, peace, or assurance. Gregory tells us of a religious lady, who, being much troubled about her salvation, did write unto him, that she "would never cease importuning of him until he had sent her word that he had received a revelation from heaven that her sins were pardoned, and that she was saved." To whom he returned this answer, "That it was a hard and altogether a useless matter which she required of him; it was difficult for him to obtain, as being unworthy to have the secret counsels of God to be imparted to him, and it was as unprofitable for her to know: and that, first, because such a revelation might make her too secure. And secondly, because it was impossible for him to demonstrate and make known unto her or any other the truth and infallibility of the revelation which he had received to be from God, so that, should she afterwards call into question the truth of it, as well she might, her troubles and doubtings concerning her salvation would have been as great as they were before."

Oh therefore, let all believers that would have sure establishment, sound comfort, lasting peace, and true and sweet assurance of the love of God, and of their saving interest in Christ, etc., take heed of flying unto revelations, visions or voices from heaven—to assure them of their salvation, and of the love of God, and of their saving interest in Christ, etc. If you who are advantaged to consult church history, you will find upon record that where one has been mistaken about searching his own heart, and trying his ways, and observing the frame and temper of his

own spirit—many hundreds have been eternally deceived and deluded by voices, visions, apparitions, revelations, and strange impulses and strong impressions, especially among the Romanists, 2 Thes. 2:9-12. And within these few years, have not many hundreds in this nation fallen under the same woeful delusions, who are all for crying up a light within, and a Christ within? etc. And this you are seriously and conscientiously to observe in opposition to the papists, who boldly and stoutly affirm that assurance of a man's salvation can be had by no other means than by extraordinary revelation. Witness the council of Trent, who have long since said, "That if any man says that he knows he shall certainly persevere, or infallibly be assured of his election, except he has this by special revelation, let him be Anathema." Without all question, God will one day cross and curse such a wicked council, which curses his people for asserting and maintaining that that may certainly be obtained in this life, as I have sufficiently proved by ten arguments in my treatise called Heaven on Earth, from page 1 to page 26.

I think there is a great truth in that Confession of Faith, which says that "infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith—but that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he is partaker of it. Yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may without any extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure." [1 John 5:13; Isaiah 50:10; Mark 9:24; 1 Cor. 2:12; 1 John 4:13-14; Heb. 6:11-12; Eph. 3:17-19; 2 Peter 1:10] But,

**11. The eleventh maxim or consideration.** Consider that probabilities of grace, of sincerity, of a saving interest in Christ, and of salvation—may be a very great help, and a singular support, and a special cordial and comfort to many precious Christians who lack that sweet and blessed assurance that their souls do earnestly breathe and long after. There are doubtless many thousands of "the precious sons and daughters of Zion comparable to fine gold," Lam. 4:2, who have not a clear and full assurance of their saving interest in Christ, nor of the saving work of God upon their souls, who yet have many evidences of grace, and of a saving interest in Christ. Now doubtless evidences of grace and of a saving

interest in Christ may serve to keep off fears and doubts, and darkness and sadness, and all rash and peremptory conclusions against a man's own soul, and his everlasting welfare, and may contribute very much to the keeping up of a great deal of peace, comfort, and quietness in his soul. The probable grounds that you have grace, and that God has begun to work powerfully and savingly upon you, are mercies more worth than ten thousand worlds. Will you please seriously and frequently to dwell upon these ten particulars.

**[1.] First,** That though many weak gracious souls do not enjoy communion with God in joy and delight—yet they do enjoy communion with God in sorrow and tears, Hos. 12:4; Isaiah 38:3; Psalm 51:17. A man may have communion with God in a heart-humbling, a heart-melting, and a heart-abasing way, when he has not communion with God in a heart-reviving, a heart-cheering, and a heart-comforting way. It is a very great mistake among many weak, tender-spirited Christians, to think that they have no communion with God in duties, except they meet with God embracing and kissing, cheering and comforting up their souls. And oh that all Christians would remember this once for all, namely—that a Christian may have as real communion with God in a heart-humbling way, as he can have in a heart-comforting way, John 20:11-19. A Christian may have as choice communion with God when his eyes are full of tears, as he can have when his heart is full of joy. When a godly man upon his dying bed was asked which were his most joyful days, either those before his conversion or those since his conversion, upon which he cried out, "Oh give me my mourning days again, give me my mourning days again, for they were my most joyful days." Many times a poor Christian has never more joy in his heart than when his eyes are full of tears. But,

**[2.] Secondly,** Though many poor, weak, doubting, trembling Christians dare not say that they do love the Lord Jesus Christ—yet they dare say that they would love the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts, and with all their souls, and they dare say, that if it were in their power, they would even shed tears of blood because they cannot love Christ both as they would and as they should. [It was a famous saying of Austin's, he loves not Christ at all—who loves not Christ above all.] Blessed Bradford would sit and weep at dinner until the tears fell on his plate, because he

could love God no more. So the poor, doubting, trembling Christian mourns and laments because he can love Christ no more. "A man may love gold, and yet not have it—but no man loves God but he is sure to have God," says Augustine. A godly man once cried out, "I had rather have one Christ, than a thousand worlds."

**[3.] Thirdly,** Though many poor, weak, doubting, trembling Christians dare not say that they have grace—yet they dare say that they prize the least grain of grace above all the gold and silver of the Indies. Were all the world a lump of gold, and in their hands to dispose of it, they would give it for grace, yes, for a little grace. Now certainly no man can thus highly prize grace but he who has grace. No man sees the worth and luster of grace, no man sees a beauty and excellency in grace, no man can value grace above the gold of Ophir—but he whose heart has been changed, and whose eyes has been opened by the spirit of grace. But,

**[4.] Fourthly,** Though many poor, doubting, trembling Christians dare not say that their condition is good, that their condition is safe and happy—yet they dare say that they would not for ten thousand worlds change their conditions with the vain and debauched men of the world—who delight in sin, who wallow in sin, who make a sport of sin, and who live under the reign and dominion of sin. They had rather, with Lazarus, be full of sores and full of needs, and live and die in rags, and after all be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, than with Dives, every day to fare sumptuously, and be clothed gloriously, and perish eternally, Luke 16. Though they are poor—and wicked men are rich; though they are debased—and wicked men are exalted; though they are empty—and wicked men are full; though they are low—and wicked men are high; though they enjoy nothing—and wicked men enjoy everything. Yet they would not for as many worlds as there be men in the world change conditions with them. But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that they do not sin, because there is not a just man upon the earth, who does good and sins not: Eccles. 7:20, "And because no man can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin;" Proverbs 20:9, "And because in many things we offend all;" James 3:2, And because "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is

not in us;" 1 John 1:8, chapter 3:6, 8- 10. Yet they dare say that **they would not willingly, willfully, wickedly, resolutely, maliciously, and habitually sin against the Lord to gain the whole world.** Though they dare not say they do not sin—yet they dare say, if they might have their choice, they would never dishonor God more, nor crucify the Lord of glory more, nor grieve the Spirit of grace more, nor wound conscience more, nor cloud the face of God more, nor darken their evidences for heaven more, nor interrupt their communion with God more, etc. But,

**[6.] Sixthly,** Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that God is their God, or that Christ is their Redeemer, or that the Spirit is their Comforter. Yet they dare say, that if God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and grace and glory, and holiness and happiness, were offered to them on the one hand—and all the honors, pleasures, profits, delights, and carnal joys of the world were offered them on the other hand—they had ten thousand times rather, they had infinitely rather, choose God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and grace and holiness, and everlasting happiness, than the contrary. Cant. 5:10; Deut. 26:17; Psalm 73:25; Philip. 3:6-8. Look! as Rachel cried out, "Give me children, or I die," Gen. 30:1; so these poor hearts are still crying out, "O Lord, give me yourself, or I die; give me your Christ, or I die; give me your Spirit and grace, or I die; give me pardon of sin, or I die; lift up the light of your countenance upon me, or I die; bring me under the bond of the covenant, or I die. O Lord, let all these things be done, or I am undone, and that forever; Lord, let the men of this world take the world, and divide it among themselves; let me but enjoy yourself, your Christ, your love, and I shall say, "My lot is fallen to me in a pleasant place, and truly I have a goodly heritage," Psalm 16:5, 6. But,

**[7.] Seventhly,** Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that they have grace in their own hearts—yet they dare say that they dearly love, and highly honor, and greatly prize the graces of the Spirit which they see sparkling and shining in the hearts and lives and lips of other saints. [Acts 11:23; Psalm 15:4; Psalm 16:3; Lam. 4:2; 1 You. 1:2-3; Heb. 11:38.] And they dare say that there are no men in all the world who are so precious, so lovely, so worthy, and so honorable

in their eyes, or so high in their esteem—as those who have the image of God, of Christ, of holiness, most clearly, fairly and fully stamped upon them. But,

**[8.] Eighthly,** Though poor, doubting, trembling Christians dare not say that they have such strength and power against their sins as they would have, or as they should have, or as many of the dear saints of God have, who often lead captivity captive. Yet they dare say, that when the Lord is pleased, now and then, by his Spirit, power, word, grace, etc., to help them, though it be but a little, against their sins, to help them in any measure to subdue their sins, or to assist them to bring any one sin or another to an under, or to arm them against any temptations, occasions, or provocations to sin—there are no such times or seasons of joy, comfort, delight, refreshing, and contentment to their souls as these are. Psalm 65:3, Gal. 5:14. The language of their souls in such a day as this is, is this: Oh that it might be always thus with us! Oh that every day we might lead captivity captive! Oh that every day we might have our lusts at an under! Oh that every day we might triumph over the old man! Oh that every day one lust or another might fall before the power, the Spirit, the presence, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But,

**[9.] Ninthly,** Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that they make so much advantage, so much earnings of the sermons they hear, or of the prayers they make, or of the scriptures they read, or of the communion of saints that they enjoy, as others do. Yet they dare say that they would not for all the world cast off praying, or hearing, or reading, or the communion of saints, and give up themselves to the ways of sin and Satan, and the world. Psalm 4:3; 66:19-20; 138:8; Lam. 3:55-58. But,

**[10.] Tenthly** and lastly, Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that Christ is their Savior—yet they dare say that they desire and endeavor to honor Christ as their Lord, though they cannot see Christ bestowing himself on them as their Redeemer, John 20:28—yet they are willing to make a resignation of themselves up to him as their king; they are willing to resign up their hearts and lives to the government of Jesus Christ. Though they cannot find comfort—yet they will oppose sin; though they cannot comprehend Christ—yet they will not

willingly offend Christ; though they cannot see their own propriety in Christ—yet they desire nothing more than that Christ may claim a propriety in them; though they cannot see Christ as a friend—yet they can look upon sin as an enemy; though they cannot close with the promises—yet they will close with the precepts; though they cannot close with the privileges of a Christian—yet they will close with the services of a Christian; though they cannot share in the comforts of a Christian—yet they will side with the duties of a Christian; though they cannot clear up their saving interest in Christ—yet they are willing to yield subjection to Christ; though they lack strength to throw themselves into the arms of Christ to save them—yet they will cast themselves at the feet of Christ to serve him; though they lack the light of comfort and consolation—yet they will walk in the light of God's commands and directions, Isaiah 50:10.

All men will grant that these ten things are strong probabilities of grace. But give me leave to say that they are, without all controversy, most sure, sound, solid, and infallible evidences of true grace, and of a saving interest in Christ and salvation. And therefore all those poor doubting, staggering, and trembling Christians who find all these, or any of these ten things in their own souls—they ought forever to bless the Lord, and speak well of his name upon these accounts. And therefore, O my soul! be much in adoring and admiring of free and infinite grace, which has wrought all these things in you and for you.

But now, dear hearts, that this eleventh particular concerning probabilities of grace may the better stick upon you, and be the more seriously minded and weighed by you, I beseech you often to ponder upon these six following things:

**[1.] First,** That you have deserved hell, and therefore for you to have but a probability of going to heaven—is infinite grace and mercy. You have deserved to be shut up in chains of darkness with devils and damned spirits to all eternity, Jude 6, and therefore for you to have a probability of enjoying forever the presence of God, Christ, the glorious angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven," Heb. 12:22-24—is a mercy more worth than ten thousand worlds. You have deserved to dwell with a "devouring fire," Isaiah 33:14, and to lie forever under those flames and torments which are easeless, endless, and remediless. And therefore

for you to have a probability of satiating and delighting your souls in that fullness of joy, and in these "everlasting pleasures that are at God's right hand," Psalm 16:11—is grace, yes, glorious grace upon the throne, etc. But,

**[2.] Secondly,** Consider that if you cast up a true and faithful account, you will certainly find that the comfort, the peace, the joy, the quiet, the rest, the satisfaction, the contentment that the generality of saints do enjoy, is more from probabilities of grace, than it is from any certainty or assurance that they have of grace being in their souls; it is more from probabilities of a saving interest in Christ, than from any assurance of a saving interest in Christ; it is more from probabilities of being saved, than it is from any special persuasions that they shall be saved; it is more from probabilities of going to heaven, than it is from any raised fixed confidence that they shall go to heaven. And therefore the people of God have very great cause to bow before the Lord, and to adore his grace, and forever to speak well of his name, for the very probabilities of grace, and of a saving interest in Christ, and of being saved and glorified.

**[3.] Thirdly,** Consider that there have been very many under such dreadful horrors and terrors of conscience, and under such wrath and displeasure of an angry God, and who have lain trembling upon their dying beds, and who have been even ready to be swallowed up in the gulf of despair—who would have given all the world, had it been in their power, for the very probabilities of grace. Spira, being in a deep despair for renouncing of those doctrines of the gospel which he had once stoutly professed, said, "That he would willingly suffer the most intense tortures of hell-fire for the space of ten thousand years, upon condition he might be well assured to be released afterward." He died desperately, with this desperate saying in his mouth, *Farewell, life and hope together*. Despair is Satan's masterpiece; it carries men headlong to hell, as the devils did the herd of swine into the deep. He further added, in that hellish and horrible fit, that his dear wife and children, for whose sake principally he turned away from the gospel, to embrace this present world, appeared now to him as hangmen and torturers.

A despairing soul is a terror to himself; his heart a hell of horror, his conscience an Aceldama, a field of black blood. So that as Augustine

describes such a one flying from the field to the city, from the city to his house, from his house to his chamber, from his chamber to his bed, etc., so that he can rest nowhere—but is as if infernal devils in fearful shapes were still following of him, and still terrifying and tormenting his distressed and perplexed soul. Now, doubtless such poor souls would have given ten thousand worlds, had they so many in their hands to give, and that for the very probabilities of grace. And how many tempted, deserted, clouded, wounded, and benighted souls are there, who would think it a heaven on this side heaven, if they could but see probabilities of grace in their souls! Oh, therefore, let not the probabilities of grace be a small thing in your eyes—but bow the knee, and let the high praises of God be found in your mouths, even for probabilities of grace! But,

**[4.] Fourthly,** Consider that Satan is a very deadly enemy to the least probabilities of grace, and will do all he can to cloud, darken, and obscure probabilities of grace, since divine vengeance has cut him off from the least hopes, from the least probabilities of ever obtaining the least grain of grace or mercy. [Let not any think, says Luther, the devil is now dead, nor even asleep; for as he who "keeps Israel," so he who hates Israel "never slumbers or sleeps."] Oh how does he storm and fight against every probability of grace and mercy that God gives to his people for their comfort and encouragement! Satan is an old experienced enemy, almost of six thousand years' standing, and he very well knows that probabilities of grace will certainly arm a Christian against many temptations, and sweetly support him under many afflictions, and exceedingly heighten and raise his resolutions. He knows that probabilities of grace will turn crosses into crowns, storms into calms, and winter nights into summer days. Satan knows that probabilities of grace will make every bitter sweet, and every sweet seven times more sweet. And therefore his spirit rises and swells against every probability of grace. Now the greater Satan's rage is against the probabilities of grace, the more thankful we should be for the probabilities of grace. It is good to move and act cross to him, who in all his actings loves to act cross to the glory of God and the good of our souls. But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** Consider that from probabilities in outward things, men commonly gather a great deal of comfort, support, quietness, and

satisfaction. When the physician tells the patient that it is probable, yes, very probable that he will recover, live and do well, oh what a support, comfort, and refreshing is this to the languishing patient! When there is but a probability of a good market, how does the market-man smile; when there is but a probability of good trading, how does the tradesman cheer up; when there is but a probability of a good voyage, how does the merchants' and the mariners' spirits rise; when there is but a probability of a good harvest, how does the farmer sing; when there is but some hopes, some probability of a pardon for a condemned man, how does his spirits revive, and how does his heart even leap and dance for joy. And so when a Christian has but some hopes, some probabilities of grace, of a saving interest in Christ, and of being saved—he may well cheer up and maintain his ground against all fears and doubts, objections and temptations. But,

**[6.] Sixthly** and lastly, Consider there is a great deal of grace and mercy in Scripture *peradventures*, as you may easily see by comparing these scriptures together. [Exod. 32:30; 1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Kings 20:21; 2 Tim. 2:25.] Scripture *peradventures* ought to keep down despair, and raise our hopes and our hearts. To know that God is favorable, and that sin is pardonable, and that mercy is attainable, and that hell is avoidable—is no small comfort to a poor doubting trembling Christian. And as there is a great deal of grace and mercy in Scripture *peradventures*, so there is a great deal of grace and favor in Scripture *maybes*, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [1 Sam. 14:6; 2 Sam. 16:12; 2 Kings 19:4; Asa. 37:4; Ezek. 14:11; Amos 5:15; Zeph. 2:3; Dan. 4:27.]

Now, if Scripture *peradventures* and Scripture *maybes* afford so much support, relief, and comfort to your souls, as indeed they do—then surely probabilities of grace, of a saving interest in Christ, of going to heaven, and of being saved, ought very much to support, relieve, cheer, and comfort the hearts of all those who have such probabilities. A gracious soul may say when he is lowest and weakest, Well, though I dare not say that I have grace—yet I have a possibility for it. And though I dare not, I cannot say I have a saving interest in Christ—yet if I have a possibility for it, I ought to bear up bravely and comfortably against all fears and doubts. Yes, and to take the comfort and the sweet of all those blessed

probabilities of grace, of a saving interest in Christ, and of being saved, and of all the *perhapses* and *maybes* which are scattered up and down in the book of God; and with Hannah to walk up and down with a cheerful countenance, 1 Sam. 1:18.

**12. The twelfth maxim or consideration.** Consider, that it is a Christian's greatest wisdom and highest concernment, to take the most commodious time for the casting up of his spiritual accounts. If I would know what I am worth for another world, and what I have to show for "the inheritance of the saints in light," then I am to take my heart when it is at best, and when I am most divinely prepared and fitted for this great service, then to enter upon it. It is no wisdom for a man to go to see his face in *troubled* waters, or to look for a pearl in a puddle. There are some particular times and seasons in which it is no way safe nor convenient for a Christian to enter upon the trial of his spiritual estate:

1. As when the body is greatly distempered.
2. When the soul is greatly tempted by Satan, or sadly deserted by God.
3. When the conscience is so deeply wounded by some great falls, as that the soul is filled with exceeding great fear, terror, and horror. [Times of desertion and temptation are rather times and seasons for mourning, watching, resting, and seeking of God—than for judging and determining of our conditions.] It is with many poor Christians in this case, as it has been with some who have been so struck with the fear and horror of death before the judge, that though they were good scholars, and able to read anything—yet fear and horror has so surprised them, that when their lives have been at stake, and the book has been given them to read, they have not been able to read one line, one word. So many of the precious servants of Christ, when they have been under wounds of conscience, and when they have been filled with fears, terrors, and horrors, they have not been able to look up to heaven, nor read their evidences, nor turn to the breasts of the promises, nor call to mind their former experiences, nor behold the least glimpse of heaven's glories, Psalm 40:12, 72, 88; Job 23:8-9.

No man in his wits, if he were to weigh gold, would weigh it in the midst

of high winds, great storms, and horrible tempests, which would so agitate the balance up and down, this way and that, that it would be impossible for him to weigh his gold exactly. Now the trial of our spiritual estates is like the weighing of gold, for we are all to weigh ourselves by the balance of the sanctuary, Job. 31:6; Dan. 5:27. God himself will one day weigh us by that balance, and if we hold weight when he comes to weigh us, we are safe and happy forever.

But when he comes to weigh us in the balance of the sanctuary—if we shall then be found too light—it would have been better for us, if we had never been born! When Belshazzar saw the handwriting upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled, and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another, verses 5-6. But what was all this to an everlasting separation from God, and to those endless, ceaseless, and remediless torments that such must endure, who, when they are weighed in the balance, shall be found too light? 2 Thes. 1:7-10.

A man who would weigh grains of gold, must weigh it in a quiet still place. And so a man who would make an exact trial of his spiritual estate, he must take his soul when it is most serious, quiet, still, and composed; he must take his heart when it is in the best frame, and most disposed to solemn and weighty work. There are some times which are very unapt for a gracious person to sit as judge upon his spiritual estate, and to pass sentence upon his own soul. [Sin indulged in the conscience, is like Jonah in the ship, which causes such a tempest, that the conscience is like a troubled sea, whose waters cannot rest; or it is like a mote in the eye, which causes a perpetual trouble while it is there.]

The best Christians under heaven do meet with divers inward and outward changes; sometimes the light shines so clear that they can see things as they are—but at other times all is dark and cloudy, and tempestuous, and then they are apt to judge themselves by feelings, and not according to the truth. O sirs! remember this once for all—that **times of inward or outward distresses are best for praying, and worst for judging**. If a man will at such times pass sentence on himself or his estate as a judge, he will certainly judge improperly, for then the soul is not itself, and is very apt and prone to take Satan's work for his own, and

to side with him against itself, yes, and then usually it will see nothing, it will think of nothing, it will dwell upon nothing—but what makes against itself.

4. When God exercises a man with some exceeding severe and unusual providences, when God steps out of his ordinary way of dispensations in his dealings with a man; when God sets a man up before all the world as a mark to shoot at, as he did Job, Job 7:20, 16:12. Now a poor Christian is ready to doubt and conclude, *Surely the Lord has no regard of me, he has no love for me, his heart is certainly not towards me—seeing all these sore trials make so much against me.* But here the poor Christian is mistaken, as Jacob once was: Gen. 42:36, "And Jacob their father said unto them, I am bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away. *All these things are against me!*" But Jacob was wrong, for all those things were for him, and for the preservation of the visible church of God in the world, Gen. 45:5-9.

Certainly all the afflictions which befall the people of God, are but his love-tokens. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," Rev. 3:19, Heb. 12:5-6, and therefore those Christians are miserably mistaken, who take them for testimonies of his wrath, and effects of his disfavor. O sirs! what can be more absurd, displeasing, and provoking, than for a Christian to make that an argument of God's hatred—which God intends for an instance of his love? And yet Christians are apt thus to act. It is observable the apostle reckons affliction among God's honoraries and tokens of respect, "For to you it is given," says he, "not only to believe—but also to suffer," Philip. 1:29, "which," says Latimer, "is the greatest promotion that God gives in this world." Job, when he was himself, could not but admire at it, Job 7:17-18, that God should take such an account of man, and that he should so magnify him, and dignify him—as to think him worthy of a rod, a whipping; as to think him worth a trying every morning, yes, every moment.

It is certain that *great prosperity and worldly glory* are no sure tokens of God's love, Proverbs 1:32, Psalm 73:5, Eccles. 9:1-2. And it is certain that *great troubles and afflictions* are no sure marks of God's hatred. And yet many poor Christians, when the waters of affliction rise high, and are ready to overflow them, oh how apt are they to conclude that God hates

them, and will revenge himself upon them, and that they have nothing of God or Christ, or the Spirit, or grace in them! Or,

5. When the Spirit, the Comforter, stands afar off, Lam. 1:16, and withholds those special influences, without which, in a common ordinary way, a Christian cannot divinely, candidly, clearly and impartially transact with God in order to his own peace, comfort and settlement. Or,

6. When either a Christian's evidences are not at hand, or else they are so soiled, darkened, blotted and obscured, as that he is not able to read them. Or

7. When a Christian is extremely oppressed with melancholy. Melancholy is a dark and dusky humor, which disturbs both soul and body, and the cure of it belongs rather to the physician than to the divine. It is a most pestilent humor where it abounds; one calls it the devil's bath; it is a humor that unfits a man for all sorts of services—but especially these that concern his soul, his spiritual estate, his everlasting condition. [Psalm 88; Job 33:10. In the German proverb—the melancholy head is the devil's bathing place.] The melancholy person tries the physician, grieves the minister, wounds relations, and makes sport for the devil. There are five kinds of people whom the devil makes his donkey to ride in triumph upon, namely—the ignorant person, the unbelieving person, the proud person, the hypocritical person, and the melancholy person.

Melancholy is a disease which works strange passions, strange imaginations, and strange conclusions. It unmans a man, it makes a man call good evil, and evil good; sweet bitter, and bitter sweet; light darkness, and darkness light. The distemper of the body oftentimes causes distemper of soul, for the soul follows the temper of the body. A melancholy spirit is a *dumb* spirit—you can get nothing out of him; and a *deaf* spirit—you can get nothing into him. Mat. 9:28-29. It is no more wonder to see a melancholy man doubt and question his spiritual condition, than it is to see a child cry when he is beaten, or to hear a sick man groan, or to hear a drowning man call out for help. You may silence a melancholy man, when you are not able to comfort him. While Nebuchadnezzar was under the power of a deep melancholy, he could not tell whether he was a man or a beast. Melancholy is the mother of fears,

doubts, disputes, and discomforts.

Now of all the evil spirits we read of in the Gospel, the dumb and the deaf were the worst. Darkness, sadness, solitariness, heaviness, mourning, etc., are the only desirable companions of melancholy people. Melancholy makes every sweet bitter, and every bitter seven times more bitter. The melancholy person is amazingly prone to bid sleep farewell, and joy farewell, and food farewell, and friends farewell, and ordinances farewell, and duties farewell, and promises farewell, and ministers farewell, and his employment farewell; and it is well if he is not even ready to bid God farewell too. Melancholy people are like idols—they have eyes but see not, and tongues but speak not, and ears but hear not. Melancholy turns truths into fables, and fables into truths; it turns fancies into realities, and realities into fancies. Melancholy is a fire which burns inwards and is hard to quench.

Now if a Christian is under the power of physical or emotional melancholy, his work is not now to be a-trying his estate, or a-casting up of his accounts to see what he is worth for the eternal world—but to use all such ways and means as God has prepared in a natural way for the cure of melancholy; for **as the soul is not cured by natural remedies—so the body is not cured by spiritual remedies.**

Now in the seven cases last mentioned, a Christian's work lies rather in mourning, self-judging, self-loathing, self-abhorring, and in repenting and reforming; and in fresh and frequent exercises of faith on the Lord Jesus, on his blood, on his promises, and on his free rich sovereign and glorious grace—which is displayed and offered in the gospel; and in a patient waiting upon the Lord in the use of all holy and heavenly helps for deliverance out of his present straits, trials and exercises—than in falling upon that great work of casting up his spiritual accounts, and of searching into the records of glory, to see whether or not his name be registered in the book of life. O sirs! when poor Christians are bewildered, their proper work is to cast themselves upon the promises, to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay themselves upon their God, Isaiah 50:10. Job, in a cloudy stormy day, resolves to trust in the Lord, though he should slay him, Job 13:15; and so must you. And oh that this rule were more seriously minded, and effectually observed by all doubting,

trembling, and staggering Christians. But,

**13. The thirteenth maxim or consideration.** Consider—you must never judge yourselves unsound, or hypocrites, by those things which the Scripture never makes a character of an unsound Christian, or of a hypocrite, or of hypocrisy. [The grand rule by which we must try and judge of our spiritual and eternal estates, is the word of God, Isaiah 8:20. In this scripture the prophet plainly shows where we must go with our doubts, fears, scruples, questions—and with whom we must consult—and of whom we must take advice; and that is "the law and the testimony."]

Mark, as you are to receive no comfort—but what is backed with clear scripture, nor are you to receive any evidences for the goodness and happiness of your spiritual estate and condition—but such as are backed with clear scriptures; in like manner, you are to receive, you are to admit of no arguments, nor pleas, nor reasonings, to prove yourself a hypocrite, or unsound, or that you have no grace, or that your spiritual estate and condition is not good—but such arguments, pleas, and reasonings, as are backed with clear scriptures.

Now tell me, O *weak, doubting, staggering, trembling* Christian—if you can—where are those clear scriptures which prove that wandering thoughts in duty, or which prove that narrowness or straitness of spirit in a duty—to be characters of a hypocrite, or of hypocrisy, or of one who is unsound?

Tell me, O *sighing* Christian, if you can, where are those clear scriptures which prove that the lack of a good memory for holy things, or the lack of those gifts or abilities that many Christians have, to pray, to speak, to discourse, to open Scripture, or to dispute for the concerns of Christ and his kingdom—to be characters of a hypocrite or of hypocrisy, or of one who is unsound?

Tell me, O *distressed* Christian, if you can, where are those clear scriptures which will justify you to conclude that you are a hypocrite, because you are without the present evidence of your sincerity? Are there not many of the precious sons and daughters of Zion, comparable to fine gold, Lam. 4:2, who have true grace and sincerity in their hearts, though

for the present it is hidden from their eyes? Isaiah 50:10, 1 John 5:13. Joseph's brethren had their money in their sacks, though they did not see it, nor did they know it until they came to their inn and opened them, Gen. 44. Just so, many of the dear children of God have sincerity in their hearts, though for the present they do not see it nor know it.

O sirs! it is Christ's work to evidence itself so clearly and fully to our eyes, as to enable us to own it. It is one thing for the Spirit of God to work grace in the soul, and another thing for the Spirit to shine upon his own work. Now, until the Spirit shines upon his own work, the soul is in the dark. The graces of the Spirit are best seen in the light of the Spirit, as we see the sun best by his own light, 1 Cor. 2:12. It is good for doubting Christians when they are in the dark, to hold fast this conclusion, namely—that they may be upright, though at present they are not able to see their uprightness. Now, though this will not bring in a full tide of comfort into their souls—yet it will keep them from despair, and it will support and uphold their hearts, until the Spirit, shall show them their uprightness.

Tell me, O *mourning* Christian, if you can, where are those clear scriptures which prove that deadness, dullness, and indisposedness in duty—though it be sadly lamented, bewailed, and mourned over, and much striven against, yes, though it be the great grief and burden of the soul—to be characters of hypocrites, or of hypocrisy, or of one who is unsound?

Tell me, O *disquieted* Christian, if you can, where are those clear scriptures which prove that the lack of those enlargements, ravishments, joys, comforts, peace, or assurance which some others have, to be characters of hypocrites or hypocrisy, or of one that is unsound? And yet, upon the account of the above mentioned things on the one hand, and under a sensible lack of the things last cited on the other hand—how exceeding apt and prone are many poor weak, doubting, trembling Christians, confidently and insisently to conclude themselves to be hypocrites, and to be unsound, and that they have not a grain of grace, nor any saving saving interest in Christ at all!

O sirs! remember this once for all, that as you must never admit of any

arguments, pleas, or reasonings, for the comfort, peace, and refreshment of your souls—but such as are attended with the evidence of clear Scripture—but such as are backed with pregnant scriptures; in like manner, you must never admit of any pleas, arguments, or reasonings, to trouble, vex, perplex, and disquiet the peace of your souls—but such as are attended with clear Scripture evidence—but such as are well backed with Scripture.

[In all soul cases, God expects we should consult his word, and cleave to his word, without warping or turning aside either to the right hand or to the left. John 12:45. That book which shall try you at last, and which shall save you or damn you in the great day—is the only book by which you must make a judgment of your present and future estates. Clemens of Alexandria, speaking of the word, says, *it is the touchstone of truth and falsehood.*]

Now if this choice rule were but wisely observed, and carefully, frequently, and conscientiously practiced by many weak, doubting, trembling Christians—how would it set them at liberty from their fears, doubts, and misgivings of heart! How would it knock off all their chains, and wipe all tears from their eyes, and remove that sadness which lies like a load upon their hearts, and how soon would it bring them into a condition of peace, comfort, quietness, and settlement.

O sirs! every working and appearance of hypocrisy does not presently prove the person in whom it is to be a hypocrite. A man may be hypocritical, either:

1. Really; or,
2. In their own opinion and imagination.

Many of the dear children of God are very apt and prone many times both to suspect and falsely charge the true estate of their souls. A child in a distemper may question the inheritance which is entailed on him, etc. But, remember this—if your heart be upright, all comfort is your portion; for as our distrustful fears do not alter the reality of the state of grace—so our frequent suspicions that we are hypocrites, does not cut us off from

the title and right of promised comforts.

Christians must carefully distinguish between the *presence* of hypocrisy and the *predominancy* of hypocrisy. In the most upright hearts, there is more or less hypocrisy remaining in them. All the saints that ever were in the world have found more or less of this root of bitterness springing up in them, Romans 7:22-23, Heb. 12:15. It is not the *presence* of hypocrisy—but the *reign* of hypocrisy which damns the soul. That hypocrisy which is discerned, resisted, opposed, and mourned over—will never damn a Christian. Where the usual temper and general bent of a man's heart is upright, there the presence of hypocrisy cannot denominate a man a hypocrite. All men must stand and fall forever according to the usual temper and general bent of their hearts. If the usual temper and general bent of their hearts is sincere—they are happy forever. But if the usual temper and general bent of their hearts be hypocritical—they are miserable forever. But,

**14. The fourteenth maxim or consideration.** Consider—you must never judge yourselves unsound, or hypocrites, for such things, or from such considerations, or by such arguments or reasonings, which being admitted and granted to be true—will necessarily and unavoidably prove the whole generation of the faithful, the whole body of those who fear the Lord, to be unsound, and to be a pack of notorious hypocrites, Psalm 73:15. He who shall judge himself unsound, or a hypocrite, because his thoughts and imaginations are that he is not sincere, or because he is thus and thus tempted; or because he is at particular times, and in particular cases, thus and thus worsted and captivated by sin, Isaiah 55:7-9, notwithstanding all the resistance that he is able to make against it, and notwithstanding his hatred of it, and his loathing and judging of himself for it; or because he is thus and thus afflicted in his family, or in his relations, or in his own person; or because he is thus and thus distracted in prayer, and straitened in prayer; or because he is sometimes troubled with sad, hard, hideous, and blasphemous thoughts of God; he does in so judging judge and condemn the whole generation of the righteous, for there are none of them but more or less, have been exercised even as he is, or as he has been exercised. [Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Heman, Paul, and those worthies in the 11th of the Hebrews, have been as much

afflicted as you have been. Now for you to conclude that you are not beloved by God, because you have been thus afflicted, this is to conclude against all those worthies, of whom this world was not worthy, Heb. 11:38.]

Who dare judge his neighbor, his brother, his friend—to be a hypocrite, because the hand of the Lord has been various ways lifted up against him, or because Satan has been let loose to play with his grand battery upon him? Now if you dare not judge your neighbor a hypocrite upon these accounts, how dare you to judge yourself a hypocrite upon the very same accounts? When your neighbor, your brother, your friend is thus and thus afflicted, tempted, distressed, etc., you can tell them that this has been the common lot of the people of God in all the ages of the world; you can tell them that no man knows God's love or hatred by these things, and that all things come alike to all; you can tell them that the choicest saints have been most afflicted, tempted, clouded, and distressed; you can tell them that all shall end well, that all shall outcome well. [Eccles. 9:1-3; Asa. 1:25, 27:9; Heb. 12:10-11; James 5:10-11.]

Remember the patience of Job, and consider the end that the Lord made with him. You can tell them that you have got that good by afflictions, temptations, cloudings, distresses—which you would not exchange for ten thousand worlds.

Now if Christians, when they are afflicted, tempted, clouded, distressed, would be but as kind, favorable, and merciful to *themselves* as they are to *others* in the same condition, how well would it be with them, how soon would they get out of the snare! O sirs! if this rule were but prudently considered, and seriously practiced, how would the fears, doubts, and darkneses of many poor weak, doubting, staggering, and trembling Christians vanish, and what peace, comfort, and settlement would they quickly find. O sirs! we must never stand to that judgment which we pass upon our spiritual estates, which is irrational, or without sufficient ground from Scripture, or which would be to condemn the generation of the just. We may safely appeal from that sentence of our judgment, which acts itself in times of passion or violent temptation. We must not unjustly vex our own hearts, and dash out our integrity, when the sentence that we pass upon ourselves is rather of imagination, than of reason.

When a man thinks, and thinks again and again that his heart is not sincere with God, though many, if not all, evidences of sincerity appear in him, and when he cannot produce any one inherently distinguishing ground of a hypocrite in himself, why this is but an imaginary judgment, and utterly unreasonable, for this is to condemn the innocent without cause. O sirs! that soul will never be settled in peace and comfort, which gives way to his own imaginations and passions, and which has a conceit that every sinful thought, or violent temptation, or conflict with an inward corruption, or the resurrection of some old sin, or frequent distractions in pious duties, or particular falls or slips into this or that sin—cannot be compatible with a state of grace, cannot be compatible with uprightness, cannot be compatible with singleness and soundness of heart. But,

**15. The fifteenth maxim or consideration.** Consider—in judging of yourselves and your spiritual estates and conditions, you must always have an eye to your natural tempers, complexions, constitutions, and inclinations, and the sins and temptations that these lay you most open to, and remember that as in some tempers a little grace makes a very great show, so in other tempers a great deal of grace makes but a very little show. A little water in a long narrow-mouthed glass seems to be a great deal, when ten times, yes, twenty times as much in a large cistern is hardly discernible; the application is easy. [A little gold ring upon an alabaster hand makes a more glorious show than a very great ring upon a leprous hand; the application is easy.] A little sugar will serve well enough for sweet wines—but much more is requisite to sweeten that wine that is sour and harsh. A little grace will make a very glorious show in such men and women whose very natural tempers are sweet, soft, gentle, meek, affable, courteous; when **a great deal of grace is hardly discernible in those men and women whose very natural tempers are cross, crooked, choleric, fierce, passionate, rough, and unhewn.**

As a godly man said of an eminent saint now in heaven, "That he had grace enough for ten men—but scarce enough for himself," his natural temper was so bad, which he would himself often lament and bewail, saying to his friends, "That he had such a cross, crooked nature, that if

God had not given him grace, none would have been able to have lived one day quietly with him." A sincere Christian may have more roughness of nature, and more sturdiness of passions—than is in many a moral man. He who has more Christianity may have less morality, as there is more perfection of animal and sensitive faculties in some brutes than in some men. It is an old experienced truth, that those sins are with the greatest pains, labor, travail, and difficulty subdued and mortified, which our natural tempers, complexions, and constitutions do most strongly incline and dispose us to; and were but those lusts subdued and brought under control, it would be no difficult thing to bring all other things to under control.

When *Goliath* was slain, the Philistines fled, 1 Sam. 17:51-52; when a *general* in an army falls, the common soldiers are quickly routed. So it is here; get but the sins of your natural tempers, complexions, and constitutions under your feet—and you will quickly ride in a holy triumph over the rest. When justice is effectually done upon your constitution-sins, other sins will not be long lived; thrust but a dart through the heart of Absalom, and a complete conquest will follow, 2 Sam. 18:14, seq.

Now before I close up this particular, let me advise you frequently to consider, that you can never make a true, a right, a serious judgment of yourselves, or of your spiritual estates and conditions, without a prudent eye upon your natural tempers, complexions, and constitutions; granting to yourselves such allowance upon the account of your natural tempers, as will stand with sincerity and the covenant of grace. But,

**16. The sixteenth maxim or consideration.** Consider, if you cannot, if you dare not say that you have grace—yet do not say that you have no grace, for the *being* of grace in the soul is one thing—and the *seeing* of grace in the soul is another thing. Mark 4:26-28: A man may have grace—and yet not know that he has grace; he may have a seed of God in him—and yet not see it. 1 John 5:13, He may believe—and yet not believe that he does believe; the child lives before it knows that it lives. If you cannot say that your graces are true—yet do not say they are counterfeit, lest you bear false witness against the real work of the Spirit in you. There are none so apt to question the truth of their grace—as those are who are truly gracious. Though Satan cannot hinder the Holy Spirit from working

true grace in the soul—yet he will do all he can to fill the soul with fears and doubts and jealousies about the truth of that grace that the Holy Spirit has wrought in it, 1 John 4:4; Psalm 77. When did you ever know the devil to tempt a hypocrite to believe that his graces were not true, and that certainly he had not the root of the matter in him?

If you cannot say that you have a saving interest in Christ—yet do not say that you have no saving interest in Christ; for a man may have a saving interest in Christ, and yet not see his saving interest in Christ, not know his saving interest in Christ. There are many precious Christians who walk in darkness—who yet have a saving interest in that Jesus that is all light, life, and love, Isaiah 50:10. If you cannot say that your pardon is sealed in the court of your own conscience—yet do not say that it is not sealed in the court of heaven; for many a Christian has his pardon sealed in the court of heaven, before it is sealed in the court of his own conscience, Psalm 51. A pardon sealed in the court of conscience, is that new name and white stone which God does not give to everyone at first conversion, Rev. 2:17. God will take his own time to seal up every Christian's pardon in his bosom.

If you cannot say that your name is written in the book of life—yet do not say that it is not written in the book of life. The disciples' names were first written in heaven before Christ bid them rejoice because their names were written in heaven, Luke 10:20. A man may have his name written in heaven, and yet it may be a long while before God may tell him, that his name is written in heaven. You cannot say that the precious promises are yours—yet do not say that they are children's bread, and such dainties that your soul shall never taste of. It is not every precious Christian, that has a saving interest in the promises—who can run and read his saving interest in the promises, Psalm 77, 88; 1 Pet. 1:4. If you cannot say that the heavenly inheritance is yours—yet do not say that it is not yours. A Christian may have a good title to the heavenly inheritance, and yet not be able to make good his title, to clear up his title; as a child in the cradle may be heir to a crown, a kingdom—and yet he is not able to make good his title. If you cannot say that you have assurance—yet do not say that you shall never have assurance, for a man may lack assurance one year, and have it the next; one month, and have it another; one week, and have

it another; one day, and have it another; yes, one hour, and have it another, Luke 19:1-10; Acts 16:29-35; Romans 11:33. If you cannot say that you shall certainly go to heaven—yet do not say that you shall undoubtedly go to hell; for who made you one of the privy-councilors of heaven? Who acquainted you with the secret decrees of God? etc. Now were this rule but thoroughly minded, and conscientiously practiced, oh how well would it go with many tempted, troubled, bewildered, and clouded Christians! Oh how would Satan be disappointed, and poor souls quieted, composed, and refreshed. But,

**17. The seventeenth maxim or consideration.** Whenever you cast your eye upon your gracious evidences, it highly concerns you seriously to remember that you have to deal with God in a covenant of grace, and not in a covenant of works. Every breach of peace with God is not a breach of covenant with God. Though the wife has many weaknesses and infirmities hanging upon her, and though she may often grieve, provoke, and displease her husband—yet as long as she remains faithful, and truly loving, and in the main obedient to him, though he may alter his demeanor towards her—yet he will not withdraw his love from her, or deny his relation to her. No more will God towards his weak, failing ones, as you may evidently see by comparing these scriptures. [Jer. 3:12, 14, 22; Hosea. 14:4; Isaiah 63:22-26; 57:16-18.]

Doubtless there are many dear Christians whose troubles of conscience about their spiritual and eternal estates arise from their looking upon God and dealing with God in a covenant of works. [Everything which is a ground of grief or sorrow to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground of questioning their integrity, or the goodness and happiness of their spiritual estates and conditions. If, upon every slip, failing, and infirmity, a Christian should question all that ever was wrought in him, and done by God upon him—his life will certainly be made up of fears and doubts, and he will never attain to any settled peace, comfort, or assurance, or be able to live that life of joy, praise, and thankfulness that the gospel calls for.]

Are there not many precious Christians, who, when they fall before temptations, and are worsted by their corruptions, who are ready to question all, and throw up all as lost and instantly to conclude against their own souls, that all is bad, very bad—and that they are hypocrites,

and that God will never own such as they are, nor ever accept of such as they are, nor ever delight in such as they are, nor ever have anything to do with such as they are. And all this because they do not aright understand the covenant of grace, and think that they have to deal with God in a covenant of works. Though many Christians do freely and readily acknowledge that there is a covenant of grace—yet upon the least stirring of any corruption, or the least conquest that is made upon them by the violence of any temptation, they are so full of fears, faintings, reasonings, diffidences, and despondencies, etc., and they behave so weakly and unworthily towards the Lord, as if there were no covenant of grace at all, or as if they had wholly and only to deal with God in a covenant of works.

Now what a high dishonor is this to the free, rich, infinite, sovereign, and glorious grace of God, which so sparkles and shines in the covenant of grace, and which tells us that our eternal estates shall never be judged by a covenant of works, and that the lack of an absolute perfection shall never damn a believing soul, and that the obedience that God requires at our hands is not a legal obedience—but an evangelical obedience! Oh that all those dear Christians who are so apt to be dejected and overwhelmed upon the account of the prevalency of such and such corruptions, and because they fail in keeping covenant with God, and in walking in a covenant-relation with God; I say, oh that all these would frequently and seriously consider of these three things.

**[1.] First,** That so long as a Christian does not renounce his covenant with God, so long as he does not willfully and wickedly break the bond of the covenant, the substance of the covenant is not yet broken, though some articles of the covenant may be violated, Psalm 89:30-35, 2 Sam. 23:5. While Christ lies at the bottom of the covenant, it cannot be utterly broken. As among men there be some trespasses against some particular clauses in covenants, which, though they be violated—yet the whole covenant is not forfeited; it is so here. Every jar, every miscarriage does not break the marriage covenant; no more does every sin, every miscarriage break the covenant between God and the soul. But,

**[2.] Secondly,** Seriously consider that many weak Christians are much mistaken about the terms and condition of the covenant of grace; they think that the condition of the covenant is perfect and unsinning

obedience, whereas it is only sincere obedience. Mark, that man sincerely obeys and sincerely walks in covenant with God, who sincerely, who heartily, who ordinarily desires, labors, and endeavors to obey the law of God, the will of God, and to walk in covenant with God. [Isaiah 54; 7:8-10; Jer. 31:33-37.] Mark, particular actions do not denominate any estate; it is the course of actions which does denominate a man's walking in covenant with God, or his not walking in covenant with God. If his course of actions be sinful, he walks not in covenant with God. But if his course of actions be holy and gracious, he walks in covenant with God. Though the needle of the seaman's compass may jog this way and that way—yet the bent of the needle will still be northward; so though a Christian in covenant with God may have his particular sinful joggings this way or that way—yet the bent of his heart will still be to walk in covenant with God. But,

**[3.] Thirdly,** Consider that infirmities, aberrations of weakness, do not nullify or void our covenant with God; nor hinder our walking in covenant with God; for if they should, then no man could possibly keep covenant with God, or walk in covenant with God. God passes by and pardons the infirmities of his children, and will never put them into the account, and therefore they cannot hinder our walking in covenant with God. Breaches made in the first covenant were irreparable—but breaches made in the covenant of grace are not so, because this covenant is established in Christ, who is still a-making up all breaches.

Mark, there are five things which show that the deviations of God's people are only infirmities and not enormities, weaknesses and not wickednesses. And the first is this, namely,

(1.) That they do frequently and principally arise from the subtlety and sudden power of Satan's temptations. 1 Chron. 21:1.

(2.) That the bent of their lives and hearts is against the evil that they do, Romans 7:15-16, 19, 23-24.

(3.) Their daily cries, tears, and complaints, speak it out to be an infirmity. They are in this particular like a lost sheep, or a lost child, or a lost friend.

(4.) Though they fall—yet they rise again; though they step or wander out of the way—yet they do return into the right way again.

(5.) When they do fall, there is a vast difference, a mighty difference between their falls, and the falls of wicked men who are not in covenant with God, and that

[1.] first, in respect of willingness;

[2.] in respect of choice;

[3.] in respect of desire;

[4.] in respect of course;

[5.] in respect of quietness;

[6.] in respect of continuance.

Mark, when wicked men fall, when men out of covenant with God fall, then they fall willingly, they fall out of choice, they fall out of desire to fall, they fall in a course, they fall, and they are quiet under their falls; they fall, and continue to fall, "tomorrow shall be as today," Isaiah 56:12.

But people in covenant with God, though they do fall—yet they do not fall, nor cannot fall, as they do who are out of covenant with God. For

[1.] first, there is in all such people a habitual purpose to keep covenant with God;

[2.] a habitual desire to keep covenant with God;

[3.] a habitual resolution to keep covenant with God;

[4.] a habitual endeavor to keep covenant with God.

Now, where it is thus, that man is certainly in covenant with God, and that man walks in covenant with God; he is under a covenant of grace; his sins are pardoned, and therefore they shall never be his ruin. Doubtless

many precious Christians have charged and condemned themselves for those things that the great God will never charge them with, nor condemn them for, Isaiah 63:17. Blessed Bradford wrote himself a hypocrite, a painted sepulcher. But doubtless God will never bring in such a charge against him. O sirs! the stirrings of sin, and the workings of sin, and the prevalency of sin for particular acts will stand with the covenant of grace, though not with the covenant of works. You may not by any means conclude that you are not in a covenant of grace, because such and such corruptions stir in you, or because such or such weaknesses now and then break forth and discover themselves, either in your lips or lives. Did Christians but study the covenant of grace more, and understand better than they do the difference between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works, how would their fears and doubts about their spiritual and eternal estates vanish, as the clouds before the sun when it shines in its greatest strength and glory! etc.

It was the saying of an eminent minister on his deathbed, that he had much peace and quietness, not so much from a greater measure of grace than other Christians had, or from any immediate witness of the Spirit—but because he had a more clear understanding of the covenant of grace than many others, having studied it and preached it so many years as he had done. Doubtless, had Christians a more clear and a more full understanding of the covenant of grace, they would live more holily, serviceably, humbly, fruitfully, comfortably, and sweetly than they do. And they would die more willingly, readily, and cheerfully than many (may I not say than most?) Christians use to do. But,

**18. The eighteenth maxim or consideration.** Consider—that trouble, grief, and sorrow for sin, which drives a man from God, is sinful, and must one day be repented of and wept over. All true trouble, grief and sorrow, drives to God, as is evident by these scriptures. [Hosea 5:14-15. 6:1-3; Jer. 31:18-20; Psalm 51; Hosea 14:1-2; Psalm 25:11.] Suppose you have so and so sinned—yet it is a false inference that therefore you should be discouraged, and let your hopes sink, and your heart faint, as if there were no help, no hope, no comfort for you in your God.

Question. **But when is a man's trouble or sorrow for sin, sinful?**

Answer.

[1.] When it keeps Christ and the soul asunder.

[2.] When it keeps the soul and the promises asunder.

[3.] When it unfits a man for the duties of his place and calling, wherein the providence of God has placed him.

[4.] When it unfits a man for the duties of religion, either private or public.

[5.] When it takes off the sweet and comfort of all outward comforts and enjoyments, and renders all our mercies like the white of an egg, which has no taste or savor in it.

[6.] When it weakens, wastes, or destroys the outward man; all godly sorrow is a friend to the soul, and not an enemy to the body.

And thus much for these divine maxims, considerations, and rules which are seriously to be minded and observed in order to the clearing up a man's saving interest in Christ, and his title to all the glory of the eternal world. Certainly these eighteen maxims, considerations, or rules—if God shall please powerfully to set in with them—are of singular use for the clearing up of the saving work of God upon poor souls. And therefore it highly concerns Christians seriously to ponder upon them, as Mary did upon the sayings of the angel in her heart, Luke 2:19.

Now these things being premised, I shall come in the next chapter to lay down some infallible evidences of saving grace.

**CHAPTER II. Containing many choice, precious, and infallible evidences of true saving grace,** upon which a Christian may safely and securely, comfortably and confidently, rest and lean the weight of his precious and immortal soul, and by which he may certainly know that it

shall go well with him forever; and that he has a real saving interest in Christ, and shall be everlastingly happy, when he shall be here no more, etc.

**I. First, There are some things in regard of SIN, and a Christian's actings about it—which manifests a gracious estate, and which discovers a saving principle of grace to be in the soul.** I shall instance in these eleven particulars.

**[1.] First, A universal willingness to be rid of all sin—is an infallible evidence of the truth of grace in a man's soul.** [Isaiah 28:15, 18, 30:22; Hoses 14:8; Romans 7:22-24.] "When He comes, He will convict the world about sin." John 16:8. The first saving work of the Spirit upon the soul is the dividing between sin and the soul; it is a making an utter breach between sin and the soul; it is a dissolving of that old league that has been between the sinner and his sin. The first work of the Spirit is to make a man look upon sin as an enemy, and to deal with sin as an enemy, to hate it as an enemy, to loathe it as an enemy, to fear it as an enemy, and to arm against it as an enemy.

When the Holy Spirit takes possession of a soul, from that day forward the soul looks upon sin with as evil and as envious an eye as Saul looked on David when the evil spirit was upon him. Oh, says Saul, that I were but once well rid of this David. And oh, says the gracious soul, that I were but once well rid of this proud heart, this hard heart, this unbelieving heart, this unclean heart, this froward heart, this earthly heart of mine, etc. Look! as the daughters of Heth even made Rebekah weary of her life, Gen. 26:35, so corruptions within makes the gracious soul even weary of his life. "Many a day have I sought death with tears," said blessed Cowper, "not out of impatience, distrust, or perturbation—but because I am weary of sin, and fearful to fall into it."

Look! as when Christ has won the will, he has won the man; so when sin has lost the will, it has lost the man. The will is the heart; "My son, give me your heart," is, My son, give me your will. The will is the fort-royal of the soul; it is that stronghold which stands out stoutest and longest

against all the assaults of heaven. When the will is won—all is won—the castle is won—the heart is won. The man is won when the will is won. [Restraining grace does only suppress and abate the acts of sin; it never alters the disposition and will of a man as to sin. You may chain up a lion—but you cannot change the nature of a lion.] A man's *judgment* and *reason* may say, *I ought to turn from sin*; and his *conscience* may say, *I must turn from sin, or it will be bitterness in the end*, and yet the work not done, nor the soul won. But when the heart says, the will says, *I will turn from sin*—then the work is done, and the man is won.

Where *reason* says these lusts ought to be subdued, and the *conscience* says these lusts must be subdued, and the *will* says these lusts shall be subdued—Psalm 65:3, "As for our transgressions, you shall purge them away,"—there is a saving work upon the soul. When the will says to sin, as Ephraim said to his idols, "Get you hence, what have I any more to do with you?" Hosea 14:8, then the work of God is begun in power upon the soul.

A universal willingness to be rid of all sin, speaks the heart to be sound and sincere with God. The enmity which grace works in the heart against sin—is against the whole kind; it is against all sin, as well profitable and pleasurable sins as disparaging and disgracing sins; and as well against small sins as against great sins. True grace strikes at root and branch, at head and members, at father and son. A true Israelite would not have one Canaanite left in the holy land; he would have every Egyptian drowned in the red sea of Christ's blood; Psalm 119:104, "I hate every false way": Psalm 139:24, "Search me, O Lord! and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Saving grace makes a man as willing to leave his lusts, as a slave is willing to leave his galley, or a prisoner his dungeon, or a thief his bolts, or a beggar his rags.

But now take a man who is in his natural condition, and he is as unwilling to part with his sins, as Abraham was to turn Hagar and Ishmael out of doors. Ambrose reports of one Theotimus, that having a disease upon his body, the physician told him, That except he did abstain from intemperance, drunkenness, uncleanness, etc., he was likely to lose his

eyes; his heart was so desperately set upon his lusts, that he answered, *Farewell, sweet light then!* He had rather lose his eyes—than leave his sins. So they in Micah 6:6-7, do make very large offers for a dispensation to live in their sins; they offer calves of a year old; they offer thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil; yes, they offer their firstborn for their transgressions, the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls.

**Sinners' hearts are so glued to their lusts, that they will rather part with their nearest, dearest, and choicest enjoyments, than part with their sins; yes, when they are put hard to it, they will rather part with God, Christ, and all the glory of heaven, than they will part with some base bosom lust.** Witness that young man in the Gospel, who went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions, Mat. 19:21-22. Look! as a man leaves his wife and children, his country, estate, and trade, with tears in his eyes and sorrow in his heart; so does an unregenerate man leave his lusts, with tears in his eyes and sorrow in his heart.

Very observable is the story of Phaltiel: David had married Michal; Saul injuriously gave her to another. When David came to the crown, and was able to speak a word of command, he sends for his wife Michal; her husband dares not but obey; he brings her on her journey, and then, not without great reluctancy of spirit, takes his leave of her. But what, was Phaltiel weary of his wife that he now forsakes her? Oh no! he was forced to it, and though she was gone—yet he cast many a sad thought after her, and never leaves looking until he sees her as far as Bahurim, weeping and bemoaning her absence, 2 Sam. 3:15-16. And just thus it is with carnal and unregenerate men, who, though for fear, or some other reasons, they part with their sins—yet they have many a longing heart after them; they part—but because they are forced; they part, and yet they are very loath to part asunder.

Look! as the merchant throws away his goods in a storm, because he cannot keep them—just so, carnal men, in times of sickness and distress, or in times of horror and terror of conscience, or when death, the king of terrors, knocks at their doors, or when they see hell gaping to devour them, and God as a solemn judge standing ready to pass an eternal doom upon them—only then they are willing to cast overboard their pleasures,

their drunkenness, their swearing, their cursing, their lying, their flesh-pleasing, etc. But not out of any hatred to their lusts—but out of love to themselves, and out of fear of being damned, etc.; for could they but enjoy their sins and heaven too, sin and they would never part.

But now, were there no danger, no wrath, no hell, no damnation, no separation from God attending sin—yet a gracious soul would be heartily willing to part with all sin, and to be rid of all sin, upon the account of the vile nature of sin, upon the account of the defiling and polluting nature of sin. **Of all the vile things in the world, sin is the most defiling thing; it makes us red with guilt and black with filth;** it is compared to a menstruous cloth, Isaiah 30:22, which of all unclean things in the law was the most unclean, as some observe; and upon this very account a gracious soul would be willingly rid of it.

**[2.] Secondly, A constant habitual willingness to be rid of all sin—is an infallible evidence of the truth of grace in the soul.** It is not a transient willingness to be rid of sin, when a man is either under some outward trouble, or some inward distress—which speaks out the truth of saving grace—but a permanent, lasting, and abiding willingness to be rid of sin. Pharaoh in a fit, in a fright, when thunder and hail and frogs and flies were upon him, was then willing to let Israel go. But when his fright was over, and the judgments removed, he grew prouder and harder than before.

So many men, when they are troubled by a sermon, or under some smart pangs of conscience, or under some startling or amazing judgments, oh! Then they will be willing to let Israel go, then they will be willing to let drunkenness go, and pride go, and uncleanness go, and worldliness go, etc. But when their sickness is over, and the pangs of conscience abated, and judgments removed, oh! then they return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow to the wallowing in the mire again!

There was a man well known to a minister in this city, who, in the time of his sickness, was so terrified in his conscience for his sins, that he made the very bed to shake upon which he lay, and cried out all night long, "I am damned! I am damned! I am damned!" and this man, in the days of his outward and inward distresses, made many and great protestations of

amendment of life if God would be pleased to recover him. In a little while he did recover, and being recovered he was as bad and as wicked, if not worse, than he was before, 2 Pet. 2:20-22.

So in the time of the great plague in king Edward's days, as long as the heat of the plague lasted, all sorts and ranks of people were still a-crying out, "Mercy, good Lord, mercy, mercy, mercy!" Then lords and ladies, and other people of nobility, cried out to the ministers, "For God's sake tell us what we shall do to avoid the wrath of God; take these bags of money; pay so much to such a one whom I have deceived, and so much restore unto another, whom in bargaining I robbed; oh! give so much to the poor, and give so much to such and such pious uses." But after the sickness was over, they were just the same men that they were before!

Men in time of trouble are very ready to cry out, "Arise and save us!" Jer. 2:27. And with them, "Deliver us this time!" Judges 10:15. And with the Samaritans, who when God had sent lions among them, inquired after the manner of his worship, 2 Kings 17:25-26; and yet after all this, remained as vile and wicked as ever! Jer. 2:20, "Long ago I broke your yoke and tore away the chains of your slavery, but still you would not obey me. On every hill and under every green tree, you have prostituted yourselves by bowing down to idols."

A wicked man's willingness to be rid of his sins is transient, not constant; it is like the morning cloud and the early dew—which passes away, Hosea 6:4. The Jews were a very unstable people, a people bent to backsliding, a people who would often start aside like a deceitful bow, Hosea 11:7; Psalm 78:34, 37, 57; Hosea 7:16. Sometimes when the judgments of God were heavy upon them, or when they were under the reign of some good kings—then down went their groves, their altars, their idols, and their high places! But soon after, they are as much set upon idolatry as before. Sometimes they were willing to be rid of their idols, and at other times they were mad to go a-whoring after their idols. But now a godly man, when he is himself, he is never unwilling to be rid of his sins, yes, to be rid of all his sins. The fixed, standing, and abiding disposition and bent of a godly man's soul, of a godly man's will, is to be rid of every sin. And thrice happy is that man who is habitually under such a choice and blessed frame.

**[3.] Thirdly, A transcendent willingness, a superlative willingness, an overtopping willingness to be rid of sin—is an infallible evidence of the truth of grace in the soul.** When a man's willingness to be rid of his sins overtops his unwillingness; when a man is more willing to be rid of his sins than he is to continue in sin—then his spiritual state is certainly good. A gracious heart had much rather, if it were put to his choice, live without all sin, than to have allowance to wallow in any sin; he had rather live without the least sin, than to have liberty to live in the greatest, or the most flesh-pleasing sin. It is certain that sin is more afflictive to a gracious soul than all the losses, crosses, troubles, and trials that he meets with in the world.

*David* cries, not "I am undone!" but "I have done foolishly!" 2 Sam. 24:10. He does not cry, "Take away the pestilence!" but, "Take away the iniquity of your servant!"

*Daniel* does not cry, "Oh we are sadly reproached, we are greatly distressed, we are woefully oppressed!" but, "We have rebelled!" Dan. 9:5. And the church does not cry out, "Take away our captivity!" but, "Take away all iniquity!" It is not, "Take away our chains" but, "Take away our sins!" It is not, "Take away our afflictions!" but, "Take away our pollutions!" It is not, "Take away all our enemies' lives!" but, "Take away the lives of all our lusts!" Hosea 14:2.

And so *Paul* does not cry out because of his reproaches, or persecutors, or bonds, or chains, or stripes, or perils, or prisons; he rather glories in these. But he cries out of a law of sin in his members, rebelling against the law of his mind, and bringing of him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members, 2 Cor. 11:16; Romans 7:23. Paul does not cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from all my sorrows and sufferings?" but "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" verse 24.

A sincere heart, when he is himself, had much rather be rid of his sins than of his sufferings, yes, of the least sins than of the greatest sufferings. It was a sweet saying of Bernard: "I had rather," says he, "that God should better my heart than remove his hand; I had rather that God should

continue my strokes than my sins." And the same noble spirit was working bravely in Job when he was under the heavy hand of God: Job 34:32, "Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again." (See Job 7:20, 21.)

But now graceless men are much more willing to be rid of their afflictions than to be rid of their sins. Witness Pharaoh, who cries out, *Take away the frogs!* see Exod. 10:17: Exod. 8:8, "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people. And I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord." It is not, Entreat the Lord, that he would take away this proud heart, or this hard heart, or this besotted heart, or this blind mind, or this perverse will, or this benumbed conscience—that is in me and my people. But Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me and my people. A *graceless* heart is more abundantly willing to be freed from punishment--the effect of sin; than it is willing to be freed from sin--the cause of punishment. A *gracious* heart sees more filthiness in sin than in frogs, and had rather be rid of his sins than of all the frogs or toads that are in the world.

See what a sad spirit was upon the children of Israel, in Numbers 21:6-7, "Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, 'We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.'" [Heb. burning serpents. Thus they are called from the effect of their biting, which caused a mortal burning, and consequently such an excessive thirst as killed them.] Now, mark, in the fifth verse you have them murmuring against God, and Moses, and divine dispensations, and the manna from heaven, because they came lightly by it; they distrust the providence of God, they let fly at God; their spirit swells against the Holy One of Israel, and they scorn, deride, revile, and vilely and despitefully speak against Moses. And though they had often smarted for these sins—yet they are at them again. "But the people grew impatient along the way, and they began to murmur against God and Moses. 'Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?' they complained. 'There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this wretched manna!'" Numbers 21:4-5.

Upon this, God sends an army of fiery serpents among them, and they bite and devour many of them. And now they run to Moses, who but a little before they had despised, and beg him to pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from them. They do not desire Moses—that God would take away their proud hearts, their distrustful hearts, their murmuring hearts, etc.—but that God would take away the serpents; they were much more desirous to be rid of their serpents than they were to be rid of their sins.

So those in Jer. 30:15, "Why do you cry out over your wound, your pain that has no cure? Because of your great guilt and many sins I have done these things to you." They do not cry out because of their sins—but they cry out because of their afflictions. Why cry out for your affliction? Unsound hearts are more ready and willing to be rid of their afflictions—than they are willing to have their souls bettered, or their lives mended, or their lusts subdued by them.

*Pilate* was unwilling to condemn Jesus; witness his seeking to release him, and his washing his hands, and his pleading his innocency, etc., Mat. 27:17-18, 22-24. But yet the prevailing part of his will carried him forth to deliver up Jesus to be scourged and crucified, verse 26. Just so, *Herod* was unwilling to behead John the Baptist; witness that word, "The king was exceeding sorry," Mark 6:26. But yet the prevailing part of his will carried him forth to cut off John's head, verse 27, whose head was more worth than Herod's kingdom. Just so, *Darius* was very unwilling to cast Daniel into the lions' den; witness his being sore displeased with himself, and witness his setting his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and witness his great unquietness of spirit; for he could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, the night after he was cast into the lion's den. And witness his great joy at Daniel's safety, Dan. 6:14, 18:20: all which did clearly argue a very great unwillingness that Daniel should suffer. And yet the prevailing part of Darius, his will, carried him forth to sacrifice Daniel to the lions, yes, to that which was worse, namely, the lusts of his enemies, verse 16-17. By all these instances, it is most evident that **the prevalent part of a wicked man's will stands most strongly biased towards sin.**

But now the prevalent part of a Christian's will is to be rid of sin. If the Lord should say to a gracious Christian, "Ask what you will, O Christian,

and it shall be granted to you." The answer would be: "Lord, rid me of my sins! Lord, take away my iniquities! Lord, mortify my corruptions! Lord, whoever lives, let these lusts die! Lord, drown these Egyptians in the sea of your Son's blood, who have so violently and unweariedly pursued after the blood of my precious soul! Lord, kill and crucify all these sinful evils that have killed and crucified the Lord of life and glory!" "Lord, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin," Psalm 51:2, 7; "Lord, purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow!" Lord, carnal reason, and flesh and blood, would gladly have such and such pleasurable sins, and such and such profitable sins, indulged and spared. But, Lord, the earnest, the ardent desires of my soul are, that I may be rid of them, and that justice to the height may be done upon them; Lord, be but the death of my sins, and my soul shall say, "My lot is fallen in a pleasant place," and "truly I have a goodly heritage;" Lord, cleanse me but from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, and I shall cry, "Hosanna" to you, Mat. 21:9; Lord, let me but outlive my lusts, and follow them to the grave before others follow me to my grave, and I shall say it is enough, Psalm 16:6; 2 Cor. 7:1. And thus every gracious soul is more willing to be rid of his sins than he is to keep his sins. A porter cannot be more willing to be rid of his burden, nor a sick man to be rid of his disease, nor a beggar of his nasty lousy rags, nor a prisoner of his chains, than a gracious soul is willing to be rid of his lusts, etc.

**[4.] Fourthly, That soul that does not, nor will not allow himself, or indulge himself in a course of sin, or in the common practice of any known sin—that soul is certainly a gracious soul.** "The evil that I do, I allow not," Romans 7:15. So Psalm 119:1, 3, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the law of the Lord, they also do no iniquity;" that is, they allow not themselves in the practice of any iniquity. Blessed souls live not in the service of sin, they live not in an ordinary practice of any iniquity: 1 John 3:9, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." He who has the seed of God, the seed of grace and regeneration in him, he cannot allow himself in a way of sin, he cannot give himself over to a voluntary serving of sin, he cannot make a trade of sin.

So Proverbs 16:17, "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil;" that is, it is the ordinary, usual, constant course of an upright man to depart from evil. An honest traveler may step out of the king's highway into a house, a forest, a meadow—but his work, his business is to go on in the king's highway. So the business, the work of an upright man is to depart from evil. It is possible for an upright man to step into a sinful path, or to touch upon sinful things. But his main way, his principal work and business is to depart from iniquity. A bee may land upon a thistle—but her work is to be gathering at flowers. A sheep may slip into the dirt—but its work is to be grazing on the mountains, or in the meadows.

Certainly there is no man in the world so abominable wicked—but that he may now and then, when he is in a good mood, or when he is under distress of conscience, or bleeding under a smarting rod, or beholding the handwriting upon the wall, or under a sentence of death, depart from evil. But this is not his *course*, this is not his *business*, this is not his *work*, this is not his *highway*. Thieves do but now and then step into the king's highway to take a purse, they do not keep the king's highway. But now the upright man's highway, his common and ordinary course, is to depart from evil, and therefore he cannot allow himself liberty to walk in an evil way.

Titus 2:11-12, "For the grace of God, that brings salvation, has appeared to all men," (without distinction of nations, gender, age, or condition) "teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Under the name of ungodliness, he comprises all the breaches of the first table. And under the name of worldly lusts, he comprises all inordinate desires against the second table. And those three words, "soberly, righteously, and godly," have a threefold reference: the first to ourselves, the second to our neighbor, and the third to God. We must live soberly in respect of ourselves, righteously in respect of our neighbors, and godly in respect of God. And this is the sum of a Christian's whole duty.

Now if the grace of God, which brings salvation, teaches saints to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; then certainly saints who are taught by that grace cannot *live*, nor *allow* themselves in ungodliness or worldly lusts. Without all question, heaven is for that man, and that man is for

heaven—who can appeal to heaven that he allows not himself in the practice of any known sin. Thus David did: "Search me, O Lord," says he, "and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me," Psalm 139:24. It is a most sure sign, that sin has not gained a man's heart nor consent—but committed a rape upon his soul, when he allows not himself in it—but cries out bitterly to God against it, as Paul did, Romans 7. If the ravished virgin under the law cried out, she was guiltless, Deut. 22:25-27. Certainly such as cry out of their sins, and that would not for all the world allow themselves in a way of sin, such are guiltless before the Lord. That which a Christian does not allow himself in—that he does not do in divine account, etc.

But now the whole trade, the whole life of formal and carnal professors, is nothing else but one continued web of wickedness; there is no wicked unregenerate person in the world—but lives in the daily practice of some known sin or other—but allows himself in some trade or way of wickedness or other, as you may evidently see by comparing of these following scriptures together, Proverbs 1:20-33; Jer. 5:3, 44:16-19, 9:3-6, 7:8-16; Psalm 50:16-17; Isaiah 66:3; Mat. 7:23; Romans 6:12-13, 19, 8:5; Luke 13:27; Ephes. 2:2-3; Philip. 4:19; Titus 3:3; 2 Peter 2:14. Sin is a sinner's absolute work, it is his main work, and the sinner is besides himself, besides his calling, as it were, when he is besides his sin.

**[5.] Fifthly, He who conflicts most with heart-sins, and is most affected with spiritual sins, and who laments and mourns most over secret sins, invisible sins—sins that lie most hidden and remote from the eyes of the world—he is certainly a gracious soul.** [Psalm 19:12, "Cleanse me from my hidden faults." Psalm 119:113, "I hate vain thoughts."] "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24

Grace in truth, and grace in power, will rise and conflict, and make headway against the most inward and secret vanities of the soul, as against secret self-love; and secret hardness of heart, Isaiah 63:17; and secret unbelief, Mark 9:24; and secret carnal confidence; and secret hypocrisy; and secret envy; and secret malice, and secret vain-glory; and secret fretting and murmuring; and secret lustings, and secret runnings-

out of the soul after worldly vanities; and secret pride. Hence Hezekiah humbles himself for the pride of his heart. And so David, he humbles himself for the pride of his heart in numbering of the people, 2 Chron. 32:25, 2 Sam. 24:10. And how does the same prophet chide himself for sinful dejection of spirit: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted in me?" Psalm 42:11. And how does he at another time befool himself, and be-beast himself, for his secret grudging and fretting at the prosperity of the wicked: "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before you," Psalm 73:22.

And so Paul was most affected and afflicted with a law in his members rebelling against the law of his mind. Inward pollutions and defilements did sit closest and saddest upon his spirits. And the same apostle in that 2 Cor. 7:1, is for keeping down the filthiness of the spirit, as well as the filthiness of the flesh; he is for inward cleansing, as well as for outward cleansing: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. 7:1.

Just so, Mr. Bradford was a man who had attained to so great and eminent a height of holiness; Taylor, the martyr, calls him "that saint of God, John Bradford;" and yet, oh how sadly does he bewail his secret hypocrisy. True grace makes opposition as well against the being of sin in a man's nature, as against the breakings out of sin in a man's life, Col. 3:5. True grace will make war against the corruptions of the heart, as well as against the excursions of the feet; it is as willing and desirous to be rid of a polluted heart, as it is willing and desirous to be rid of a polluted hand. It would gladly have, not only sinful acts—but also sinful dispositions, and not only irregular actions—but also inordinate affections, mortified and subdued.

O friends! heart sins are root sins; they are the springs which set all the wheels a-going; the fountain which sets all the streams a-running; the fire which sets the furnace a-smoking; the bellows which sets the fire a-burning. Certainly a proud heart has more of Satan in it than a proud look, and a wanton heart is more vile than a wanton eye, and a murderous or adulterous heart is worse than a murderous or adulterous act, etc. And therefore true grace makes war against heart sins, against

spiritual sins, against the most inward secret sins, against those very sins that lie not within the reach of reason, or the sword of the magistrate, or the piercing eye of the most knowing or observing man in the world—but are only obvious to an omniscient eye!

But now carnal men, as they make little of outward sins, so they make nothing of heart sins, of spiritual sins. If they are not drunkards, nor swearers, nor extortioners, nor whoremasters, nor cursers, nor cheaters, nor oppressors, nor liars, nor persecutors, Mat. 19:16-27; if they are good *negative professors*, ("God, I thank you that I am *not* like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers." Luke 18:11), then they think themselves very good saints, and in a very fair way for heaven, and that no man can say evil is their *eye*. But their *hearts* are as full of evil thoughts and secret lusts, as ignorance, atheism, unbelief, pride, envy, discontent, anger, formality, hypocrisy, indifference, lukewarmness, deadness, and hardness, etc., as the sun is full of light, or as hell is full of darkness.

*Restraining* grace, *common* grace—only makes headway against gross enormities, against overt vanities—as you may see in the scribes and pharisees. But saving grace makes headway against heart sins, against spiritual sins. Common grace is all for washing the outside—but saving grace is for washing the inside as well as the outside. Common grace is only for washing the feet and the head—but saving grace is for washing both feet, head, *and heart*, Mat. 23, John 13:9-10. Look! as in a dark night we can only see those stars which are of the greatest magnitude; so by the starlight of natural conscience, the natural man can only see those sins which are more great and gross.

Natural convictions can reach no further than natural light—but spiritual convictions can reach to the most inward, secret, spiritual, and undiscernible sins. Certainly that is a sincere heart, a heart more worth than gold, that smites a man for inward sins as well as for outward sins; for sins done in a corner, as well as for sins acted upon the house-top; for spiritual sins, as well as for fleshly sins; for sins against the soul, as well as for sins against the body; for sins committed in a closet, as well as for sins committed on the most public stage.

Certainly that trouble and grief that springs from heart sins, from

spiritual sins, from secret sins, bears a more immediate relation to the holy God—who alone observes them, and is offended by them; and so is a most sure and infallible evidence of saving grace, and of the work of the Spirit in power upon the soul. When open commissions do humble and abase the heart, and secret inclinations to sin do even break and burst the heart asunder, then the heart is certainly sincere with God.

A Christian will readily grant that his God is a good God, and that Jesus Christ is the chief of ten thousand, and that the gospel is a glorious gospel, and that the promises are precious promises, and that the ordinances are blessed ordinances, and that the lively communion of saints is the sweetest communion in all the world. But yet he will say, I have such a proud heart, such a hard heart, such a vain heart, such a carnal heart, etc., and I am so vexed and molested with sinful notions, and with sinful imaginations, and with sinful inclinations, and with atheistical risings, and with private murmurings, and with secret unbelievings, and that in despite of all my conflictings, and strivings, and prayings, and mournings, and sighings, and groanings, and complainings, that I am oftentimes even weary of my life. And if this does not speak out Christ within, and grace within, and the Spirit within such a soul, I know nothing.

O friends! remember this once for all, namely, that the main battle, the main warfare of a Christian lies not in the open field, it lies not in visible skirmishes. But his main quarrels and conflicts are most within, and his worst and greatest enemies are those of his own house, they are those of his own heart. A little grace at first conversion may reform an evil life—but it must be a great deal of grace that must reform an evil heart. A little grace may make a man victorious over outward gross sins—but it must be a great deal of grace that must make a man victorious over inward sins, secret sins, spiritual sins, heart sins! Yes, a thorough conquest of these sins will keep a man in battle all his days. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, He who abstains from sin, he whose heart rises against sin, he who sets himself against sin, because of the evil nature of sin, because of that vileness and filthiness that is in sin—he certainly has a principle of grace, a seed of God in him.** He who refrains from sin, and whose heart rises more against sin,

because of *the purity of the law which forbids sin*, rather than because of *the severity of the law which condemns sin*, is certainly under the power of renewing grace, of saving grace: Psalm 119:140, "Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it." It is only pure grace that can enable a man to love the word for its purity. [2 Cor. 7:1. I have read of the ermine, that she will rather die than be put into the dirt and defile her beautiful skin. And rather than Joseph will defile his beautiful soul by defiling his master's bed, he will go to a dirty dungeon. He had rather that the irons should enter into his soul, Psalm 105:18, than that sin should enter into his conscience. He had rather that his chains should eat into his flesh, than that sin should pollute his soul. Isaiah 59:1-2; Amos 3:6; Acts 5:39.]

The apostle, to set forth the formidable evil that is in sin, expresses it thus, Romans 7:13, "That sin might become utterly sinful." He could find nothing more evil and odious to express sin by, than itself. Sin is so great an evil, that it cannot have a worse epithet given it. Paul can call it no worse than by its own name, sinful sin. Had the apostle said that sin might appear to be a snare, a serpent, a viper, a toad, a plague, a devil, a hell, etc., he would have said much—but yet not enough to set forth the transcendent evil which is in sin, and therefore he calls it *sinful sin*. All other evils are but outward, they only reach the name, the body, the estate, the life—but sin is an inward evil, a spiritual evil, an evil that reaches the precious and immortal soul, and therefore is the greatest evil. Death puts an end to all other troubles, namely, poverty, sickness, disgrace, scorn, contempt, afflictions, losses, etc. But sin is so great an evil, that death itself cannot put an end to it! Eternity itself shall never put a stop, an end—to this evil of evils. All outward evils can never make a man the subject of God's wrath and hatred. A man may be poor, and yet precious in the eyes of God; he may be greatly abhorred by the world, and yet highly honored by God; he may be debased by men, and yet exalted by God. But sin is so great an evil, that it subjects the sinner's soul to the wrath and hatred of God. All other evils do but strike at a man's present well-being—but sin strikes at a man's eternal well-being! All other evils can never hinder a man's communion with God. A man may have communion with God in poverty, in sickness, in prison, in banishment. But sin is so great an evil, that it interrupts communion with God, it cuts

off communion with God. All outward evils are God's creatures: "Is there any evil in the city that the Lord has not done?" But sin is the devil's brat—it is a creature of his own begetting! Yes, it is worse than the devil, it is that which has turned glorious angels into infernal devils!

All other evils do not fight against the greatest good—but sin is that grand evil that fights against the greatest good. Sin fights against the being of God, the essence of God, the glory of God. Sin is a killing of God, it is a murdering of God. Sin is a universal evil, it is all evil, it is nothing but evil; there is not one drop, one spark of good to be found in any sin—but now in all outward evils there is some good; there is some good in poverty, in sickness, in war, in death—but there is not the least good in sin. Sin is the sole object of God's hatred; he hates nothing but sin; he is angry with nothing but sin; he has forbid nothing but sin; he has revealed his wrath from heaven against nothing but sin; so great an evil is sin. Sin is that grand evil which has midwived all other evils into the world. It was sin which drowned the old world with water. It was sin which destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone. It was sin which laid Jerusalem in heaps. It was sin which has midwived sword, famine, and pestilence into the world. It was sin which laid the foundation of hell—which laid the cornerstone in that land of darkness; for before sin there was no hell, Judges 5:8; Psalm 107:34; Deut. 28:21. It was sin which crucified the Lord of glory, Romans 8:7. Now, oh how great must that evil be—which has ushered in all these great evils into the world!

Sin is enmity against God. God has no enemy in the world but sin, and those whom sin has made enemies. Sin has set all the world against the Lord of glory. It is sin which has turned men into incarnate devils, and which has drawn them out to fight against God, and Christ, and their own souls, and the things of their everlasting peace. Now, when a man looks upon sin as the greatest evil in the world, and his heart rises and is enraged against it, because of the vile, filthy, odious, and heinous nature of it, it is a clear evidence that such a man has the divine nature in him.

Take that one instance for all: Psalm 19:12-13, "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins." But why does David pray thus? "So," says he, "shall I be innocent from the great transgression." Mark, he does not pray thus: Lord, keep me from presumptuous sin—that so I may be free from

troubles without, and from terrors within, or from hell beneath. But, Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins—that so I may be innocent from the great transgression. He does not say, So shall I be free from the great punishment—but, So shall I be free from the great transgression. That is a heart worth gold, that is more sensible and more affected with the evil that is *in* sin—than with the evil that *follows* sin. It was a weighty saying of Austin: "That man," says he, "who only fears hell—he does not fear to sin—but fears to burn. But that man who fears to sin—he fears sin as he would fear hell."

*Common* grace never works a man thus to fear sin—but *renewing* grace does. Common convictions carry the soul out to look more on the evil which follows sin, rather than on the evil which is *in* sin. And hence it comes to pass, that souls under common convictions are more affected and afflicted at the fear of hell and dread of wrath and damnation—than they are affected or afflicted at the vileness, odiousness, and heinous nature of sin.

When an unsanctified person is angry with sin, and chides sin, and fights with sin, and makes some headway against sin—it is either because it has cracked his credit, or clouded his honor, or hindered his profit, or embittered his pleasure, or provoked his friends, or incensed the magistrate, or enraged his conscience, or exposed him to shame, disgrace, or contempt here—and hell hereafter. But *never* because a holy God is dishonored, a righteous law transgressed, a blessed Savior crucified, or the blessed Spirit greatly grieved. The child will not touch the coal because it will *burn* him, and the prudent man will not touch the coal because it will *smut* him. A gracious heart rises against sin because of its defiling and polluting nature—but an unsanctified heart rises against sin because of its burning and damning nature. A sanctified person hates sin, because it *pollutes* his soul—but an unsanctified person hates it because it *destroys* his soul. A sanctified person loathes sin, and abhors sin—because it fights against God's *holiness*. But an unsanctified person loathes sin, and abhors it, because it provokes and stirs up God's *justice*. A sanctified person detests sin, because of the hell that is *in* sin. But an unsanctified person detests sin, because of the hell that *follows* sin, etc. But,

**[7.] Seventhly, Where there is an irreconcilable opposition in the soul against sin—there is a saving work of God upon that man's heart.** [The contrariety to sin, which is in a real Christian, arises from an inward gracious nature, which is opposite to the whole species of sin, and every kind of sin; as contrarieties of nature are to the whole kind; as light is contrary to all darkness, and fire to all water. So that this contrariety to sin arising from the inward man is universal to all sin, etc.]

Where there is such a detestation of sin, and such an enmity raised in the soul against sin, as that the soul cannot, nor will not, upon any terms in the world, admit of any truce or reconciliation with sin—there is Christ and grace formed in the heart. The war between a gracious heart and sin, is like the war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam: 1 Kings 14:30, "There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam *all their days.*"

The Cirrheans could not be happy unless they waged war night and day; no more can we, except we perpetually fight against our lusts. O friends! a gracious heart that is weary of sin, will certainly and habitually fall striving against it: Gal. 5:17, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: for these two are contrary the one to the other." Now contraries are naturally expulsive each of other. Such a pair as a Jacob and an Esau; such twins as an Isaac and an Ishmael, cannot lie quietly together in the same womb; no, nor can they live quietly together in the same house—but there will be a mutual prosecuting and persecuting each of other. Fire and water may as well agree in the same vessel—as grace and sin in the same heart. True grace has a real repugnancy and contrariety to all sin.

Remember this once for all—that saving grace is not contrary to sin because it is open and manifest; nor is it contrary to sin because it is private and secret; nor is it contrary to sin because of this or that consequence. But saving grace is contrary to sin as **sin**, whether public or private, because both the one and the other are contrary to the law of God, the will of God, the glory of God, the nature of God, the designs of God, etc. As it is true with *light*, though it be but a single beam—yet it is universally opposite to all darkness; or as it is with *heat*, though there be but a small degree of it—yet it is opposite to all cold. Just so—true grace is opposite to all sin—it cannot comply with any known sin.

Look! as sin and grace were never born together, and as sin and grace shall never die together, so sin and grace can never be reconciled together. There is a natural contrariety between sin and grace, and therefore you can never reconcile them in the heart. The opposition that grace makes against sin is inward as well as outward; it is against sin wherever it is. Nothing will satisfy a gracious soul but the *destruction* of sin; Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be *destroyed*, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The Greek word which is here rendered *destroyed*, signifies weakened, and the strength of it broken, and made idle, fruitless, and ineffectual. So Psalm 51:2, "Wash me thoroughly" (or wash me multiple times, or play the fuller upon me), "from my iniquity." David looked upon his sin, his stain, to be so inveterate, so ingrained, that it would hardly be ever gotten out until the washcloth were almost rubbed to pieces! "And cleanse me from my sin." David was as desirous to be cleansed of the leprosy of sin, as ever any poor leper was willing to be cleansed of his leprosy under the law. And so verse 7, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

All the sacrifices of expiation of sin in the old law, were done by blood, and that blood was sprinkled upon the people by a bunch of hyssop. In the legal sprinklings made with hyssop, was shadowed out the washing away of sin through the blood of Christ. The bride's garments are made white in the blood of the Lamb, and not by any washings in snow water, Rev. 1:14, Job 9:30. When a gracious soul looks upon sin, he cries out, 'Lord, raze it, raze it down to the ground; Lord, let not one stone be left upon another!' In every gracious soul there is such a detestation and such an indignation against sin, that neither mountains of gold, nor rocks of pearl, nor honor, nor applause, nor favor on the one hand; nor frowns, nor threats, nor neglects, nor scorns, nor contempt on the other hand—can win the soul over to sin, or make the soul one with sin.

Look how it was between the Lord and Amalek, so it is between a gracious soul and his sins. Now if you turn to that Exod. 17:16, you shall find how it was between the Lord and Amalek. "Because the Lord has sworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation;" or, as the Hebrew has it, "The hand upon the throne of the Lord." God's hand is

laid upon his own throne, as swearing to root out Amalek; or because Amalek's hand is lifted up against God's throne, therefore God will have perpetual wars with Amalek. God could as soon be reconciled to Amalek, as a gracious Christian can be reconciled to his sins.

Others sense the words thus, that Moses had a solemn oath, as it were, laying his hand upon God's throne, for asseveration and assurance, that he and the people will have an irreconcilable war with the posterity of Amalek. And so every gracious soul is resolved to make an irreconcilable war with sin.

But now, where there is only common grace, there a man deals by his sins as David did by his son Absalom, banish him his court for a time, and afterwards receive him into full favor, and court him as much or more than before. An unsound heart may fall out with his sin, and be very angry with its sin—for the *consequence* of it, for the *shame* it brings upon him, for the blot it leaves upon his name, and for the stinging guilt and painful fits which it causes in his conscience; and yet this very person remains in a very close and strict league with sin, and his heart inwardly and strongly adheres unto sin.

But a gracious heart will be still a-restraining of sin, a-curbing of sin, a-crossing of sin, a-making headway against sin, and a-withstanding it in all its workings. *Anger* may be reconciled—but *hatred* cannot.

**[8.] Eighthly, Where the very prevailings of sin are ordinarily made serviceable to high and holy ends, to gracious and spiritual ends—there certainly is a saving work of God upon that man's soul,** Ezek. 16:61, 63; Eph. 2:5-7. As when prevailings of sin produce more soul-loathing, soul-humiliation, self-judging, self-abasement, self-abhorring; or when they fill the soul with a greater admiration of the freeness and riches of grace; or when they keep down pride, and prevent the despising of others, or produce holy shame; or when they make the blood of Christ more precious and dear to the soul; or when they engage a Christian so much the more to watch and pray, and pray and watch, that he may either be kept *from* the hour of temptation, or *in* the hour of temptation; or when every fall makes sin more bitter to the soul than ever, and Christ more sweet to the soul than

ever, and all the means of grace more delightful to the soul than ever, and heaven more desirable to the soul than ever; or when sin is made the prevention of further sin; or when sin, through the over-ruling hand of grace, is made an occasion of more grace, as that godly man said, "As I get hurt by my *graces*—so I get good by my *sins*."

You know all the falls, and knocks, and blows which children get—who are learning to walk, do but make them cleave the closer and hang the faster upon the father's arm, or about the mother's neck. So when all a Christian's falls do but work him to cleave the closer and hang the faster upon the strength of Christ, and to be still a-drawing more and more virtue and power from Christ—then is the prevalency of sin made serviceable to holy and gracious ends. And where God ordinarily thus works, there is certainly a work of God in power upon that soul: 2 Cor. 7:11, "Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish the wrongdoer. You showed that you have done everything you could to make things right." This scripture I have fully opened in my eighth sign of godly sorrow in this book, and to that I refer you.

The mother, by allowing the child to get one fall, keeps the child from many a fall; and so it was with these Corinthians. Adam's fall was an inlet to abundance of grace; and his unrighteousness ushered into the world the most glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ. Hezekiah falls, and by his fall God gives him a clearer and fuller sight of his own heart than ever he had before in all his days, 2 Chron. 32:25, 26, 31. Sin is no gainer—but a loser, by every fall of the saints. God does and will, by the over-ruling hand of his grace, make the very sins of his people, to be glorious inlets to more eminent degrees of grace and holiness. God has a great revenue of glory from the very infirmities of the saints. And the saints have a great revenue of comfort from their very faults and sins—by the wise, powerful, over-ruling, and sanctifying hand of God. God is that powerful, that skillful physician, who can make an antidote and sovereign remedy out of sin—which is the most deadly poison in all the world. God does and will make the very sins of his people to further the salvation of his people, according to that golden promise, Romans 8:28.

God never allows his people to fall into any sin—but out of a design to break the neck and back of that sin which they fall into. God allowed David to fall into those two great sins of murder and adultery—but by these very falls, he broke the very back of those sins; for we never read that ever he fell into those sins the second time. And so God allowed Peter to deny him once—but by that sore fall, God broke the neck of that very sin; for we never read that ever he denied Christ any more. Yes, it is very observable that Peter's courage and boldness for the truth received a very high advance by those deep wounds that he had formerly given them, when he denied the Lord who bought him. After his sore falls, for courage and boldness he carries the bell from all the apostles, as you may see in Acts 4:12.

It is the nature of true grace to gather strength by every wound. Grace gathers strength by contraries, as fire does when it is compassed about with coldness, by opposition or counteraction. By all a Christian's falls—his graces grow brighter and stronger. In the long run—a Christian by all his falls, loses nothing but his dross, his chaff, his scum, his filth. Now, he who finds his sins thus over-ruled for the good of his soul, he is certainly a gracious soul.

O sirs! remember this forever, namely—that the oftener a hypocrite or a formalist falls, the more ground and strength his sins get upon him, and so will continue to do until all that grace and goodness which he seemed to have had, is quite extinguished. But,

**[9.] Ninthly, Where a bare naked command of God is commonly, ordinarily of that power, force, and authority with the soul, as to curb sin, and restrain the soul from sin, and to arm and fence the soul against the encroachments and commands of sin—there is certainly a saving work, a powerful work of God upon that soul.** When a man can say to heaven and hell, *Stand aside for the present*, and to precious promises, *Stand aside for the present*, and to divine threatenings, *"Stand aside for the present—here is a command of God that forbids such and such actions, and therefore I cannot, I dare not do this or that wickedness, and sin against the Lord!"*—there is certainly a principle of grace in that man's heart, Gen. 39:9. That is a great word of David, Psalm 119:161, "My heart stands

in awe of your word." When a naked command from God does so overawe the heart, as that it dares not sin against God—then doubtless the heart is sincere with God.

A child does not stand in more awe of the rod, nor a servant of a beating, nor a favorite of his prince's frowns—than a real Christian, when he is himself, stands in awe of the word. So Psalm 119:11, "Your word have I hid within my heart, that I might not sin against you." When a man hides the word in his heart as a treasure, that he may not lose it—and as a rule that he may not transgress it—then his heart is indeed right with God. When the law of God in a man's heart arms him against the lusts of his heart and life—then doubtless his heart is sound with God.

So Psalm 17:4, "By the words of your lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer;" or as some read the words, "according to the command and charge of your words, I have kept myself from the sinful ways, manners, behaviours, etc., of the destroyer, or the cruel man." Christ commanded his apostles to make him known to the world, and to preach the everlasting gospel, and to make known those mysteries and riches of grace which were hidden in former ages, Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 10:36, seq. The Jewish authorities threaten them, and command them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus, Acts 4:17-18. But the command of Christ holds sway with the apostles against all their threatenings and commands: verses 19-20, "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen."

When the commands of authority run counter-cross to the commands of God, the commands of God must be obeyed, though the greatest authority under heaven should be displeased and enraged. God never gave authority to anyone, to act contrary to his commands. Disobedience to *unlawful* commands is no disobedience. Woe to him who obeys the commands of men—in opposition to the commands of God: 1 Cor. 9:16, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Now it is infinitely better to fall under the displeasure of men—than to fall under the woes of God. The Jews, under a pretense of their authority, command

the apostles not to preach Jesus to the people. But the commands of Christ hold sway with the apostles against all their contrary commands. The apostles, who were like bottles of new wine—which must either vent or burst, knew very well that it was not obedience to men's absolutes that could excuse their disobedience to God's commands.

Just so, in the third chapter of Daniel, the commands of the great God held sway over the three children against all the dreadful threatenings, proud boastings, and idolatrous commands of king Nebuchadnezzar. Certainly the commands of sin are of all commands the vilest commands; they are all illegal; sin has no ground, no reason to command our souls. Sin is but a usurper, a traitor, and therefore has no authority over us. All sin's commands are absolutely sinful; they are plain and notorious rebellions against the laws of Christ, the life of Christ, and against the crown, honor, and dignity of Jesus. All sin's commands are grievous, burdensome, and painful commands; of all yokes, none so heavy as that which sin lays upon the sinner; hence sin is compared to a lead cover, Zech. 5:7, to show the weightiness and burdensomeness of it. And hence it is that sinners are said to weary themselves in committing iniquity, Jer. 9:5. And hence it is that wicked men are said to *travail* with iniquity, Psalm 7:14, to show what anxiety, pain and trouble they have, in bringing about their wickedness: "Behold he travails with iniquity;" or as the Hebrew has it, he shall travail, or he continually travailes—he takes as great pains to go to hell as a travailing woman does to be delivered.

Wicked men are as laborious, and as restless and unquiet in the practice of wickedness, as a woman in labor is, when the pangs of travail are upon her, Proverbs 4:14-16. Sugared poisons go down pleasantly; oh but when once they are down—they gall, and gnaw, and gripe the very heart-strings asunder; it is so with sin.

Lastly, the commands of sin are extremely **unreasonable**. What an unreasonable thing it is to command a man to run into the fire, or to drown himself in the water, or to strangle himself, etc. Now all the commands of sin tend directly and intentionally—to the burning, drowning, strangling, and destroying of the sinner. All sin's commands tend to the dishonor of God, the breach of his righteous laws, and the damnation of the precious and immortal soul. Now where the commands

of God do commonly hold sway, against all the commands of sin, there the soul is certainly sincere with God.

That we owe perfect obedience to God's will, to God's commands, is evident enough several ways, and in particular from the universal obedience of all creatures; I mean those which are without reason, sense, or life—for they inviolably observe his commands: Isaiah 48:13, "It was my hand that laid the foundations of the earth. The palm of my right hand spread out the heavens above. When I call to them, they stand up together," as prepared to execute his commands. The insensible parts of the world are so compliant with his will, as to contradict their proper natures to serve his glory. Fire descends from heaven at his command, Gen. 19:24; 2 Kings 1:10-12. And the liquid sea stands up at his command, Exod. 14:22. Now what a sad thing is it that Christians should at any time prove disloyal and rebellious, when all inferior creatures do with one consent serve and glorify the great God! But, etc.

**[10.] Tenthly, Constant desires, and earnest and constant endeavors to avoid and shun all known appearances of sin—evidences the truth and reality of grace in the soul.** [Where do you read in all the Scriptures, of any one hypocrite, who ever made conscience of shunning and avoiding the appearances of sin?] Certainly that man is a true Nathaniel, who makes it his business, his work, to abstain from all appearances of evil. A hypocrite loves the *appearance* of good—more than goodness itself; and a sincere Christian hates the very appearance of evil, as well as the evil itself. He who hates a person, loathes his very picture. A wicked man may abstain from broad-faced evils—but commonly he is very bold and venturous upon covert evils. Oh what vain apologies do many make in these days for long hair, gaudy apparel, antique fashions, spotted faces, naked breasts, wanton behaviors, ungodly alliances, and a thousand other suspicious practices and vanities!

But now a man who is truly gracious, he makes conscience, not only of shunning real, gross, known evils—but also of shunning the very appearance of evil. His heart does not only rise against real sins—but he is very shy of that which looks like sin. When Joseph's mistress took hold of him and said, "Lie with me!" he left his garment in her hand and fled,

and fled out," Gen. 39:12. Joseph would not be found in the company of his impudent, brazen-faced mistress, who could so openly and basely, so boldly and frequently, solicit him to defile his master's bed, and to damn two souls at once, her own and his—that so he might avoid the very appearance of evil, the very suspicion of sin. By lustful touches and dalliance, mental adultery is often committed. And therefore Joseph flies, as being unwilling to touch her, or to be touched by her.

And so *Paul* refused the using his liberty in taking a lawful maintenance for his labors, lest a sinister interpretation of covetous and mercenary affection should have been put upon it by his adversaries, 1 Cor. 9:11-15. And so the same apostle would needs have Titus and two others chosen by the church, to join with him in carrying the benevolent gift of the church of Macedonia, to Jerusalem, because he was very careful to avoid all suspicion of dealing ill in that business. 2 Cor. 8:20-21, "We are taking this precaution so no one can find fault with us concerning this large sum administered by us. For we are making provision for what is honorable, not only before the Lord but also before men."

Just so, *Daniel* would not defile himself with the portion of the king's food, Dan. 1:3, that is, say some, he would not defile his conscience by eating such unclean meats as were forbidden under the law, for the Babylonians did eat of many meats, as of swine, rabbits, etc., and of sundry sorts of fishes and fowls—which were forbidden by God unto the children of Israel, Levit. 11, Deut. 14; nor with the king's wine. But in the Hebrew the plural number is used, of his drinks, whence some gather that the king drank many sorts of wines, which were also set before Daniel and his companions; therefore he requested that he might not defile himself. Daniel's living at a full table, and his feeding upon kingly dainties, might have been, not only a means to ensnare him, and drown him in the sensualities of the court—but it would have carried with it also too great a show of Daniel's conformity to the court's manners and customs, and have been too great an appearance of Daniel's forgetfulness of the sore and miserable calamities and matchless miseries of the captive church, which sat sighing and groaning and mourning in her cruel bondage, and had none to comfort her, or speak peace unto her. And therefore Daniel purposed in his heart, or set it upon his heart, or laid it

upon his heart, as the Hebrew may be read, that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's food, etc., that so he might avoid all shows or suspicions of evil.

It is very observable, that in the law of the *Nazarite*, who did for a time special consecrate himself to God, that besides his not coming near the dead; and not cutting his hair—it was ordained of God that he should abstain from these six things:

(1.) From wine and strong drink;

(2.) from the vinegar of wine or strong drink;

(3.) from any liquor of grapes, though it were but the water wherein they were steeped;

(4.) from the green or moist grape;

(5.) from the dried grape or raisin;

(6.) from the husk or kernel of them, Num. 6:3-4.

Had the Nazarite eaten but the skin of the grape or raisin, he would have broken the law. Now hereby the Lord would teach us, that those who separate themselves from the world, to be in a special manner serviceable to the Lord, they must avoid not only that which is plain sin, downright sin, or such sins that men may run and read—but also that they must shun and be shy of the very appearances of sin.

It was good counsel that Livia gave her husband Augustus, "It behooves you," says she, "not only not to do wrong—but not to seem to do so," etc. We must shun and be shy of the very suspicion and appearance of sin, if either we prize our credit abroad, or our comfort at home. Walking in the power of holiness lies much in shunning the very appearance of sin. The primitive Christians would not endure that any Christian should look towards Jerusalem praying, because they would avoid the least show of Judaism. And indeed there are great reasons why every Christian should avoid whatever may have the suspicion of sin. And this will be evident, if you please but seriously to consider of these eight following particulars:

**(1.) First, Consider those clear and plain commands of God which makes this duty to be a duty,** as that 1 Thes. 5:22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." God requires us not only to abstain from all *apparent* sins—but also from all *appearance* of sin. We must do nothing which has a show or shadow of sin. It is duty to abstain from whatever is of an evil show, or an evil report. And so God commands us to hate the *garment* spotted with the flesh, Jude 23. Saints must abhor everything that carries with it but an *appearance* or suspicion of uncleanness. The apostle alludes to legal uncleanness, which was contracted by touching the houses, the vessels, or the garments of unclean people, Levit. 15. [Hence that saying of the Jews, Remove yourself from filthiness, and from all that which has an *appearance* of it.] Christians must not only hate uncleanness—but they must hate everything that looks like it, or that has the least communion with it. So in that Deut. 12:30, "Be careful not to be ensnared by their ways after they have been destroyed before you. Do not inquire about their gods, asking—How did these nations worship their gods?" God does not only command his people to abstain from gross idolatry—but he also commands them to take heed of all those ways and means and inquiries that might tend to draw them to idolatry, or that might carry with them the least show or appearance of idolatry.

It is observable in the law, that God commanded his people not only that they should *worship* no idol—but that they should *demolish* all the monuments of them; and that they should make no covenant, nor have any affinity with those who worshiped them. And all to avoid the very shows of idolatry, and to prevent his people from being drawn by those means to commit idolatry with them. And so Exod. 23:7, "Keep far from a false matter." Every godly man must stand aloof off, he must keep at a distance, both from the *occasions* of sin, and from the *appearances* of sin.

Just so in Proverbs 5:8, "Remove your way far from her, and come not near the door of her house." He who is farthest from fire, is safest from burning; and he who is most remote from the water, is in least danger of drowning. It is no small wickedness to approach near the door of wickedness; he who approaches near the door of a whore's house, is already in the door of whoredom, Proverbs 22:14, 23:27. It is too

dangerous for anyone to knowingly, willingly, come near the door of of a whore's house. Oh how should a man dread the coming into that house, where he must needs either perish or else be overcome! Certainly it is infinite better not to be in danger of perishing, than being in danger not to perish.

Just so in Hosea 4:15, "Though Israel is a prostitute, may Judah avoid such guilt. O Judah, do not join with those who worship me insincerely at Gilgal and at Bethaven." Gilgal was once famous for sundry services performed to God. But now Gilgal was abased to idol worship. And hence it is that God charges Judah not to come near it, that so they might avoid both the show and danger of idolatry; and it is upon the same account that God charges them not to go up to Bethaven. By these scriptures it is evident that God would have his people to abstain from all shows and appearances of sin. But, etc.

**(2.) Secondly, The holiness of God, and the honor of God, calls aloud upon all Christians to avoid the suspicion of sin.** God is so essentially holy, so unmixedly holy, so universally holy, so eminently, so transcendently holy, so superlatively holy, so originally, radically, and fundamentally holy; he is so independently holy, so unchangeably, so constantly, and so exemplarily holy—that he cannot but hate and abhor the very appearance of evil. Look! as apparent sins stir up the judicial anger of God against sinners, so the appearance of sin stirs up the fatherly anger of God against saints. A gracious heart knows that "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," Hab. 1:13, and therefore he keeps at a distance from the appearance of iniquity. Of all men in the world, none honor God at so high a rate as those who keep most aloof off from the appearance of evil. Many, by their apparent evils, have lived God, and Christ, and the gospel, and their profession, and precious ordinances—into disgrace, scorn, and contempt. And oh that we would all make it our great business, by abstaining from all appearance of evil—to live God, and Christ, and the gospel, and our profession, and precious ordinances—into a greater credit, praise, and honor than ever! He keeps farthest off from dishonoring God—who keeps farthest off from the appearance of sin. But, etc.,

**(3.) Thirdly, This is the best of ways for a man to keep himself**

**clear from other men's sins.** That man who abstains from the appearance of sin is very rarely guilty of other men's sins. Men many times, by venturing upon the appearances of sin, come to wrap themselves up in the guilt of other men's sins. If Joseph had been dallying and toying, playing and sporting with his mistress in a wanton manner, how soon might he have enrapt himself up in the guilt of his mistress's burning lusts! He who would not tempt nor entice others to sin—must keep off from the very appearance of sin.

Certainly there is not the holiest man in the world, but has sins enough of his own to sadden him—though not to sink him; to humble him—though not to damn him; to abase him—though not to deject him. And therefore how much does it concern the best men in the world to abstain from the very appearance of sin—so that they may not bring upon themselves the guilt and burden of other men's sins. It is very well observed by some, that a more grievous punishment is reserved for those who cause others to sin; thus the serpent was punished more than Eve, and Eve more than Adam. And so Jezebel, who tempted and provoked Ahab to sin, was punished with a far greater and severer punishment or judgment than Ahab himself was. [2 Kings 9:30, seq., compared with 1 Kings 22:34-39.] To sin, has not so much perdition in it—as to make others to sin. And therefore, as you would never draw others to sin, keep off from all appearance of sin. Oh that all superiors, inferiors, and equals, would lay this counsel to heart! But,

**(4.) Fourthly, The keeping off from all appearances of evil is the best and noblest way under heaven to keep a good name and to keep a good conscience.** Now, a good name and a good conscience are jewels of more worth than all the scepters and miters in the world, and there is no wisdom in the world to that which leads a man by the hand to secure his name and his conscience. Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving-favor rather than silver and gold." So Eccles. 7:1, "A good name is better than precious ointment;" the one being but a perfume of the nostrils, the other a perfume of the heart. It is observable, the princely preacher does not say, "a *great* name is better than precious ointments," but "a *good* name is better than precious ointments." Ointments are here named, because in

those eastern parts they were laid up in the king's treasury, even among his most precious things: Isaiah 39:2, "Hezekiah welcomed the Babylonian envoys and showed them his precious things—the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointments," etc. Precious aromatic ointments were things greatly in use and esteem among the Israelites, and a special part of their treasures, as is evident by these Scriptures. [Exod. 30:22-23; 28:41; 1 Sam. 16:13; Pa. 89:20; Heb. 1:9; Isaiah 61:3; Amos 6:6; Esther 2:12; Psalm 23:5; Luke 7:46; Psalm 92:10; Deut. 33:24; Proverbs 21:20.] And yet a good name, which has its foundation in virtue, and in a holy, innocent, blameless, harmless, and exemplary life—is better than these most precious ointments.

It was good counsel the moralist gave when he said, "Whatever commodity you lose, be sure to preserve that jewel of a good name." "A good renown is better than a golden belt," say some. "A man's eye and his good name can bear no jests," say others. "If I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough," said the naturalist. O friends! as ever you would keep a good name, keep off from the very appearance of evil; for the very appearance of evil will both eclipse and wound a man's name and his conscience at once. Certainly a man were better not to live, than to outlive his good name. A man's good name is like a piece of white paper, which, if once blotted, will be very hard to be erased out, so as to leave no blotch.

A man's reputation is like a large structure—a long time being built up—but quickly ruined; or like a merchant's estate, long a-getting—but lost in a moment. And therefore how much does it concern every Christian to keep his name as he would keep his life! and this he can never do, except he keeps off from the appearance of evil. It is his name only, which shall be kept green and flourishing like the rod of Aaron—who keeps off from the appearance of evil. He takes the best and the wisest course to preserve his good name in the world, and to maintain the peace of his conscience—who is most studious and industrious to abstain from all appearances of evil. But, etc.

**(5.) Fifthly, The appearance of evil may very much offend, scandalize, stumble, and tempt weak Christians.** And therefore it highly concerns us to keep off from the very appearance of evil. The more grace any man has in his own heart, the more fearful he will be of

stumbling or offending those who have less. Venturing upon the appearance of evil may not only defile my own conscience—but also wound my weak brother's conscience. And therefore it concerns me to be very shy of the appearance of evil. If in things of an indifferent nature I must deny my own liberty, as I must, rather than grieve, or offend, or wound the conscience of a weak brother for whom Christ has died, 1 Cor. 8:11-13, 10:25, 28, oh how much more, then, must I shun the very appearance of sin, considering how apt weak Christians are to be offended and stumbled when they see others so bold as to venture upon the appearance of evil!

Alexander's Macedonians having offended him, put on mourning apparel, and came running in troops to his tent, where, for almost three days, they remained with loud cries and tears, to testify their remorse for offending him. And shall we make nothing of offending those weak Christians who are the price of Christ's blood, and the travail of his soul? The Lord forbid!

Besides, our venturing upon the appearance of evil may prove a great temptation to weak Christians, not only to venture upon *seeming* evils—but also to venture upon *real* evils. Doubtless many weak Christians have been drawn to real evils, by observing others to venture upon the appearance of evil. It is commonly seen, that when strong Christians will adventure upon appearing evils, weak Christians will be emboldened thereby to commit real evils.

"But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge." 1 Corinthians 8:8-11

When the weak shall see men of knowledge communicating with idolaters in their feasts, their consciences will be emboldened and confirmed in their old superstition about those idols which they were beginning to leave, returning now afresh to a more reverent esteem and service of

them than ever, etc. O friends! as you would not offend the weak, as you would not tempt the weak—keep off from all shows and appearances of evil, etc. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, Christians venturing upon appearing evils, will exceedingly harden and encourage wicked men to commit real evils.** It is very natural and customary with wicked men to make use of the appearing infirmities of the saints, as excuses for their greatest enormities and wickednesses. "Why, did not such and such knowing eminent Christians do thus and thus? and we have gone but one step beyond them, and is that so great and heinous a crime? they have been playing and sporting themselves about the pit, and we are but slipped or stepped into the pit. They have been sitting and bibbing with such and such company, and we have but taken two or three merry cups more than ordinary in the same company—and is that so great a sin?" etc.

O sirs! as we should walk wisely towards the unconverted, so we should walk compassionately towards the unconverted, 1 Thes. 4:12. "Of some have compassion, making a difference," Jude 22. Did not Jeremiah wish that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people? Jer. 9:1. Did not Samuel mourn for Saul? Did not Christ weep over Jerusalem? Did not the compassionate Samaritan bind up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine—on the one who fell among thieves? Did not Paul weep over those who were enemies of the cross of Christ? Yes, shall we show pity and compassion to an ox or an donkey that is fallen into a ditch? Nay, shall David rather fight a lion—than lose a lamb? Shall Jacob rather endure heat by day, and cold by night—than neglect his flock? Shall Moses fight with dire odds—rather than the cattle shall perish with thirst? [1 Sam. 15:25; Luke 19:10; 10:30-35; Philip. 3:20; Lev. 19:17; 1 Sam. 17:34; Gen. 31:40.] Nay, shall Xenocrates, a heathen, show compassion to a poor sparrow, that being scared and pursued by a hawk, flew into his bosom for support? etc. And shall not we have that compassion on poor sinners' precious and immortal souls, as to abstain from the appearance of sin, which may more ways than one prove so exceeding harmful to them? etc.

Wicked men are greatly prone to watch for the saints' haltings, Jer. 20:10.

Christians are lights upon a high hill; and therefore every man's eye is upon them, and if wicked men can but discern the least indecency, the least appearance of any eccentric or irregular motion, oh how readily will they let fly against God and the gospel, against true religion, and against all who have a profession of true religion! Now the honor of God, and the credit of the gospel, should be so dear and precious in the eyes of every Christian, that he should rather choose to die than to venture upon the least appearance of sin, whereby the honor of God may be clouded, or the credit of the gospel impeached or eclipsed, or the soul of a poor sinner endangered or worsted. Both the least sin, and the least appearance of sin, must be avoided and prevented.

The cockatrice must be crushed in the egg, else it will soon become a serpent! The very *thought* of sin—will break out into *action*, action into *custom*, custom into *habit*, and then both body and soul are in the ready way of being irrecoverably lost! Camerarius tells us a sad story of two brothers, who, walking out in the evening and seeing the sky full of bright spangling stars, one of them being a grazier, wished that he had as many oxen as there were stars in the sky; then said the other brother, If I had a pasture as big as all the world, where would you keep the oxen? He answered, In your pasture. What, said the other, whether I would or not? Yes! said his brother. The matter was very light; it was but a little evil, or an appearing evil—but it fell out very heavily; for presently they fell to angry words, and then began to fight, and in the end killed one another. O friends! as you love the lives of sinners, and as you love the souls of sinners, keep off from all appearance of evil. But,

**[7.] Seventhly, Other precious saints have abstained from all appearances of evil.** Witness Joseph, Paul, Daniel, etc.—but lately cited. And to these let me add that great instance of Augustine, who refused even ironies, because they had the appearance of evil. And so the primitive Christians would not set up lights at their doors, though for this they were persecuted as enemies to the emperor, because the temple and the doors of idolaters were accustomed to be thus garnished. And so David refused to take the threshing-floor, and threshing instruments, and oxen, etc., of Araunah as a gift—but would needs buy them at a price, and this he did, partly out of a divine nobleness, and partly to avoid the very

show of covetousness, 2 Sam. 24:21-24.

Now why has God left all these famous examples upon record—but on purpose to encourage his saints in all ages to abstain from all appearance of evil. Certainly God desires that we should so eye the best, the highest, the worthiest, and the exactest examples, as that we should make it our great business and work to come up to them, and to imitate them to the life. O friends! the examples last cited should be very awakening, very persuading, very convincing, and very encouraging; because in them you may see that though abstinence from the appearance of evil be a difficult thing—yet it is a possible thing. Shall we love to look upon the pictures of our friends, and shall we not much more love to look upon the holy examples of those eminent saints who had the lively picture of grace, and the lovely image of Christ fairly stamped upon their hearts and lives? It is both our mercy and our duty to eye the examples, and to follow the footsteps of those Christians that have been most eminent in grace, as you may plainly see by comparing of these scriptures: Proverbs 2:20; Heb. 6:12; 1 Thes. 1:6; Philip. 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:10-12; Heb. 12:1; Philip. 3:17; 1 Cor. 11:1; Titus 2:7. He who would write well, had need have his eye often upon his copy. And he who would sincerely abstain from all appearance of evil, he had need often to eye the gracious examples of such who have made conscience of abstaining from the appearance of evils, as well as from real evils. But,

**[8.] Eighthly and lastly, Consider what some refined heathens and civilized pagans have done in this very case.** There are stories of heathens that would not look upon beauties, lest they should be ensnared. Democritus plucked out his own eyes to avoid the danger of uncleanness. Socrates speaks of two young men who flang away their belts, when, being in an idol temple, the lustrating water fell upon them, detesting the garment spotted by the flesh. Alexander would not see the woman after whom he might have lusted. Scipio Africanus, warring in Spain, took New Carthage by storm, at which time a beautiful and noble virgin fled to him for support; he being twenty-four years old, and so in the heat of youth, hearing of it, would not allow her to come into his sight for fear of temptation—but caused her to be restored in safety to her father. So when Demosthenes the orator was asked a large sum of money

to behold the beautiful Lais, he answered, He would not buy repentance so dear, neither was he so ill a merchant as to sell eternals for temporals. Nor would Caesar search Pompey's cabinet, lest he should find new matters of revenge. Memorable is the story of the children of Samoseta, that would not touch their ball—but burnt it, because it had touched the toe of a wicked heretical bishop as they were tossing and playing with it.

Now shall some refined heathens, shall civilized pagans abstain from the appearance of evil, from occasions and temptations to sin? and shall real Christians fall short of them? Shall blind nature do more than grace? Shall men fallen in the first Adam do more than those who are raised and enlivened by the second Adam? But to prevent all mistakes, let me add, though many heathens have abstained from the appearance of some evil—yet they have not abstained from the appearance of all evil; neither have they abstained from the appearance of any evil out of a hatred of evil; nor from any principles of saving light, or life, or love; nor out of any regard to any royal law of God; nor out of any regard to the honor or glory of God—but either out of vain-glory and popular applause, the pole-stars by which they steered all their actions, or out of hypocrisy, which set a tincture and dye upon all their actions.

What writer has more golden sentences than Seneca against the contempt of gold. Yet if Tacitus and others of his contemporaries may be credited, none more rich, none more covetous than he, as if out of design he had persuaded others to cast away their money, that he himself might come and gather it up again, etc. And thus you see that there are very great reasons why every Christian should avoid the very show, suspicion, or appearance of evil, etc. But,

**[11.] Eleventhly and lastly, He who sets himself resolutely, mostly, habitually, against his bosom sins, his constitution sins, his most prevalent sins, etc.—he has certainly a saving work, a powerful work of God upon his soul.** True grace will make a man stand stoutly and steadfastly on God's side, and work the heart to take part with him, against the most darling sins, though they be as dear as right hands or as right eyes. True grace will lay hands upon a man's most beloved lusts, and cry out to heaven, "Lord, crucify them, crucify them! Down with them, down with them even to the ground. Lord, do

justice, do speedy justice, do exemplary justice upon this bosom lust, this master sin! Lord, hew down root and branch! let the very stumps of this Dagon be broken all in pieces! Lord, curse this wild fig-tree, that fruit may never more grow thereon!"

Certainly God and Christ is set up highest in that man's heart, who bends most of his thoughts, strength, and endeavors against his constitution sins, against the sins of his place, calling, condition and complexion. It is very observable that the Jews, after they had been in the Babylonish furnace for idolatry, they ever hated and feared idolatry, as much as the burned child dreads the fire; yes, they would die any death rather than admit an idol. Josephus tells us how stoutly they opposed Pilate and Petronius, who would have set up Caesar's statue in their temples, offering their throats to the swords of the soldiers, rather than they would endure that idol in God's house.

Oh when once the heart of a Christian comes thus to be set against all his golden and silver idols, then we may safely say, "Behold a true Israelite, in whom there is no deceit." He who finds his lusts, his bosom, his darling lusts, begin to fall before him, as Haman once begun to fall before Mordecai, Esther 6:13, he may safely and confidently conclude that the seed of God abides in him, 1 John 3:9. But having discoursed so largely as I have concerning bosom sins, darling lusts, head corruptions, in my other writings, I need say no more at this time. And thus you see that there are eleven particulars in regard of sin and a Christian's actings about it, that manifests a true saving work of grace to be in the souls of the saints.

**II. Secondly, Where the constant, ordinary, standing, and abiding purpose, disposition, frame, and general bent of a man's heart, soul, spirit, desires, and endeavors—are fixed and set for God, for grace, for holiness in heart and life—there is a most sure and infallible work of God passed upon that man's soul.** [Psalm 40:8, 39:1, 101:3; 2 Cor. 1:12; Psalm 119:4-5, 20; 2 Chron.

19:3, 30:18, 19; Neh. 1:11; Isaiah 26:8-9.]

The constant bent and the settled purpose of a true child of God, is for God, for grace, for holiness in heart and life. Psalm 119:112, "I have inclined my heart to keep your statutes always, even to the end." Verse 38, "Establish your word unto your servant, who is devoted to your fear." Verse 44, "So shall I keep your law continually forever and ever." Verse 45, "And I will walk at liberty: for I seek your precepts." Acts 24:16, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Heb. 13:18, "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."

Gracious souls do strongly affect that which they cannot easily effect: Psalm 119:57, "You are my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep your words." Some read this verse thus, "Lord, I have said, my portion shall be to keep your words." Holy David was fully determined and resolved in himself, to keep God's royal law, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And so Barnabas exhorted the disciples, that with full purpose of heart, they should cleave unto the Lord, Acts 11:23; as if all piety and truth of grace consisted in gracious purposes of heart.

Certainly when the bent of a man's mind, and the settled purpose of a man's soul, and the sincere desires of his heart, are for God, for grace, for holiness in heart, in life, then the state and condition of that man is eternally safe and happy. It is very observable that the great apostle Paul, in his spiritual conflict, lays a very great stress upon these things; witness Romans 7:16, "And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good." So verse 18, "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." So verse 19, "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing." So verses 21-22, "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law." So verse 25, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God."

Certainly, the truth, the life, and power of grace, of holiness, of regeneration, is not so much seen in our actions, as in the renewing and sanctifying of our minds and wills, according to that Romans 12:2, "Be transformed," or metamorphosed, as the Greek has it, "by the renewing of

your mind." **No man is to judge of the soundness or sincerity of his spirit by some particular acts—but by the constant frame and bent of his spirit, and by his general life in this world.** If particular actions might determine whether a man had grace or no grace, whether he were in Christ or not in Christ, whether he were a saint or not a saint, whether he were sincere or unsound; we would many times conclude, that those had no grace—who indeed have; and that they were not in Christ—who indeed are; and that they are no saints—who indeed are; and that they are not sincere—who certainly are true Nathanaels. [Though the needle of the seaman's compass may jog this way and that way—yet the bent of the needle will still be northward. So though a Christian may have his particular sinful joggings this way or that way—yet the bent of his heart will still be God-wards.]

The best saints have had their various motions, and have very foully and sadly miscarried as to particular actions—even then when the constant course and bent of their spirits have been God-wards and Christ-wards, and holiness-wards and heaven-wards, etc. Witness *David's* murder and adultery, *Noah's* drunkenness, *Lot's* incest, *Joseph's* swearing, *Job's* cursing, *Jonah's* vexing, *Peter's* denying, and *Thomas's* not believing. Such *twinklings* do and will accompany the highest and fairest stars. He who walks most steadily—may sometimes trip. He who cannot endure to see a spot upon his clothes—may yet sometimes fall into a quagmire. So the holiest and exactest Christians—may sometimes be surprised with many infirmities and unevennesses, and sad miscarriages.

Certainly, particular sinnings are compatible with a gracious frame, though none are with a glorious condition. Though no darkness, no clouds can be mixed with the sun in heaven—yet both may be in the sky above. Our best estate on earth is mixed—and not absolutely pure. *Glory* annihilates all sinful practices—but *grace* only weakens them. The most sincere Christian is but an imperfect Christian—and has daily cause to mourn over his infirmities; as well as he has cause to bless God for his graces and mercies. Well, sirs! look—as every particular *stain* does not blemish the universal fineness of the cloth, so neither does this or that particular sin disprove and deny the general bent of the heart!

*Particulars* may not decide the estate either way. It is true, a man by a

particular sinning is denominated guilty—but by no one particular sin, can a man's estate be challenged, either for good or bad. He who shall judge of a Christian's estate by particular acts—though notorious bad, will certainly "condemn the generation of the righteous." We must always distinguish between some *single* good actions—and a *series* of good actions. It is not this or that particular good action—but a continued course of holy actions, that denominates us holy. Certainly, as there is no man so holy—but sometimes he falls into this or that particular sin. Just so—there is no man so wicked—but sometimes he falls in with this or that particular duty. Witness *Pharaoh*, who in a fit desires Moses and Aaron to pray for him. And witness *Balaam*, who in a good mood desires to die the death of the righteous. And witness *Saul*, who under a pang of conscience, condemns himself, and justifies David. And so witness *Ahab's* humbling of himself, and *Nineveh's* repenting, and *Felix's* trembling, and *Herod's* hearing of John Baptist gladly. [Mere particular actions do not conclude, either way, the estate of the soul. A hypocrite may do some good act—an upright person may do some sinful act. A man must give in judgment for or against himself, according to the habitual purpose and temper of his heart and life, etc.]

Now look, as every sin which a godly man falls into, through infirmity, does not presently denominate him ungodly; so neither will a few good actions done by a wicked man prove him godly. It is what the course and tenor of the life is—which must be most diligently and wisely observed—for every man is—as his course and bent of life is. If his course be holy—the man is so. If his course be wicked—the man is wicked. There is a maxim in logic, namely—that no general rule can be established upon a particular instance. And there is another maxim in logic, namely—that no particular instance can overthrow a general rule.

So here, as no man can safely and groundedly conclude from no better premises than from some few particular actions, though in themselves materially and substantially good—that his heart is therefore sincere; so on the contrary, no man ought to conclude, because of some gross particular sinful actions, and sinful motions—that his heart is unsound.

O sirs! we are not to make a judgment of our states and conditions, by some particular actions, whether they are good or evil. But we are to

make a judgment of our estates and conditions by the general frame, bent, and disposition of our hearts—and by the constant tenor of our lives. [It is not an occasional pang of the soul, nor a rare mood—but his habitual purpose, resolution, and inclination to godliness—which evidences the man to be really godly. Psalm 119:10, "My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto your judgments at all times," etc. A sheep may slip into a slough, as soon as a swine. But the sheep loves not to wallow in the mire, as the swine does. An apple tree may have a period of barrenness. And though the apple tree is barren one year—yet it brings forth fruit the next.]

It is certain, that God accounts every wicked man guilty of all those sins, wickednesses, and vanities, which the settled purpose, desire, bent, bias, and frame of his soul inclined him to—though he does not actually commit them! Mat. 5:28, "He who *looks* on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery already with her in his heart." A man may commit adultery, and yet not touch a woman. There are many thousands that die of the *wound in the eye*.

Just so in 1 John 3:15, "Whoever *hates* his brother is a murderer." A man may commit murder—and yet not *kill* a man; yes, he may commit murder—and yet not *touch* a man. Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinks in his heart—so is he." The *man* is as the *mind* is. God esteems of wicked men according to their *hearts*, and not according to their *words*. So it is as certain that the Lord accounts every godly man to do all that good—which the settled purpose, frame, bent, bias, and sincere desires of the soul inclines him to. 2 Cor. 8:12, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted."

Just so in Hebrews 11:17, "By faith *Abraham*, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he who had received the promises offered up his only son;" that is, Abraham offered his son—in disposition and full purpose of heart, and willingness of mind—which God accepted for the deed. A true intent is in God's account—as a real act. So *David* had a purpose, a mind, a will to build God a house—and for this God commends him: 1 Kings 8:18, "Since it was your desire to build a temple for My name, you have done well to have this desire." Yes, God rewards him for it, as if he had actually done it.

Just so, when that *servant* who owed his master ten thousand talents had showed his readiness, and willingness, and resolvedness to pay all: "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you all!" Mat 18:26, a thing as impossible for him to do, as it is for us to keep the whole law, and not to fail in one point. But his desires, his mind, his will, his purposes was to do it. Well, and what does his master do? Why, his master had compassion on him, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt, verse 27. His master took the servant's willingness—for full and current payment; he accepted of the will for the deed.

Just so, when *Zaccheus* had sincerely professed his purpose and willingness to make restitution, Christ presently replies, "This day has salvation come to your house," Luke 19:9. Certainly the Lord accounts that soul a true believer, and a blessed soul—who sincerely desires to believe. Witness Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness; for they shall be filled." And it is as certain that the Lord accounts that sinner a true penitent, who does sincerely desire, purpose, and resolve to repent, to break off his sins, and to turn to the Lord—as you may see in that great instance of the prodigal. Luke 15:18-20, "I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." As soon as ever the prodigal did but purpose and resolve to repent, and return to his father, the compassions of his father are kindled and turned towards him, and he does not *walk*—but *runs* and falls on his neck! And instead of kicking and killing, there is nothing but kissing and embracing a returning prodigal.

God always sets a higher value upon our *dispositions* than upon our *actions*; and in our best services he esteems more of our *wills* than he does of our *deeds*, as is evident by these scriptures. [2 Cor. 8:10; 1 Cor. 9:17; 1 Peter 5:2; Exod. 25:2; Philem. 14.]

Every godly man is as good in the eye and account of God—as the ordinary frame and bent of his spirit speaks him to be. Every man is as

holy, as humble, as heavenly, as spiritual, as gracious, as serious, as sincere, as fruitful, as faithful, as watchful, etc.—as the settled purposes, desires, resolutions, and endeavors of his soul speaks him to be. Hence *Noah* is said to be a just man, and perfect or upright in his generation, Gen. 6:9. And hence *Job* is said to be a perfect and an upright man, one who feared God and eschewed evil, Job 1:1-8. And hence *David* is said to be a man after God's own heart, 1 Sam. 13:14; and "who shall fulfill all God's will," Acts 13:22. Here the Greek word is *wills*, to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience.

And hence *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth* are said to be both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God blameless, Luke 1:5-6. Hence the *church* is said to be all fair: Cant. 4:7, "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you." And hence those hundred forty and four thousand saints who had their Father's name written in their foreheads, Rev. 14:1, are said to be without fault: verse 5, "No falsehood can be charged against them; they are blameless." God in the covenant of grace, and upon the credit of his Son's blood, and for the glory of his free grace and favor, is graciously pleased to accept of his people, and to approve of his people, and to delight in his people, and to interpret his people—according to the common bent, frame, disposition, resolution, sincere desires, and constant endeavors of their souls.

**III. Thirdly, If your OBEDIENCE is the obedience of faith—then your estate is good—then you have assuredly an infallible work of God upon your souls.**

Question. But how shall we know whether our obedience is the obedience of faith or not? How may a man discern when his obedience springs from saving faith?

Answer. You may certainly know whether your obedience is the

obedience of faith or no, by these following particulars:

**[1.] First, That obedience which springs from saving faith—is a FULL obedience, a UNIVERSAL obedience.** David did look upon his universal obedience as a special testimony of his uprightness: Psalm 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed—when I have *respect* unto all your commandments." Mark! the psalmist does not say, When I *obey* all your commandments—then shall I not be ashamed. But, "When I have a *respect* to all your commandments—then shall I not be ashamed." Now a **respect to all God's commandments notes an inward awe and reverential eye towards every duty which God requires.** The words, according to the Hebrew, may be read thus: "Then shall I not blush—when my eye is to all your commandments." Now you know the *traveler* has his eye towards the place where he is going, and though he is short of it—yet he is still a-going on and pressing forwards, all he can to reach it.

Just so, when the eye of a saint is to all the commands of God, and he is still a-pressing forwards towards full obedience, such a soul shall never be put to the blush; such a soul shall never be ashamed in the great day of our Lord Jesus. So Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfill all my will;" the Greek is, all my *wills*, to note the sincerity and universality of his obedience. So Acts 24:16, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have *always* a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." So Heb. 13:18, "We trust we have a good conscience, in *all* things willing to live honestly." That obedience which springs from saving faith, does neither dispute divine commands, nor divide divine commands one from another. Zacharias and Elizabeth "were upright in the sight of God, observing *all* the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly," Luke 1:5-6.

That obedience which springs from saving faith is a full obedience, a universal obedience. It is universal in respect of the subject, the **whole man**, and it is universal in respect of the object, the **whole law**. Mark! he who obeys sincerely obeys universally, though not in regard of *practice*, which is impossible. Yet,

**(1.) In regard of his WILL and DESIRES.** His will and desire is to

obey all: Romans 8:18, "For to will is present with me." Psalm 119:5, "Oh that my ways were directed to keep your statutes!"

**(2.) In respect of ELECTION or CHOICE.** He chooses to obey all: Psalm 119:173, "Let your hand help me: for I have chosen your precepts." The word here rendered *chosen* signifies to choose upon trial and examination: I have chosen your precepts before all, and above all other things. [The word notes a careful and diligent choice, upon good trial and proof.] I have chosen your precepts for my chief good, and for my only treasure. I have chosen your precepts—to own them, to follow them, and to obey them.

**(3.) In respect of APPROBATION.** He *approves* of all the commands of God, as holy, just, and good; he highly approves of those royal commands that he cannot perfectly obey: Romans 7:12, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." And verse 16, "I consent unto the law that it is good." He assents to the commands of God as holy, and he consents to them as good.

**(4.) In respect of AFFECTION.** He loves all the commands of God, he dearly loves those very commands that he cannot obey: Psalm 119:97, "O how I love your law!" Such a pang of love he felt, as could not otherwise be vented—but by this glowing exclamation, "Oh how love I your law!" Verse 113, "I hate vain thoughts—but your law do I love." Verse 163, "I hate and abhor lying—but your law do I love." Verse 119, "You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love your testimonies." Verse 127, "Therefore I love your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold." Verse 159, "Consider how I love your precepts." Verse 167, "My soul has kept your testimonies; and I love them exceedingly."

**(5.) In respect of VALUATION or ESTEEM.** He highly values all the commands of God, he highly prizes all the commands of God, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together: Psalm 119:72, 127-128, Psalm 19:8-11, Job 23:12.

**(6.) In respect of his PURPOSE and RESOLUTION.** He purposes and resolves, by divine assistance, to obey all, to keep all: Psalm 119:106, "I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep your righteous

judgments." Psalm 17:3, "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress."

**(7.) In respect of his INCLINATION.** He has an habitual inclination in him to keep all the commands of God: 1 Kings 8:57-58, 2 Chron. 30:17-20; Psalm 119:112, "I have inclined my heart to perform your statutes always, even to the end."

**(8.) In respect of ENDEAVORS.** He endeavors to keep all: Psalm 119:59, "I turned my feet unto your testimonies." There is no man who obeys God *truly*, who does not endeavor to obey God *fully*. And thus you see in what respect that obedience which flows from saving faith is a full obedience, a universal obedience. A child of God obeys all the commands of God in respect of his sincere desires, purposes, resolutions, and endeavors; and this God accepts in Christ for perfect and complete obedience. This is the glory of the covenant of grace—that God accepts and esteems of *sincere* obedience as *perfect* obedience. Such who sincerely endeavor to keep the whole law of God—they do keep the whole law of God in an evangelical sense, though not in a legal sense.

In the work of conversion, God infuses all grace together, and writes not one particular law in the hearts of his children—but the whole law, which is a universal principle, inclining the soul impartially to all, Ezek. 11:19-20. The gracious soul sincerely falls in with every command of God, so far as he knows it, without prejudice or partiality; he dares not pick and choose what commands to obey, and what to reject, as hypocrites do; he has an eye to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to obey the first table as well as the second; and the second as well as the first. He does not adhere to the first, and neglect the second, as hypocrites do; neither does he adhere to the second, and despise the first, as profane men do.

[The rule is good and true, he who serves and obeys God for God's sake, will equally obey all that God commands him. No one command is unjust or unreasonable, to him whose heart is upright in obedience, etc.]

All Sauls, Jehus, Judases, Demases, scribes, pharisees, and temporaries—they are still partial in their obedience; for while they yield obedience to some commands, they live in the habitual breach of other commands, Mat. 23:23. *Jehu* boastingly calls out, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord Almighty," 2 Kings 10:29-30. But if *Jehoshaphat* had gone a little further, he might have seen his calves too, contrary to God's commands. *Herod* heard John Baptist gladly, and did many things. But if John will be close and plain with him, he shall then first lose his liberty, and then his head for his labor, Mark 6:16-17. A sincere Christian loves all the known commands of God, and prizes all the commands of God, and sees a divine image, majesty, and authority stamped upon all the commands of God. And therefore the main bent and disposition of his soul is to obey all, and to be subject to all the commands of God. Let me in a few particulars open this great truth a little more fully to you. And therefore take me thus.

**First, A sincere Christian will endeavor to obey God in suffering commands as well as in doing commands; in losing as well as gaining commands.** An unsound Christian, he loves cheap obedience; he is willing to fall in with those commands which are not chargeable or costly; he loves a cheap gospel, and a cheap ministry, and a cheap membership, and a cheap communion of saints, etc. But when his obedience comes to be chargeable, when his obedience to divine commands may cost him his health, his strength, his liberty, his riches, his estate, his friends, his credit, his name, etc., then he retires, then he cries out, *It is a hard saying, who can bear it? John 6:60. This is a hard commandment, who can obey it?*

When religion is attended with freedom, honor, and safety; when religion is attended with riches, pleasures, and applause—then unsound hearts will put forwards. But when these part, then they bid religion farewell. As you see in the young man in the Gospel, who was willing to follow Christ so long as he might be no loser in following of him, Mat. 19:20-25. But

when it came to this—that he must part with his riches or with Christ—then he gives up, and goes away sorrowful, because he had great possessions. But now a sincere Christian will obey even the most chargeable and costly commands of God, as you may see in that little book of martyrs, and the tenth and eleventh chapters of the Hebrews. And as you may see in the three children in Daniel, in the disciples, in the primitive Christians, and in the martyrs in the Marian days. Mat. 19:27, "We have left everything to follow you!" But,

**Secondly, If your obedience springs from true faith—then you will endeavor to obey God in relative commands as well as in absolute commands.** You will not only hear, and pray, and read, and meditate, and fast, and mourn—but you will labor to be godly in domestic relationships. Remember this forever, **everyone is that in reality— which he is at home.** Many make a great profession, and have great abilities and gifts, and can discourse well on any pious subject, whose homes are not little heavens—but little hells. Some are very much like *angels* in public, *saints* in the church, and *devils* in their homes!

This is very applicable to many high professors this day, who are very forward in the general duties of religion, and yet make little conscience of relative duties. But he whose obedience springs from true faith—he will make conscience of relative commands as well as of absolute commands. Whatever command has the stamp of God, the authority of heaven, upon it, though it seems ever so small—he dares not disobey it. If he sees a beam of divine majesty sitting upon the face of any command, he will submit to it. You know men will not refuse a penny if the king's stamp is upon it; so if the authority of God is stamped upon the *least* command, a sound Christian will yield subjection to it as well as the *greatest* command. Mark, if a man makes no conscience of relative commands, though his general life as a Christian be ever so admirable—yet he has great cause to suspect himself and his estate, and that his heart is not right in the sight of God, Acts 8:21.

Oh that you would seriously consider that domestic graces and duties do more demonstrate true piety and godliness, than public duties, than general duties, do; for pride, vain-glory, self-ends, and a hundred other outward carnal considerations, may put a man upon the general duties of

religion, as you may see by the scriptures in the margin, [Isaiah 58:1-5; Hosea 5:14; Zech. 7:4-7.] and as you may see in the scribes and pharisees throughout the New Testament. But it argues both truth and strength of grace to be diligent and conscientious in the discharge of relative duties. And this is the true reason why the apostles in their epistles do so frequently, so earnestly, and so strongly, by variety of motives, press Christians to the performance of their relative duties. But,

**Thirdly, If your obedience springs from saving faith—then you will endeavor to obey God in affirmative commands, as well as in negative commands.** You will not only look upon what God would not have you to do—but you will also look to see what God would have you to do. Dives was not cast into hell for oppressing Lazarus—but for not showing mercy to Lazarus. He was not damned because he took anything from him—but because he gave nothing to him, Luke 16:19-29. The evil servant did not riot out his talent—but omitted the improvement of it, for which he was cast into outer darkness, Mat. 25:24-31. Those reprobates in the same chapter did not rob the poor saints—but omitted the relieving of them, which was their ruin. Moab and Ammon were banished the sanctuary to the tenth generation for a mere omission, because they met not God's Israel in the wilderness with bread and water, Deut. 23:3-4.

Look! as the omission of good diet breeds diseases, so the omission of religious duties will either make work for repentance, or for hell, or for the Physician of souls. Mark, there is many a man's religion lies merely in negatives; he is no swearer, no drunkard, no adulterer, no oppressor, no defrauder, etc. Luke 18:11, "God, I thank you that I am *not* like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers." A formal professor's obedience to divine commands does principally lie in negatives. He considers not so much what the command requires—as what it prohibits; and he pleases himself rather in abstaining from evil—than in doing of good; in being outwardly reformed—than in being inwardly renewed. He thinks it enough that he turns from sin—though he makes no conscience of turning to God. If you ask him concerning affirmative commands, there you will find him speechless. Ask him, "Are you holy? Are you humble? Are you heavenly? Are you sincere? Are you a believer? Do you set up God as the great object of your fear? Do you love God with a superlative

love?" etc. Now here you strike him dumb; he looks upon the neglect of these things as no sins, because they are not such scandalous sins as the other things are, Isaiah 8:13, Psalm 18:1, Isaiah 58:13. Remember, sirs, sinful omissions many times lead to sinful commissions, as you may see in the angels that fell from heaven to hell. And as you may see in Adam, who fell from his highest glory into a woeful gulf of sin and misery. But,

**Fourthly, If your obedience springs from saving faith—then you will endeavor to obey God in the spirit of the command, as well as in the letter of the command.** In every command of God there is an inner aspect and an outer aspect; one part of Christ's law binds the flesh, and another part binds the spirit: "You shall do no *murder*;" there is the letter of the command. "You shall not be *angry* with your brother without a cause;" there is the spirit of the command. "You shall not commit *adultery*;" there is the letter of the command. "You shall not look upon a woman to *lust* after her;" there is the spirit of the command, Mat. 5:21-22, 27-28.

The pharisees of old did not look to the *spirituality* of the law—but only to the *letter* of the law; they rested wholly upon an *outward conformity* to the law. When their *hearts* were full of hellish lusts, they were all for the *letter* of the law, they regarded not the inside of the law. They were all for washing of platters and cups, and for beautifying of tombs, like an adulteress, whose care is to paint and set a fair face upon a foul heart. They were all for paying tithe of mint and anise and cummin. But they regarded not the inside of the law, they omitted the weightier matters of the law, namely, judgment, mercy, and faith, Mat. 23:23.

While Paul walked by the letter of the command, he was blameless in his own account. But when he came to walk by the spirit of the command, then sin revived, and he died, Philip. 3:6, Romans 7:9. Friends, there are the more general duties of religion—such as hearing, praying, reading, fasting, discoursing, etc. Now these all lie in the very letter of the command. And there are the more inward and spiritual duties of religion—such as the exercise of faith, fear, love, hope, joy, patience, contentment, humble submission, and choosing of God, and cleaving to God, and delighting in God, and admiring of God, and exalting of God, and following hard after God, and holy meditation, and self-examination,

etc. Now all these lie in the very spirit of the command. [Could a man come up to all affirmative and negative precepts in his outward life—yet, if he were not spiritual in all these inward duties, his obedience would be but as a body without a soul. The pharisees rise higher in their outward obedience, and yet Christ clearly and fully shows that they were wretched adulterers and murderers, though they were not guilty of any such outward crimes, etc.]

Now in the exercise of these more spiritual duties, that our fellowship and communion with God mainly lies. In the more general duties of religion—a hypocrite may manifest the excellency of his gifts. But in the more spiritual duties of religion—a sincere Christian does manifest both the excellency and efficacy of grace. Mark, an unsound heart looks no further than to the bare letter of the command, to bare hearing, and bare praying, and bare preaching, and bare fasting, and bare giving, and bare receiving, and bare suffering; he looks no further than to that part of the command which only binds the flesh, or outward man. And if he does but observe that in the main, he thinks he has done marvelously well.

But now, a sound, a sincere Christian, he looks to the spirit of the command. And if he does not come up to that in sincere desires, in gracious purposes, in fixed resolutions, and in cordial endeavors—he can have no peace, no rest, no quiet, no comfort. O sirs! as ever you would see God, and enjoy God another day, you must labor, not only to obey the *letter* of the command—but also to bring your hearts to the sincere obedience of the *spirit* of the command. This is a very close, piercing, distinguishing, and discovering sign of saving grace. But,

**Fifthly, If your obedience springs from saving faith—then you will labor, not only to obey God in the *matter*—but also in the *manner* of the command; not only in the *substance* of the command—but also in the *circumstance* of the command.** God requires the *manner* as well as the *matter*. And God looks upon that work as not done, that is not done in a right manner. "Did not the Lord command sacrifice? and did not Cain offer sacrifice? and yet God had no respect to him, nor to his offering, because his sacrifice was not offered up in a right manner, his offering was not offered up by a hand of faith; he offered his offering—but because he did not offer himself as an

offering to God, his offering was rejected by God," Gen. 4:8. [Luther on Genesis.]

A work may be *materially* good that is not formally and eventually good; and this was Cain's curse. How frequently did God command the Jews to pray? and yet he plainly tells them, "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear," Isaiah 1:15. He commanded them to sacrifice, and yet he says, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?" verse 11, and all because they did not manage their prayers or sacrifices in a right manner. Their hands were full of blood, and their hearts were full of sins, and their lives were full of lewdness; and therefore all their services were vain oblations, yes, an abomination to God.

An unsound heart looks no further than to the substance of the command. If he has heard, and prayed, and fasted, and read, and repeated, and given alms, and received the Lord's supper; he strokes himself, and blesses himself, and hugs himself, and thinks all is well, and so he looks no further. But a sound sincere Christian, he looks to the circumstance as well as the substance, to the manner as well as to the matter of the command. When he prays, he labors to pray fervently, earnestly; he labors to get his heart into his prayers. When he hears, he will hear with attention and intention of spirit. When he walks, he endeavors to walk wisely, humbly, faithfully, fruitfully, circumspectly, exemplarily, winningly, convincingly, blamelessly. When he obeys, he desires and endeavors to obey freely, willingly, cheerfully. [James 5:17, 18; Micah 6:8; 1 Pet. 2:12, and 3:1-3; 1 Thess. 2:10; 2 Cor. 1:12; Psalm 110:3.]

O sirs! if we pray—yet pray not fervently; if we hear—yet hear not fruitfully; if we obey—yet obey not willingly; if we show mercy—yet do it not cheerfully; all is worth nothing, all will come to nothing, Isaiah 58:13. Mark, there are some circumstances *accessory*, and some *necessary*; some wherein the being, and some wherein the well-being of a duty does consist; and if you abstract these from them, the duty is worth nothing. Take away fervency and humility from prayer; take away faithfulness and fruitfulness from hearing; and take away willingness and delight from obedience; and all will be worth nothing. God regards not only the *matter*

—but the *manner*.

Criton said, That God loved the adverbs better than the nouns. Not to pray only—but to pray heartily; not to merely do duties—but to do them heartily—is the great wisdom of a Christian. What is the sun without light, or the fountain without water, or the body without the soul, or wood without fire, or a gun without a bullet, or a ship without a rudder? No more are words in prayer—without the spirit of prayer. God looks more at the *manner* than at the *matter* of your prayers. And let thus much suffice to confirm the first particular. But,

**[2.] Secondly, That obedience which springs from saving faith —is an obedience which is only grounded upon the word of God, the commands of God.** Psalm 119:4-5, "You have commanded us to keep your precepts diligently. Oh that my ways were directed to keep your statutes!" Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Mat. 5:18, "For truly I say unto you, Until heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled." John 10:35, "The Scripture cannot be broken." Chapter 12:48, "He who rejects me, and receives not my words, has one who judges him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." 2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Now the reasons why that obedience which springs from saving faith is *an obedience which is only grounded upon the word of God, the commands of God*, are these five:

**(1.) And the first is drawn from the supremacy and sovereignty of God—who alone is to prescribe to man his duty.** He is our great Lord and Master, he is our only Lord and Lawgiver. Isaiah 33:22, "For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King." James 4:12, "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; who are you who judge another?" Now by the laws of this Lord and Lawgiver, we must square all our actions. Look! as it would be very absurd in a servant to do that work which he thinks fit, and not what his master commands; so it is as absurd for men to think, that God will accept of this or that at

their hands, when they cannot plead his superscription and authority for what they do. God will one day say to such, "Who has required this at your hands?" Isaiah 1:12. O sirs! you must lay the command of God as a foundation for what you do, or else all your buildings, though ever so glorious, will certainly totter and fall! In all you do, you must be able to say, "Thus says the Lord," or else after you have done your best, you may be undone forever. But,

**(2.) Secondly, God's promise and blessing is only annexed to God's command.** He who will have the sweet of the promise, and the blessings of heaven—he must look that his obedience be grounded upon divine commands. In holy actions it is not your performance, nor your grace, nor your warmth, nor your zeal—but the command and the promise that is annexed to it, that will bear you out. Therefore we are called children of the promise, and heirs of the promise, Gal. 4:28; Heb. 6:17. The children of God, in all their obedience, should still keep an eye upon the command of God, and the promise of God, as ever they would run the race that is set before them, Heb. 12:1. But,

**(3.) Thirdly, Our obedience must be grounded and bottomed upon a divine command, because of that great corruption, pollution, blindness, and darkness which is upon our minds and understandings, which would carry us to what not, if we were not to steer our Christian course by divine commands.** Col. 2:20-22. The apostle condemns those things which had a show of humility and great mortification, because they were not grounded upon a divine command. And Christ condemned many practices of the scribes and pharisees, because they were not grounded upon a divine command, as you may see by comparing the 6th, 15th, and 23d chapters of Matthew together. But,

**(4.) Fourthly, Our obedience must be bottomed upon a divine command, because else we can never be able to bear up our hearts comfortably, courageously, confidently, and resolutely, under all the afflictions, oppositions, temptations, persecutions, and discouragements that we meet with in the ways of the Lord, and in doing the work of the Lord.** Psalm 44:9, seq.; Ezek. 28:12, 22. All the messages that the prophets delivered were

still grounded upon a divine command, "Thus says the Lord;" and this steeled their spirits in the work of the Lord, this made them resolute and undaunted in the midst of all the afflictions and oppositions that they met with. And so it was a word of command that raised the spirits and encouraged the hearts of the apostles in the work of the Lord, in the face of all the oppositions, threatenings, and buffetings which they met with from the civil powers, Acts 4:19-20, and 5:29.

You know Absalom lays his bloody commands upon his servants, as their highest encouragement to that bloody work of killing his brother Amnon, 2 Sam. 13:28. "Now Absalom had commanded his servants [his assassins], saying, Mark you now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon, then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? Be courageous, and be valiant;" or sons of valor, as the Hebrew runs. And so a Christian must lay the command of God before him, as his highest encouragement to do what God requires of him, etc.

**(5.) Fifthly and lastly, Our obedience must be bottomed and grounded upon the commands of God—to difference and distinguish ourselves from all hypocrites, formalists, superstitious and profane people—whose obedience is sometimes bottomed upon the traditions of men, and sometimes upon the commandments of men.** It was the sin of the ten tribes of Judah, that they complied with the command of Jeroboam and his princes, to worship the calves at Dan and Bethel; and for this the wrath of the Lord fell heavy upon them. "Ephraim is oppressed, trampled in judgment, intent on pursuing idols." And sometimes their obedience is bottomed upon the examples of men, sometimes their obedience is bottomed upon the examples of their forefathers and ancestors—Jer. 10:3, "The customs of the people are vain," etc.—and sometimes upon the examples of great men. This was that which the pharisees objected against believing on Christ. [Isaiah 29:13-14; Mat. 15:1-10; Mark 7:3-10; Hosea 5:11, 12; Jer. 44:17-18, etc.; John 7:48-49.] "Have any of the rulers or of the pharisees believed on him? but this people who knows not the law are cursed." And sometimes they bottom their obedience upon the example of the multitude. This was Demetrius his argument against Paul,

on the behalf of Diana, "that all Asia and the world did worship her," Acts 19:26-27. And therefore the doctrine of Paul, that they are no gods—which are made with hands, was false, and not to be tolerated. This has always been, and is still, the common plea of many, "We do but as the most do—and surely a great many eyes can see more than one or two!" And hereupon they exclaim against others for their singularity, because they won't do as the rest of their neighbors do. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, That obedience which springs from saving faith—is a growing obedience, it is an abounding obedience.** Such a man's desires, will, study, and labor—is to get up to the highest pitch of obedience, to get up to the highest round in Jacob's ladder: Rev. 2:19, "I know your work, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last to be more than the first." The church of Thyatira is commended,

(1) first, for their love;

(2) for their charity;

(3) for their faith, and

(4) for their patience.

And in the general course of their life, they daily became more excellent; for their "latter works were more than the first," that is, they were more manifest proofs of their constancy, and more worthy of praise than the first. This faithful church is commended for their holy progress in grace and holiness.

So Paul, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I *press on* toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12-14. The Greek word emphatically imports a pressing on with an eager pursuit after the mark. It is the same word that signifies to persecute, because the

earnestness of his spirit in pressing toward the mark now, is the same that it was in the persecution of those who pressed toward the mark before. Look! as good runners, when they come near unto the finish line, stretch out their heads, and hands, and whole bodies; so Paul in his whole race so labored unto that which was before, as if he were still stretching out his arms to take hold of it.

If such a man might have his choice, he would be the most humble, the most holy, the most heavenly, the most mortified, the most patient, the most contented, the most thankful, the most fruitful, the most active, the most zealous, and the most self-denying Christian in the world, 1 Peter 1:15-16. If he might have his choice, he would be as holy as God is holy; and as perfect as his heavenly father is perfect; he would do the will of God on earth, as those princes of glory, the angels, do it now in heaven, namely—freely, readily, cheerfully, delightfully, universally, reverentially, and unweariedly, etc. If he might have his choice, he would exercise every grace, and perform every duty, with all his might. He sees so much excellency and beauty in God and Christ, that he cannot be at rest until he is swallowed up in the enjoyment of them. He sees so much excellency in grace, that nothing but perfection of grace will satisfy him. He makes perfection not only his utmost end—but he also labors after perfection with his utmost strength and endeavors. When God is made the apex of a man's desires, the apex of a man's affections, the apex of a man's life and comfort—then will he be the apex of a man's endeavors too.

That obedience which springs from saving faith, when it is not wintertime with a Christian, is a *fruitful* obedience, it is an *abounding* obedience, it is a *progressive* obedience. Look! as the mercy and favor of God to a believer is not stinted nor limited—so the obedience of a believer to God is not stinted or limited. But now the obedience of hypocrites is always stinted and limited. *This* command they will obey—but not *that* one; this duty they will do—but not that one; this work they will attend—but not that one, etc.

[It is not every believer's happiness always to make a progress in grace. Solomon and Asa, and others, run retrograde for a time. Saints have their winter seasons; they have their decaying times, and withering times, as well as their thriving times, their flourishing times, Rev. 2:4.]

**[4.] Fourthly, That obedience which springs from saving faith— is the obedience of a son, not of a slave; it is a free, voluntary, evangelical obedience, and not a legal, servile, and forced obedience.** Psalm 110:3, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power, in the beauties of holiness;" in the Hebrew, it is willingnesses, in the plural number, to show their exceeding great willingness. Psalm 27:8, "When you said, Seek you my face, my heart said unto you, Your face, Lord, will I seek." By face is meant, (1.) God himself: Exod. 20:3, "Before my face," that is, before me. (2.) His favor, Jer. 18:17, "I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity." Now, no sooner had God given forth a word of command for the psalmist to seek him, and to seek his favor—but presently his heart did echo to that command: "Your face, Lord, will I seek."

So in Jer. 3:22, "Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding." "Yes, we will come to you, for you are the Lord our God." Every gracious soul has the duplicate of God's law in his heart, and is willingly cast into the mold of his word: Romans 6:17, "You have *obeyed from the heart* the form of doctrine that has been delivered to you," or whereto you were delivered, as the words may be read. They did not only obey—but they obeyed from the heart, their hearts were in their obedience. Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do your will, O my God! yes, your law is within my heart," or in the midst of my heart, as the Hebrew runs; these note the tenderest affections. There is the counterpart of the law written, yes, printed upon every gracious heart; a godly man will live and die with the law of God stamped upon his heart, Col. 1:12; Philip. 1:8; Jer. 31:33.

*O beautiful Apocalypse!* said the martyr, catching up the book of Revelation, which was cast into the same fire with him to be burned. *O blessed Revelation! how happy am I to be burned with you in my hands!*

It was Christ's food and drink to do his Father's will; and the same mind is in all the saints, as was in Christ Jesus. "They delight in the law of God after the inward man," John 4; Philip. 2:5; Romans 7:22. True obedience flows from principles of heartiness and love within, and not from selfish ends, which are carnal and worldly. It is observable, that Jehu's obedience was as ample and as large as God's command: 2 Kings 10:30,

"And the Lord said unto Jehu, because you have done well in executing that which is right in my eyes, and have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." And yet because his heart was not in his obedience, and because he did not purely act for God—but for himself, that he might bring about his own designs, he met with a revenge instead of a reward; as you may see in Hosea 1:4, "And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel, for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." Jehu's heart was not in his obedience; for though he rooted out Baal worship—yet the golden calves must still continue. He destroyed idolaters—but not idolatry. And this carnal policy brought down vengeance and misery upon him and his posterity.

Artaxerxes goes far: Ezra 7:23, "Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done." To what a height does this heathen prince rise! He will do anything for God, he will do everything for God that he requires. But mark, what is that which moves him to it? Is it love to God? is it delight in God? Oh no! all his obedience proceeded from nothing but fear of wrath and vengeance, as is evident in the latter part of the verse: "For why should there be wrath upon the realm of the king, and of his sons?" or, as the Hebrew runs, Why should there be boiling or foaming anger, great indignation? as it is rendered and made the utmost degree of divine displeasure in Deut. 29:28. Some read these words, "Against the realm of the king and his sons," as distinct one from another, and not depending one upon another; thus: Against the realm, the king and his sons; and this reading the original will bear. And this reading shows, that as the king feared God's wrath against himself, so also against his realm and children. And accordingly he was the more studious and careful to escape it. *Blind nature* was afraid of divine wrath, and therefore was the more sedulous to prevent it.

Oh! but now a true child of God, he has the law of God written, not only in his understanding—but also in his heart and affections. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My statutes and carefully observe My ordinances."

Ezekiel 36:26-27. And this is that which makes his obedience to be pleasing and delightful to him; so that if he might be free from the injunctions and directions of the word, he would not value such a liberty, Exod. 21:4-6, etc.; he would not swear, nor lie, nor be drunk, nor whore, nor dissemble, nor cheat, nor run into all excess of riot if he might—because in his soul he has a principle of grace, and an inward contrariety and antipathy against it. He would not cease to hear, to read, to pray, to meditate if he might—because his soul takes a pleasure and sweet delight in these things. There is a principle within him agreeable to the precepts of Scripture, which makes all pious performances to be easy and pleasurable to him.

Look! as the eye delights in seeing, and the ear in hearing, so a gracious heart (except when it is under a cloud of desertion, or in the school of temptation, or under some grievous tormenting afflictions, or sadly worsted by some prevalent corruption) delights in obedience. Actions of nature, you know, are actions of delight; and so are all those actions that spring from a new nature, a divine nature, etc.

**[5.] Fifthly, That obedience which springs from saving faith is a transforming obedience.** It mightily alters and changes a man; from impurity to purity, from sin to sanctity, from unrighteousness to righteousness, from earthly-mindedness to heavenly-mindedness, from pride to humility, from hypocrisy to sincerity, etc., 2 Cor. 3:18, Romans 12:1-2. Such as please themselves with this, that they are no changelings, and that they are whatever they were, these are still in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, Acts 8:23. That obedience of the Romans, which was said to have come abroad unto all men, was an exemplary obedience, and a transforming obedience, Romans 16:19. Certainly, gospel-obedience is a grace of much worth, and of great force upon the whole man; for when it is once wrought in the heart, it works a conformity to all God's holy will. "Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted." Romans 6:17. But having spoken more largely of this in my other writings, let this touch here suffice, etc.

**[6.] Sixthly, That obedience which springs from saving faith—is a constant obedience; it is a fixed and resolved obedience.** Not

in respect of practice and continued acts, "for in many things we all stumble." "There is not a just man upon the earth, who does good and sins not." "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" "There is no man who sins not." "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," etc. [James 3:2; Eccles. 7:20; Proverbs 20:9; 1 Kings 8:46; 1 John 1:8; Psalm 17:3.] But in respect of a Christian's sincere desires, bent of will, purpose of heart, resolution of soul, and faithful endeavors: Psalm 119:20, "My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times." Verse 112, "My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end." Verse 33, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end." Job 17:9, "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." So Isaiah 40:29-31, Job 2:3. Mark, the renewed man has at all times a desire to fear the name of the Lord, Neh. 1:11; a will to live honestly at all times, Heb. 13:18. And it has some endeavors and exercise of spirit, to keep always a conscience void of offence towards God and men, Acts 24:16.

The Israelites, in their marches toward the holy land, were many times interrupted by divers enemies—but yet they advanced in their course, as soon as they could get rid of their enemies. Just so, though the believer is many times interrupted, in the course of his obedience, by many fierce temptations, and strange working of corruptions—yet after the temptation is over, the believer returns to the course of obedience with greater resolution, and with redoubled strength and courage, and in the end perfects his course of holiness in the fear of the Lord, 2 Cor. 7:1.

Mark, the apparent motion and walking of an unregenerate man in a way of righteousness and holiness—is but artificial, from the motives of hypocrisy and self-interest, (like the flying of Architus' artificial dove,) and having no inward principle of life, it endures not. But the motion and walking of a man renewed by grace in ways of holiness and righteousness, is like the natural living motion of birds, it continues as long as life continues. And as everything in motion, the nearer it comes to the center, the more swiftly it moves; so the nearer the believer moves to his rest in heaven, the more inclined he is in all his motions towards God; "he forgets the things which are behind, and reaches forth unto those things

which are before," Philip. 3:13.

That obedience which springs from saving faith is a fixed and resolved obedience; like David's worthies, it will break through a multitude of Philistines, through an army of difficulties, impediments, and discouragements, that it may be found doing the will of God. To make this a little more clearly and fully out, observe with me these few things:

**First, No contrary commands of men, shall take this man off from his obedience to the commands of God.** Acts 4:19, and 5:29, etc.

**Secondly, No stream of evil examples, no current of corrupt times, shall bear them down in ways of obedience.** Joshua 24:15, "I and my household will serve the Lord, though all Israel should serve idols." And Noah was upright with God, and walked with God in his generation, when the whole world was overspread with violence, and all flesh had corrupted their ways, Gen. 6:9, and 7:1.

**Thirdly, No worldly profit or advantage shall bribe this man from his obedience.** Heb. 11:8. Abraham will obey and follow God, though he forsakes all the benefits and contentments of his native country, and of his father's house, not knowing where his lot should fall, etc.

**Fourthly, No carnal disputes or reasonings with flesh and blood shall dissuade him from his obedience.** Heb. 11:7. Noah might have raised many objections against that strange attempt of building an ark—a work of a hundred and twenty years' continuance. But Noah waves all disputes, and falls upon building of the ark, according to the command of God. Just so Paul, as soon as he was converted, he was commanded by God to preach to the Gentiles; he might have made abundance of objections against that service—but instead of objecting, he falls close to his Master's work, and never consults with flesh and blood, Gal. 1:15-17.

**Fifthly, No flood of natural affection shall hinder them in the way of their obedience.** When God commanded *Abraham* to offer up

Isaac as a burnt-offering, he goes about it readily, and never acquaints Sarah with it, lest she should have hindered him in his obedience, and he goes three days' journey to effect it, Gen. 22 compared with Heb. 11:17-19. When God commands, Abraham will not stick at it, though the command is to offer up a son, a natural son, and not an adopted son; an only son, and not one of many; a son of the free-woman, and not of the bond-woman; a son of his old age; a son of the promise; a son in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; a son of his love and delight; a son who made the good old man laugh and be merry—Isaac signifies laughter—a son who was grown up to some years; witness the wood of the burnt-offering that he carried, Gen. 22:6-7.

And this was the commendation of *Levi*: Deut. 33:8-9, "And of Levi, Moses said, Let your Thummim and your Urim be with your holy one" [Urim and *Thummim* signify *light* and *perfection*, according to their best derivation in the Hebrew tongue, and they are here put in the plural number, lights and perfections, to note the plenty as well as the excellency of divine graces,] "You tested him at Massah; you contended with him at the waters of Meribah. He said of his father and mother, 'I have no regard for them.' He did not recognize his brothers or acknowledge his own children, but he watched over your word and guarded your covenant." [By Urim and Thummim, some understand sincerity of life, and soundness of doctrine.] This relates to that heroic fact of the Levites, Exod. 32:26-29, when, at the commandment of Moses, they slew their idolatrous brethren who had worshiped the golden calf, not sparing those who were most nearly allied to them—but did execute God's judgments upon parents, brethren, and children, as if they had been mere strangers to them; the Levites were so impartial in God's cause as not to acknowledge either father or mother, brother or children, against his command. Natural affections are strong—but supernatural obedience is stronger. Some have well observed, that the married martyrs, who were parents of many children, as Rogers, Watts, Guest, Rawlins, etc., suffered with most alacrity.

**Sixthly, No terrors, no threats, no reproaches, no afflictions, no oppositions, no persecutions, no bonds, no banishments, no dangers, no deaths—shall deter them or affright them from**

**their obedience**—as will evidently appear by comparing of these scriptures together, Psalm 44:16-21; Acts 20:23-24, 21:12-13, and 24:14; Dan. 3:14-19; Rev. 12:11. This is most evident in the histories of the ten persecutions, and in all other histories, both of a former and a later date, etc.

Physicians observe a difference between the natural and preternatural heat in men's bodies. The preternatural heat, which arises from distemper, may be more for the present. But as it exceeds for measure, so it abates for time, because the natural heat is a more equal, and moderate, and durable heat; every part has an equal share, and it is not extreme, and yet it continues. Thus it is with hypocrites and upright people in the matter of obedience. The hypocrite may, in a kind of preternatural heat, in a hot fit, in a present heat, fall upon hearing, and reading, and praying, and reforming of his family, and upon leaving of this sin and that, and upon casting off this vain company and that, and upon associating of himself with this good company and that. But this hot fit does not last; the cold fit overtakes him again, and then he bids farewell to all his duties, and loses all his good inclinations, and lays aside all his warm resolutions. Will the hypocrite pray always? Job 27:8-9. Ephraim's goodness was as a morning cloud, which soon vanishes, and as the early dew, which is soon dried up by the sunbeams, Hosea 6:4. They were both false and fickle, unsteady and unstable; constant only in inconstancy. Their hearts were never right with God, for they were not steadfast in his covenant, Psalm 78:36-37. **There are four times wherein a hypocrite may express a great readiness and forwardness to religious duties:**

**(1.) First, When he is under terrors and distress of conscience.** Oh, now for a little ease, a little rest, a little quiet, a little comfort—what won't the hypocrite do! etc.

**(2.) Secondly, When he is under sore and heavy afflictions.** Hosea 5:15, "In their affliction they will seek me early." Isaiah 26:16, "Lord, they came to you in their distress; when you disciplined them." Psalm 78:34, "When he slew them—then they sought him." It is a reproach to some: No plague—no prayer; no punishment—no prayer, etc. So Pharaoh and Ahab, etc.

**(3.) Thirdly, When religion is in fashion,** when it is a credit to be a professor, and when profession is the highway to profit and preferment. In the warm summer of prosperity, when there is no hazard, no danger, no loss to be a Christian, who then so forward in religious duties as the hypocrite? But when the sun of persecution is up—then he falls away, Mat. 13:5-6.

**(4.) Fourthly, When others' presence, counsel, and examples have an influence upon them.** Oh, now they keep religious duties! *Joash* did that which was right in the sight of the Lord—all the days of *Jehoiada* the priest. But when *Jehoiada* was dead, *Joash* serves groves and idols, and turns a deaf ear to those prophets who testified against him, and gives *Zechariah* his passport out of the world for speaking against his evil manners, and the wicked courses of his princes and people, 2 Chron. 24:2, 17-23.

While the good *judges* lived, the Israelites kept close to the service of God: Judges 2:7, "And the people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of *Joshua* and the leaders who outlived him—those who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel." But when the good judges were dead, the Israelites did what was right in their own eyes: every man's lust was his law, Judges 17:6, and chapter 21:25.

While *Moses* was present, there was no talking of a golden calf—but no sooner was his back turned, that the Israelites make a golden calf, and worship it when it was finished! Exod. 32:1-9, etc.

But now mark, that obedience which springs from saving faith, that is a constant obedience. That is constant in opposition to fits and starts, and imports the course and bent of a Christian's life, which is always to walk with, God, to cleave to God, to follow God, and to obey God. But,

**[7.] Seventhly and lastly, That obedience which springs from saving faith—is directed to right ENDS.** Gospel obedience has always gospel ends attending it.

Question. **What are these right ends?**

Answer. They are these nine.

**(1.) First, To testify our thankfulness to the Lord for all his favors and benefits that we have received from him.** Psalm 8:1-4; 116:12, etc.

**(2.) Secondly, To recover the image of God again, to the height of what we are able.** The first Adam lost the image of God by his disobedience. Now, this image of God we recover again in Christ our second Adam. But so as that the more enlightened, the more holy, the more humble, the more heavenly, the more righteous, the more gracious, and the more obedient we are—the more we recover of this image of God, which consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Eph. 4:24.

Now, says the believer, my intent is to recover that precious image of God which I lost in the first Adam, and therefore do I labor to come up to the highest pitches of obedience, because the higher I rise in my obedience, the more I shall recover of the lost image of God. I know that I lost this image by partaking of the disobedience and pollution of the first Adam. And I know that I have recovered in part the same image by partaking of the obedience and holiness of the second Adam. And I yet further know that the more holy and obedient I am, the more I shall be like God, who is holiness itself, and the more I shall recover of that blessed image which consists in perfect holiness.

**(3.) Thirdly, Not for the justification of their person, for that is only by Christ's complete obedience, which is made theirs by faith.** 1 Cor. 1:30, Colos. 2:10. But for the manifestation of their justifying faith, according to that of the apostle, James 2:17-18; 26, etc.

**(4.) Fourthly, That they may imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be the more conformable to Christ their head, who proposes his holiness to believers as a pattern for them to follow, as a copy for them to write after.** 1 John 2:6, "He who says he abides in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." Now says the believer, oh how holy, how humble, how heavenly, how meek, how compassionate, how zealous, how exemplary, how convincing, how winning, how obedient was Jesus when in this world! and therefore, O

my soul! look to it, that you make it your business, your work, your heaven—to imitate the Lord Jesus to the utmost that you are able to reach to, Mat. 11:28-29.

**(5.) Fifthly, Though not for the obtaining of salvation, that being made sure to us by Christ—yet for the obtaining of assurance of salvation,** and for the making of our calling and election sure, according to that word, 2 Peter 1:5-11.

**(6.) Sixthly, That they may keep up their communion with God;** for though the union the saints have with God by Christ depends wholly upon that which is outside of them—namely, their being married to Christ, and clothed with his righteousness—yet the communion which the saints have with God through the Spirit has much dependence upon a saint's walking, and upon his obedience. So that, if a saint shall dare to walk carnally and loosely, though he shall not break the marriage-knot, and lose his *union* with Christ—yet he will by such sinful practices grieve the Spirit, and lose his *communion* with God, Jer. 3:14, Isaiah 49:1-2.

But on the other hand, when a believer walks spiritually, graciously, obediently—oh what sweet communion! what delightful communion! what high communion, what commodious communion! what soul-satisfying, soul-ravishing, soul-filling, soul-contenting communion with God, does he then enjoy! When the child walks wisely and obediently before his father—what sweet and delightful converses and communion are there between the father and the child. But if the child walks foolishly, stubbornly, rebelliously, disobediently—the prudent father will behave severely, distantly, and frowningly. Though his heart is still full of love to his child, and though he won't disinherit him—yet he will not be lovingly familiar with him. The application is easy, etc.

**(7.) Seventhly, To keep down the body; and to bring it into subjection to the soul.** 1 Cor. 9:27, "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should." By spiritual exercises the apostle did subdue his flesh to the obedience and discipline of the Spirit. In former times they had several athletic games, such as wrestling, and running for the prize. Such as were slow, heavy, bulky, and lazy—were dismissed from competing. Those who were admitted to those games

kept their bodies under strict control, and did not pamper their bodies with dainties and delicacies. To these the apostle alludes.

From idleness there comes no goodness. When the spirit is not acting in that which is good, that the flesh may be kept under control—the flesh will take an advantage to be very active in those things which are evil. The flesh is like an unruly beast, which through sloth, idleness, and high feeding—grows wild and masterless. Now, the only way to tame this beast is to work him hard; so the way of ways to keep the body under is to keep up the soul as much as may be, in the full exercise of holiness and obedience. **Such as have most pampered their bodies—have been the greatest enemies to their own souls.** And how many are there this day who pamper their bodies—but starve their souls; who adorn their bodies—but defile their souls; who dress and trim up their bodies with gold, and silver, and silks—while their souls are naked of all grace, holiness, and goodness, like the Laodiceans of old. [Deut. 32:13-17; Jer. 5:7-8, etc.; Rev. 3:16-18.]

The body itself, if you set too high a price upon it, will make a cheap soul. A man may be as happy in rags—as in silk. And he is certainly an unhappy man whose outside is his best side. **Our bodies are but dirt handsomely fashioned.** We derive our pedigree from the dust, and are akin to clay. And therefore we need not scruple the keeping of it under by holy exercises, and by all ways of gospel obedience, etc.

### **(8.) Eighthly, To the profit and advantage both of sinners and saints.**

[1.] To convince **sinners**, to silence sinners, and to stop the mouths of sinners. Let but one man who walks wisely, humbly, circumspectly, convincingly, exemplarily, blamelessly, come into a town, a parish, a family; which is made up of drunkards, swearers, whoremasters, etc., and his holy walking will convince them and condemn them, 1 Peter 2:12, 15; chapter 3:13, 16.

[2.] To the profit, advantage, and encouragement of the **saints**. The strict, exact-walking Christian provokes the slight, loose Christian to mend his ways, and to order his steps and life aright. And the lively active

Christian puts the dull, heavy, sluggish Christian to a blush, and spurs and quickens him up to a more lively walking with God. And the warm, flaming, zealous, burning Christian puts heat and warmth into the cold, formal, frozen Christian. And the free, liberal, bountiful Christian provokes others to be free, noble, and liberal for the supply of the necessities of the saints, 2 Cor. 9:1-2; chapter 8:1-4, 19-20, etc.

**(9.) The ninth and last, though not the least end—is the honor and glory of the great God.** God's grace is the **spring**, and God's glory is the **end** of all a Christian's obedience. God's glory is the ultimate end, the primary end, the universal end—the sea to which all a Christian's actions, like so many rivers, move and bend, Romans 14:7-8; Philip. 1:20-21. It is true many poor, low, selfish, base ends may creep into a Christian's performances. But here mark,

[1.] they are disallowed;

[2.] they are loathed and abhorred;

[3.] they are resisted and striven against;

[4.] they are lamented and mourned over;

[5.] the gracious soul would willingly be rid of them.

If a Christian might have his choice, he would never more be troubled with any base or selfish end. Beloved, you must always distinguish between a man's *settled* and his *spasmodic* ends. A man's settled end may be one thing, and his spasmodic end another thing. Now forever remember this, that the great God always makes a judgment of men according to their settled ends, according to the universal frame of their spirits, and not according to those spasmodic ends which are influenced by the world, the flesh, or the devil. It is in this case as it may be with a man who shoots at a mark; he aims aright at the mark—but his elbow may meet with a jog, which may carry the arrow quite another way than what he intended. Or as it is with a man who is sailing to such a haven, or to such a harbor, he steers a right course by his compass—but the winds blowing contrary, and the sea running high, he is forced into such a creek,

or such a harbor, which he never intended, etc.

**Question. Is it requisite, for the clearing of the sincerity of our hearts, that we have a continual eye to the glory of God in every action we do?**

Answer 1. **First**, You must distinguish between an *actual* aim and intention—and a *habitual* aim and intention. For the first, an *actual* aim and intention of the spirit, in every particular action that a man does to the glory of God, is utterly impossible, while we carry about with us a body of sin and death. The angels and "spirits of just men made perfect" do thus actually aim at the glory of God in all they do. But it is a work that will be too high and too hard for us, while we are here in a polluted estate. This was so high a mark, that Adam missed it in his innocency. No wonder then if we often miss it in our sinful state and condition. But,

Answer 2. **Secondly**, There is a *habitual* inclination in us, in every action we do, to aim at the honor and glory of God, though there is not the actual intention of the spirit in every action we do. It is with us, as with a man traveling towards a town or city; he thinks in the morning to go to such a town, such a place, where he purposes to rest the first night, and therefore sets forth towards it. And though he does not think of this every step he takes—yet it is his purpose in his journey to rest there at night. Or as it is with a man who comes to church, his end is to hear the word of the Lord. Yet in every word he hears spoken, he has not the thought of his end upon his mind—but he is there by virtue of his first intention.

Just so here, though in every particular there is not an intention of spirit to perform this or that distinct action to the glory of God—yet it is the main drift and habitual scope of a man's spirit, that God's glory may be the end of all his actions.

Answer 3. **Thirdly**, There is an eyeing or looking to the glory of God; as when I forbear such and such a sin, because God by such a command has forbidden it; or I do such and such a duty, because God has commanded it. Now, in eyeing of the command of God, I eye the glory of God. But,

Answer 4. **Fourthly**, In some particular or special cases, I ought actually

to eye the glory of God: as [1.] In some eminent or extraordinary service that I am to do for Christ; or [2.] In some special testimony that I am called to give for Christ or his gospel; or [3.] In some great thing that I am called to suffer for Christ, or his gospel, or his interest. But,

Answer 5. **Fifthly**, The more a Christian actually eyes the glory of God in all he does—

[1.] The more you glorify God.

[2.] The nearer you are the life of heaven, and the more you act like the glorious angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect."

[3.] The more will be your joy, comfort, and peace, both in life and death, and in the day of your account.

[4.] The more strong will be your confidence and assurance that your spiritual estate is good, and that you shall be saved forever.

[5.] The better you will be able to bear up under all the false, hard, and sour censures of this world.

[6.] The more you will be temptation-proof.

[7.] The more glorious and weighty will be your crown of glory at last. He shall be highest in heaven, who has actually aimed most at the glory of God in this lower world.

And thus you see how you may know whether your obedience is such an obedience as springs from saving faith or not. Now, if upon trial you shall find that your obedience is the obedience of faith—then you may safely and groundedly conclude, that you have a saving work of God upon your hearts.

#### **IV. Fourthly, A gracious heart is an UNIFORM heart.**

Being consistent in all places, is a sure evidence of integrity. He who is truly godly, will be good in bad times, and in the worst of places. Principles of grace and holiness are lasting, yes, everlasting; they are not like the morning cloud, nor the early dew, Psalm 119:112; 1 John 3:9; Hosea 6:4. A gracious soul will be steady and fixed in its principles, in the worst times, in the worst places, and under variety of dispensations. Let times and places be what they will, he will not dishonor his God, nor blemish his profession, nor wound his conscience to preserve his safety, or to secure his liberty. An upright man is a righteous man. He is one who will not be bowed or bent by the sinful customs or examples of the times and places where he lives.

*Abraham* was righteous in Chaldea, and *Noah* was perfect in his generation, though it was the worst in the world. And *Lot* was just in Sodom, and *Job* was upright in the land of Uz, which was a place of much profaneness and superstition. And *Nehemiah* was courageous and zealous in Damascus. And *Daniel* as holy, yes, eminently and exemplarily holy, in Babylon. The several generations wherein these holy men lived, were wholly devoted to wickedness and superstition; and yet these precious, gracious souls had wholly devoted themselves to the Lord and his service.

So *David*, "My soul breaks for the longing it has to your judgments at all times," Psalm 119:20. Let the times be ever so dangerous, licentious, superstitious, idolatrous, or erroneous—yet David's heart was strongly carried forth to God's judgments; that is, to his word, for under this title, judgments, you are to understand the whole word of God. So there were some in Sardis who were of the same spirit with the worthies last mentioned: Rev. 3:4, "You have a few names even in Sardis, who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."

In polluting times pure hearts will keep themselves pure. A holy heart will keep himself undefiled, even in defiling times, Psalm 119:1-3. Rev. 14:4, "These are those who were not defiled with women." When others are besmeared all over—he will keep his garments white and clean. The three

Hebrew children, or rather the three champions, Dan. 3:17-20, were so highly resolved to keep themselves pure from the abominations of their day, that it was neither Nebuchadnezzar's music that would flatter them, nor his fiery furnace that could scare them from their God, or from their duty, or from their piety. Let the times ever so often change, you shall find that he who is really holy, he will be holy under every change; no change shall turn him out of a way of holiness: Job 17:9, "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

The laurel keeps its freshness and greenness in the winter season; a gracious soul is *semper idem*—'always the same'. Let the wind, and the world, and the times turn which way they will, a gracious soul for the main will still be the same; he is "like mount Zion, which cannot be moved," Psalm 125:1. Job 27:5-6, "Until I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." A gracious heart is, in some measure, like the heart of God—without variableness or shadow of changing. That Christian that is not for substance the same that once he was—was never what he ought to be, James 1:17. A gracious heart is firm and fixed for God and godliness, both in prosperity and in adversity. Take him among the godly or among the wicked; take him in storms or calms; in winter nights or in summer days; take him among friends or foes; take him at bed or board; take him in health or sickness; take him in an ordinance or out of an ordinance; take him in his work or take him at his recreations; take him in his commerce or in his converse; take him living or take him dying—and you shall still find that the bias of his soul is still God-wards, Christ-wards, holiness-wards, and heaven-wards.

A gracious man will stand his ground, and hold his own in all changes—his heart being fixed upon an unchangeable God. The godly man is four square; cast him where you will, like a dice he falls always square and sure. So cast a gracious man where you will, and into what company you will, and into what condition you will—yet still he falls sure and square for God and godliness. [Joshua 24:15; Ps 112:7; Mal. 3:6. The poor heathen could say, that change of place causes not any change of mind, etc.] Let the times be ever so sad, nor ever so bad—yet a gracious soul will

keep his hold; he will let all go, he will let everything go, before he will let his God go, or his piety go, or his integrity go.

A gracious Christian is like gold. Now cast gold into the fire, or into the water; cast it upon the ash-heap, or into the kennel; cast it among the poor, or among the rich; among the pious, or among the superstitious, etc. Yet still it is gold, still it retains its purity and excellency. So cast a gracious Christian, who is the only golden Christian in the world, into what condition you will, and into what company you will—yet still he will retain his purity, his innocency.

Lapidaries tell us of the Chelydonian stone, that it will retain its virtue and luster no longer than it is enclosed in gold: a fit emblem of a hypocrite, who is only good while he is enclosed in golden prosperity, safety, and felicity. An unsound professor, like green timber, shrinks when the sun of persecution shines hot upon him, Mat. 13:6. The heat of fiery trials cools the courage of an unsound professor. If you put water into a tub, it will have the shape of the tub that you put it into; or if you put water into a glass, it will have the shape of the glass you put it into. This is the very picture of an unsound heart. But a sincere Christian is like a massive vessel of gold, that keeps its own shape and figure, at all times, in all places, and in all companies. Unsound hearts, they will be righteous among the righteous, and licentious among the licentious. They will be as the company is among which they are cast. With the good they will be good, and with the bad they will be bad; with the zealous they will be zealous; and with the superstitious they will be superstitious; and with the lukewarm they will be lukewarm. They are for all times and tides; they are for any turn that will serve their turn; they are for any mood that will bring either profit or pleasure to them. They are like Alcibiades, of whom it was said, that he was a man for all times; for he could swagger it at Athens, and take any pains at Thebes; he could live most sparingly at Lacedaemon, and tipple among the Thracians, and hunt among the Persians. They are like the chameleon, ready to change their hue with everyone they converse with; they are like Polypus, that resembles every stone that it sticks to; or they are like the buskins anciently used in tragedies, that would serve either leg alike; they are as fit for one society as another; or like the players that used them, such as acting princely

parts, wear royal apparel, keep state, and behave themselves gravely and soberly, so long as they are in public view upon the stage. But when they have done acting, are no sooner off the stage—but they pass presently into another habit, and retain neither their princely behavior nor apparel—but are most beggarly, base, and debauched, either in private among themselves, or among their companions like themselves.

Unsound hearts can accommodate themselves to the times, and comply with them, whatever they be. With Proteus they will transform themselves into all shapes; as the times change, so will they; what the times favor, that they will favor; what the times commend, that they will commend; what the times cry up and admire, that they will cry up and admire. And what the times frown upon and condemn, that they will frown upon and condemn. Look! as curious and well drawn pictures seem to turn their eyes every way, and to smile upon everyone that looks upon them, so these can turn with the times, they can look as the times look, and smile as the times smile; they can say with the times, and sail with the times; sometimes they can act one part, and sometimes another part, as the times require. If the times require a large profession, they can make it; if the times bespeak them to leave their religion at the church door, they can leave it.

But now, a sincere Christian, he will labor to be so much the more gracious, by how much the more the times are licentious. A sincere Christian is like gold. If you cast it into the fire—it will not be destroyed; if you throw it into the water—it will not rust, it will retain its own purity and excellency wherever you put it.

**V. Fifthly, A gracious heart sets himself most against his darling sin, his bosom-sin;** against the sin of his complexion, constitution, inclination, and calling, etc., Heb. 12:1.

There is some one sinful quality that is more predominant in the heart of man than any other. There is some one Delilah, some one darling sin that a man is more apt to play with, and to hug in his own bosom—than any other. There is usually some one sin that is a favorite, some one sin which the heart is most fond of, and which the bias of the soul does most naturally and strongly incline towards.

Pliny writes of some families that had privy marks on their bodies peculiar to those of that line. And so every man has as it were his privy sin, which is most justly and peculiarly called his; as in a ground that lies untilled, among the great variety of weeds, there is usually some master weed, one among the rest that is rifer and ranker than all the rest. And as it is in the body of man, that although in some degree or other, more or less, there be a mixture of all the four elements, not any of them wholly lacking—yet there is some one of them predominant that gives the denomination; in regard whereof some are said to be of a sanguine, some of a phlegmatic, some of a choleric, and some of a melancholic constitution.

Now, thus it is in the souls of men. Though there is a general mixture and medley of all evil and corrupt qualities—yet is there some one sin that usually is paramount, more powerful and prevalent, that sways and shows forth itself more eminently and more evidently than any other of them do. And from this, therefore, more frequently and apparently discovering itself, is the designation accustomed to be given whereby some are styled ambitious, some lascivious, some envious, some malicious, some haughty, some hasty, and the like.

Or as in every man's body there is a seed and principle of death—yet some are more prone to die of a fever than of a dropsy, and others are more prone to die of a dropsy than of a fever, etc.; so though original sin has spread itself over all our noble and ignoble parts—yet every man has his particular inclinations to one kind of sin rather than another. And this may properly be called a man's own sin, his own evil way. Now mark, a gracious heart makes most battle, most opposition, against his darling sin, against his complexion sin, against those sins that were once as dear to him as his right hand, or as his right eye, or as Delilah was to Samson, Herodias to Herod, Isaac to Abraham, and Joseph to Jacob: Psalm 18:23,

"I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from my iniquity;" that is, from my darling sin whereunto I was most inclined and addicted. What this bosom-sin was that he kept himself from, it is hard to say. Some suppose his darling sin was lying, dissembling, for it is certain he often fell into this sin: Psalm 119:29, "Remove from me the way of lying." [In that 1 Sam. 21:2, 8, he tells three or four round lies, and the like he did in that 1 Sam. 27:8-10.] Others suppose it to be some secret iniquity, which was only known to God and his own conscience. Others say it was uncleanness, and that therefore he prayed that God would turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, Psalm 119:37. Others judge it to be that sin of disloyalty which Saul and his courtiers falsely charged upon him. Well, be it this or that, it is enough for our purpose that his heart did rise against that very sin that either by custom or complexion, or some strong inclination, he was most naturally apt, ready, and prone to fall into. This is the laying of the axe to the root of the tree; and by this practice David gives a clear proof of the integrity of his heart.

Idolatry was the darling sin of the people of Israel; they called their idols delectable or desirable things; they did dearly love and greatly delight in their idols, Jer. 17:1-2; Hosea 2:8; Isaiah 31:6-7, 44:9, etc. But when the Lord in the day of his power wrought savingly and gloriously upon their hearts, oh! how did their hatred and indignation against their idols rise! as you may see Isaiah 30:22, "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them—Away with you!" They were so delighted and enamored with their idols, that they would lavish gold out of the bag, or they waste or spend riotously, as the Hebrew runs, that they might richly deck them up, and set them forth in the greatest glory and bravery. Oh! but when the Lord should make a glorious turn upon their spirits, then they should readily and roundly deface, defile, and disgrace their idols, then they should hate and abhor them, then they should so detest and loathe them, that in a holy indignation they would cast them away as a menstruous cloth, and say unto them, Get you hence! pack! begone! I will never have any more to do with you, Isaiah 46:6. [After the return of the Jews out of Babylon, they so hated and abhorred idols that in the times of the Romans they chose rather to die than to suffer the eagle, which was the imperial arms, to be set up in their temple.]

"In that day, a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." Isaiah 2:20. In the day when God shall exalt Himself in the souls of His people, and before the eyes of His people, they shall express such disdain and indignation against their idols, that they would not take only those made of trees and stones—but even their most precious and costly idols, those which were made of silver and gold—and cast them to the moles and to the bats; that is, they should cast them into such blind holes, and into such dark, filthy, nasty, and dusty corners, as moles make underground, and as bats roost in. So when Christ, and grace, and holiness comes to be set up in men's hearts and lives, then all their darling sins, their bosom lusts—which are their idols of silver and their idols of gold—these are with a holy indignation cast to the moles and to the bats! They are so loathed, abhorred, abandoned, and dismissed, that they desire they may be forever buried in oblivion, and never more see the light!

Idols were Ephraim's bosom sin: Hosea 4:17, "Ephraim is joined," or glued, as the word signifies, "to idols, let him alone." But when the dew of grace fell upon Ephraim, as it did in chapter 14:5-7, then says Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" verse 8. Now Ephraim loathes his idols as much or more than before he loved them; he now abandons and abominates them. Though before he was as closely glued to them as the lecherous man is glued to his Delilah, or as the enchanter is glued to the devil, from whom by no means he is able to stir, as the words in the original import, when it was the day of the Lord's power upon Ephraim, then Ephraim cries out, "What have I any more to do with idols?" Oh! I have had to do with them too long, and too much already! Oh! how does my soul now rise against them! how do I detest and abhor them! Surely I will never have more to do with them!

"If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, 'Let us go and worship other gods (gods that neither you nor your fathers have known, gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. You must certainly put him to death. Your hand

must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people. Stone him to death, because he tried to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." Deut. 13:6-10. This Scripture tells us, that if father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or kinsman, or friend, should go about to draw a man from God, his hand should be first upon him to put him to death. Now, bosom sins, darling sins—they seek to draw a man's heart from God, and therefore a gracious soul can't but rise up against them, and do his best to stone them, and to be the death of them!

"The days of mourning for my father are at hand," says bloody Esau, "then will I slay my brother Jacob," Gen. 27:41. It is a bloody speech of a vindictive spirit, which nothing would satisfy but innocent blood. So says the gracious soul, The days of mourning for the death of my dear Savior are now at hand, and therefore I will slay my bosom lusts, my constitution sins; now will I be revenged on them for all the dishonors that they have done to God, and for all the wounds that they have made in my conscience, and for all the mercies that they have embittered, and for all the favors that they have prevented, and for all the afflictions that they have procured, and for all the duties that they have hindered.

Samson pleads hard with God, that he might be avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes, Judges 16:28. And so does the gracious soul plead hard with God, that he may be avenged on his bosom lusts, on his darling sins, which have put out his two eyes, which have so blinded him who he has not for a long time been able to see God, or Christ, or the things that belong to his external, internal, or eternal peace.

The next of kin in the law was always the avenger of blood, and to him it appertained to hunt after the murderer, to bring upon his head the innocent blood that he had shed. If therefore we will show ourselves brethren or sisters of Christ, or anything of kin unto him, we must even be the avengers of his blood upon bosom sins, upon darling and complexion sins; for them as well as others was his blood shed. O sirs! **What bosom sin is there so sweet or profitable that is worth a-burning in hell for, or worth a-shutting out of heaven for? Surely none!** This a gracious soul seriously weighs, and accordingly he sets himself against the toad in his bosom, against his darling sins,

against his complexion sins.

But now, unsound hearts are very favorable to bosom sins, to complexion sins. They say of them, as Lot of Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" Gen. 19:20. And as David once said concerning Absalom, 2 Sam. 18:5, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom;" "beware that none touch the young man Absalom," verse 12. "And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe?" verse 29. An unsound heart is as fond of his bosom sins, of his complexion sins, as Jacob was of his Benjamin; or as Jehu was of his calves; or as Naaman was of his idol Rimmon; or as Judas was of bearing the money-bag; or as Herod was of his Herodias; or as Demetrius was of his Diana; or as the Pharisees were of devouring widows' houses, and of having the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and of being saluted in the market places with those glorious titles, *Rabbi, rabbi*.

The besotted sinner is most engaged to his bosom sins, his complexion sins; and therefore it is as bitter a thing as death for him to part with them. He had rather part with "thousands of rams, and with ten thousand rivers of oil; yes, he had rather part with his first-born, than with his bosom sin; he is ready to give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul," Micah 6:6. Let God frown or smile, stroke or strike, lift up or cast down, promise or threaten—yet he will hide and hold fast his bosom sin! Let God set life and death, heaven and hell, glory and misery before him—yet will he not part with his bosom sins! Let God wound his conscience, blow upon his estate, leave a blot upon his name, crack his credit, afflict his body, write death upon his relations, and be a terror to his soul—yet will he not let go his darling sins! An unsound heart will rather let God go, and Christ go, and heaven go, and all go—than he will let his darling lusts go!

But now a sound Christian, a throughout Christian, he sets himself most against the Delilah in his bosom, against the Benjamin, the son, the sin of his right hand. A sincere Christian looks upon bosom sins, upon complexion sins, as the most **God-provoking sins**. There are no sins so provoking to God's jealousies and justice as bosom sins! He looks upon bosom sins, complexion sins, as the most **dangerous** sins! He looks upon bosom sins, complexion sins, as the **worst** thing in all the world! He looks upon bosom sins, complexion sins, as more ugly and horrid

than the devil himself, or than hell itself! He looks upon bosom sins as the great hindrance between God and his soul, and between his conscience and his comfort, Isaiah 59:1-2, Lam. 3:8, 44! He looks upon bosom sins as those enemies that have provoked God often to turn a deaf ear to all his prayers! He looks upon his bosom sins as so many Judases that have often betrayed him into the hands of the devil! He looks upon his bosom sins as the waters of Marah, which have embittered all his mercies! He looks upon his bosom sins as the only things that have often clouded the face of God! He looks upon his bosom sins as dead flies in the box of precious ointment—which spoils all, and accordingly with all his might he sets himself against them.

- (1.) He fights most against these;
- (2.) he weeps most over these;
- (3.) he watches and arms most against these;
- (4.) he prays most against these;
- (5.) he resolves most against these; and
- (6.) he lays the axe of repentance most to these, etc.

But pray sir, before you close up this chapter, lay down some sure and infallible evidences of the goodness, graciousness, and happiness of their estates and conditions, who are but weak in grace, who are but babes of grace, that so they may have their portion, satisfaction, support, and consolation as well as others.

But please sir, before you close up this chapter, lay down some sure and infallible evidences of the goodness, graciousness, and happiness of their estates and conditions, who are but weak in grace, who are but babes of grace, that so they may have their portion, satisfaction, support, and consolation as well as others.

Answer. I shall endeavor to do it, and therefore thus:

**VI. Sixthly, True desires of grace is grace; true desires after Christ, and grace, and holiness—is grace.** He who does sincerely desire to believe—he does really believe. And he who does sincerely desire to repent—he does really repent. And he who does sincerely desire to obey the Lord, and to fear the Lord, and to serve the Lord—he does really obey the Lord, and fear the Lord, and serve the Lord. [1 Peter 2:3-4; 2 Chron. 30:18-19; Mat. 7:8; Psalm 42:1-2, 63:1, etc.]

It is the first step to grace—for a man to see his heart void of grace. And it is the first degree of grace—for a man to desire grace. Mark, all true desires of grace have the very nature and truth of grace in them, as there is true *fire* in a spark—as well as in a flame, and true *water* in a drop—as well as in a stream, and true *light* in a beam—as well as in the sun, and true *gold* in the very filings of gold—as well as in the whole wedge of gold. The least of anything partakes of the nature of the whole, Isaiah 55:1-2, 65:1; John 7:37. True desires of grace argues a state of grace and salvation: Psalm 38:9, "Lord, you know all my desires, my groaning is not hidden from you." Mat. 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled;" or as the Greek runs—those who are hungering and thirsting; intimating, that wherever this is the present disposition of men's souls, they are blessed. Rev. 22:17, "And let him who is athirst come, and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

*Sincere desires of grace* are those holy seeds, those divine beginnings of grace in the soul, out of which grace springs and grows up to its measure and perfection. [Augustine. Where there are sincere desires of grace, there are the seeds of grace, the beginnings of grace, the buds of grace.] O sirs! look, as no man can sincerely seek God in vain, so no man can sincerely desire grace in vain. A man may love gold—yet not have it. But no man loves God—but is sure to have him. Wealth a man may desire—and yet be never the richer for it. But grace no man ever sincerely desired—and missed it. And why? it is *God that has wrought this desire in the heart*, and he will never frustrate the desire that he himself has there wrought!

Let no man say, I have no faith, no repentance, no love, no fear of God, no sanctifying, no saving grace in me. Does he see a lack of those things in himself? Yes, that is it which so *grieves* him, that he cannot love God, stand in awe of him, trust in his mercy, repent of sin as he should. Yes—but does he seriously and sincerely desires to do thus. Yes, he desires it above all things in the world, and would be willing, as it were, to buy even with a whole world the least measure, or grain, or drop only of such grace.

Now let me ask him, who is it who has wrought this desire in him? Not the devil; for he would rather quench it than kindle it in him; not his own corruption, for that is naturally averse to everything that is good; it must needs then be the work of the Spirit of God, who "works in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," and who pronounces all them blessed, who thus desire after grace. "When I have a good desire," says one, "though it does scarcely show itself in some little slender sigh, I must be assured that the Spirit of God is present, and works his good work."

Wicked men do not desire the grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby they may resist sin—and therefore they are justly deprived of it. But he who earnestly desires the Holy Spirit has this grace already, because this desire for the Spirit cannot be but from the Spirit. "Our faith," says another, "may be so small and weak, as it does not yet bring forth fruits that may be lively felt in us. But if those who feel themselves in such an estate *desire* to have these feelings, namely, of God's favor and love, if they ask them of God's hands by prayer—this desire and prayer are testimonies that the Spirit of God is in them, and that they have faith already. For is such a desire a fruit of the flesh—or of the Spirit? It is of the Holy Spirit, who brings it forth only in those in whom he dwells in, etc." Then those holy desires and prayers, being the motions of the Holy Spirit in us, are testimonies of saving faith, although they seem to us small and weak.

As the woman who feels the moving of a child in her body, though very weak, assures herself that she has conceived, and that she is carrying a live child; so if we have these motions, these holy affections and desires before mentioned, assure us that we have the Holy Spirit, who is the author of them, dwelling in us, and consequently that we have also saving

faith.

Again, says the same author,

- (1.) if you have begun to hate and fly from sin;
- (2.) if you feel that you are displeased at your infirmities and corruptions;
- (3.) if, having offended God, you find a grief and a sorrow for it;
- (4.) if you desire to abstain from sin;
- (5.) if you avoid the *occasions* of sin;
- (6.) if you strive against sin;
- (7.) if you pray to God to give you grace;

all these holy affections, proceeding from none other than from the Spirit of God, and ought to be as so many pledges and testimonies that he is in you.

It is as impossible for us naturally to do the least spiritual good, or to desire the least grace—as it is for a toad to spit cordials, Philip. 2:13, 2 Cor. 8:10, 12. *Sincere desires* after God, and Christ, and grace, is sometimes the only evidences which the people of God find in themselves. This was all that Nehemiah could say of himself, and the rest of his brethren, Neh. 1:11, that they did *desire* to fear God's name. And so the church: Isaiah 26:8, "The *desire* of our soul is to your name, and to the remembrance of your holiness." And verse 9, "With my soul have I *desired* you in the night." So the spouse, Cant. 3:1-3. So David, Psalm 27:4, 42:1-2, 63:1. **They must needs be sure of possessing grace—who have a sincere desire for it.**

This is a maxim that we must live and die with, namely—that **no man can truly desire grace—but he who has already grace.** Certainly he who desires grace has grace to desire it. It is an infallible sign, that that man has already some measure of grace, who does seriously desire to have it. He would never seriously desire to **fear** God—who stands not in

some awe of him already. Nor would he ever desire seriously to **love** God—who has not in him some love to God already. Nor would he ever seriously desire to **believe**—who has not in him some faith already. Nor would he ever seriously desire to repent—who has not repented already. Nor would he ever seriously **desire sanctifying grace**—whose heart in some measure is not already sanctified by the Spirit of grace.

It is the very essence of righteousness, says one of the ancients—for a man to be willing to be righteous. And the poor heathen could say, "It is a principal part of goodness, for a man to be willing to be good." It is natural for everyone to desire his *own natural* good—but to desire *spiritual* grace, holiness, sound sanctification, sincere faith, the true fear of God, serious repentance, etc., is more than ever any natural man did or can do. No man did ever desire to eat—who had not eaten before. No man did ever desire to believe—who did not believe before. All true desires after faith spring from saving faith as the root of them. Certainly wicked men do not, and cannot so much as desire saving grace, Job 21:14, Isaiah 53:2; and that,

**[1.] First, Because grace is above the reach of sinful human nature.** 1 Cor. 2:14, "But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The water rises no higher than the springs from whence it came; so natural men can ascend no higher than his fallen human nature. Spiritual things can neither be *discerned* nor *desired*—but by those who are anointed with the eye-salve of the Spirit. The natural man is dark and blind, and he sees no beauty nor excellency in grace—that he should desire it or be in love with it. Man in his natural estate is *without*, Eph. 2:12. There are five *withouts*:

(1.) without Christ;

(2.) without the church;

(3.) without the promise;

(4.) without hope;

(5.) without God.

Now, every natural man being under these five withouts, how is it possible that he should have any serious desires after grace? Such is the corruption of our human nature, that, if you propound any *divine good* to it, it is entertained as fire by water, or wet wood—with hissing. Propound any *evil*—then it is like fire to straw; it is like the foolish satyr who made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that unctuous matter which naturalists say sucks and snatches the fire to it with which it is consumed.

The contrariety and enmity that is in every natural man's heart against God, and Christ, and grace, and holiness—may sufficiently satisfy us that the natural man is a total stranger to serious and sincere desires after God, or Christ, or grace, or the great things that belong to his everlasting peace, Romans 8:7. Such sincere and serious desires as these—Oh that Christ were mine! oh that I were married to his person! oh that I were clothed with his righteousness! oh that my soul were adorned with his grace! oh that I was filled with his Spirit! oh that he would be my *king* to rule me, and my *prophet* to teach and instruct me, and my *priest* to make an atonement for me! oh that I might enjoy choice and high communion with him! oh that I might sin no more against him! oh that I may do nothing unworthy of him! oh that after death I might live forever in the enjoyments of him! etc. I say such serious and sincere desires are not to be found in the natural man's bosom!

**[2.] Secondly, Because grace is contrary to sinful human nature.** "The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God," Romans 8:7. Fire cannot desire water—nor water fire, because they are contrary, one expelling the other. Either the water will quench the fire, or else the fire will lick up the water. So here, sinful human nature would have a man love himself, and seek himself, and exalt himself. But grace will have a man love God, and seek God, and exalt God, etc. Take human nature when it is most adorned, enriched, raised, elevated, etc.—yet then you shall find it at enmity with God and grace. Consequently,

**[3.] Thirdly, Because grace is not only above sinful human nature, and contrary to nature—but it is even a hell to nature.** Grace and holiness is a hell to a natural man. Look! as a glorified estate

would be a hell to every wicked person (*Heaven would be a hell to the damned!* says one of the ancients), so would a gracious estate also. Grace puts a man to keep up the cross of Christ, to deny his natural self, his sinful self, his religious self, his relative self—and to give up a man's self to the strictest and exactest ways of God, and to crucify his lusts, and to pull out his right eye, and to cut off his right hand, etc. And oh! what hard work is this—yes, what a hell is this to sinful human nature! etc.

**[4.] Fourthly, Wicked men do not and cannot so much as truly and seriously desire saving grace.** Witness their daily withstanding and slighting the offers of grace. Compare these scriptures, Proverbs 1:20, seq., chapter 8:1-12; Ezek. 24:13; Mat. 23:27; Luke 19:41, 42, etc.

**[5.] Fifthly, Wicked men do not and cannot so much as truly and seriously desire saving grace.** Witness their common, ordinary, habitual provoking, vexing, quenching, resisting, and grieving of the Spirit of grace. Turn to these scriptures, Gen. 6:3; Isaiah 63:10; Acts 7:55; Eph. 4:30.

**[6.] Sixthly, Wicked men do not and cannot truly and seriously desire saving grace.** Witness that enmity, hatred, rage, and madness which is in them against the saints, whose hearts and lives are enamelled with grace, Gen. 3:15; Psalm 34:21, 44:10; Job 31:29; Amos 5:10, etc. I have read of a desperate wretch, who, when he came to die, he gave good portions to all his children but one, and to him he would give but twelve pence. And being asked the reason of it, he made answer, he was a Christian. *I have heard him say*, said this wretched father, *that he had a promise to live on; let us now see whether a promise will maintain him or not.* Certainly, wherever there are true serious desires after grace, there is a dear love to those upon whose hearts the work of grace is past.

Now, by these short hints, it is evident enough that wicked men do not, and cannot sincerely, seriously desire grace. Certainly, such who are "poor in spirit," and who mourn for their spiritual defects, and who hunger and thirst after grace and holiness, after a righteousness imparted and a righteousness imputed, must confess themselves to be in a blessed estate, and consequently in a state of grace; for what true happiness is there outside of it? Or else they must contradict our Savior, and charge

truth itself with untruth, who has pronounced them blessed—who are so qualified, so affected. Were this well weighed and seriously considered of, how would it comfort, refresh, support, and keep up many a troubled soul. And what a well-spring of life would this be to many a wounded spirit!

Doubtless, the greatest part of a saint's perfection in this life (witness Paul's own sincere confession; after fourteen years' conversion, say some. And who ever went beyond him? and how exceedingly do most fall short of him!) consists rather in *will*—*more* than in *work*; and in *desire* and *endeavor*—*more* than in *deed*. Romans 7:15, 18-19, 21-22. There is so much good in *good desires*, that they are the main thing which the godly have to speak of, and to reckon of. Make an inventory of a Christian's estate, and search every room; if you find not these, you find nothing. And if you set these down in the inventory, you set down even all he is worth for the eternal world.

Daniel is called *a man of desires*, and so is every gracious man, a man wholly made up of gracious desires, Dan. 10:11. Mark, God makes a judgment upon the sons of men, according as their desires stand. He who desires to *steal*—he is a thief in the account of God. And he who desires to commit *adultery*—he is an adulterer in the account of God. And he who desires to *oppress*—he is an oppressor in the account of God. And he who desires to *deceive*—he is a deceiver in the account of God. And he who desires to *persecute*—he is a persecutor in the account of God, etc.

Look! as every wicked man is as bad in the account of God as his desires are bad—so every godly man is as good in the account of God as his desires are good. He who sincerely desires to believe, he does believe in the account of God. "The desire," says one, "to believe in the lack of faith is faith. Though as yet you lack firm and lively grace—yet are you not altogether void of grace; if you can desire it, your desire is the seed, conception, or bud of what you lack." [Mr. Perkins in his "Grain of Mustard-seed."]

Now is the spring-time of the engrafted word or immortal seed cast into the furrows of your heart; wait but a while, using the means, and you shall see that leaves, blossoms, and fruits will shortly follow, etc. Ursinus

says, 'faith in the most holy is not perfect; nevertheless, whoever feels in his heart an earnest desire to believe, and a striving against his doubts, he both may and must assure himself that he is endued with true faith.'

And he who sincerely desires to **repent**—he does repent in the account of God. Holy Bradford, writing to a friend, says, Your sins are undoubtedly pardoned, etc., for God has given you a penitent and believing heart, that is, a heart which desires to repent and believe; for such a one is taken of him, he accepts the will for the deed, for a penitent and believing heart indeed.

And he who sincerely desires to **mortify sin**—he does mortify sin in the account of God. And he who sincerely desires to walk with God—he does walk with God in the account of God. And he who sincerely desires to honor God—he does honor God in the account of God. And he who sincerely desires to deny himself—he does deny himself in the account of God. And he who sincerely desires to be weaned from the world—he is weaned from the world in the account of God. And he who sincerely desires to be conformable to God—he is conformable to God in the account of God. And he who desires to grow in grace—he does grow in grace in the account of God. And he who sincerely desires to improve mercies—he does improve mercies in the account of God. And he who sincerely desires to glorify God in the hour of his visitation—he does glorify God in the hour of his visitation in the account of God. [Let your desires be before God, "and he who sees in secret shall reward you openly;" your desire is your prayer, and if your desire be continual, your prayer is continual, etc.]

A gracious man may make a better judgment of his estate by his sincere desires—than he can by his duties. And so a wicked man may make a better judgment of his estate by his desires—than he can by his words or works. I have been the larger upon this evidence because of its great usefulness to weak believers. But.

**[7.] Seventhly, No man can sincerely desire grace for grace's sake, but he who has true grace.** Namely, **faith** for faith's sake, and **love** for love's sake, and **humility** for humility's sake, and **uprightness** for uprightness' sake, and **meekness** for meekness' sake, and **holy fear**

for holy fear's sake, and **hope** for hope's sake, and **holiness** for holiness's sake, and **self-denial** for self-denial's sake, etc.

Mark, no man can sincerely and seriously desire grace for the inward beauty, glory, and excellency of grace—but he who has true grace. "The king's daughter is all glorious within," Psalm 45:13, though within is not all her glory. Grace differs nothing from glory but in name. Grace is glory in the bud—and glory is grace at the full. Grace is glory militant—and glory is grace triumphant. Grace has an inward glory upon it, which none can see and love—but such as have grace in their own hearts, 2 Cor. 3:18. Wicked men can see no beauty, no glory, no excellency in grace why they should desire it. And no wonder, for they could see no beauty, nor excellency, nor glory, nor loveliness in Christ the fountain of grace, Isaiah 53:1-4.

Though next to Christ, grace is the most lovely and desirable thing in all the world—yet none can desire it for its own loveliness and desirableness—but such as have a seed of God in them. Though grace is a pearl of price, though it is a jewel more worth than the gold of Ophir, though it is a beam of God, a spark of glory, a branch of the divine nature—yet carnal hearts can see no glory nor excellency in it, that they should desire it. If carnal eyes were but opened to see the excellency of grace, it would ravish the soul in desires after it. But grace's beauty and glory is inward, and so it is not discerned but with spiritual eyes. Plato was accustomed to say, If moral virtues could be seen with bodily eyes, they would stir up in the heart extraordinary flames of admiration and love. I might say much more of grace, 1 Cor. 2:14, seq.

(1.) Grace puts an excellency, it puts a luster and beauty upon men's person. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor," Proverbs 12:26. And what makes him so, but grace? Wisdom makes a man's face to shine; but riches, and honors, and dignities, and royal ornaments, and costly fare, and noble attendants, don't put an excellency and glory upon man, Dan. 11:21; witness Antiochus, Saul, Haman, Herod, Dives, etc.—but saving grace does, 1 Peter 3:4-5, etc. The graces of the Spirit are that chain of pearl that adorns Christ's bride.

(2.) Grace puts an excellency upon all a man's duties; "By faith Abel

offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" faith put an excellency upon Abel's sacrifice.

(3.) Grace puts an excellency upon all a man's natural and acquired excellencies. It puts an excellency upon beauty, honor, riches, name, arts, parts, gifts. Now, how excellent and glorious must that be, which puts an excellency upon all our excellencies?

(4.) Grace makes a man conformable to God and Christ.

(5.) Grace fits a man for communion and fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit.

(6.) Grace fits a man for the choicest services.

(7.) Grace turns all things into a blessing.

(8.) Grace fills the soul with all spiritual excellencies.

(9.) Grace preserves a Christian from the worst of evils, namely, sin.

(10.) Grace sweetens death, it makes the king of terrors to be the king of desires.

(11.) Grace renders a man acceptable to God, and that is the height of a Christian's ambition in this world: 2 Cor. 5:9, "We labor" (we are ambitious), "that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." The apostles made it their ambition to get acceptance in heaven. Riches, and honors, and gifts, and arts, and parts, etc., may commend us to men—but it is only grace that commends us to God, and that renders us lovely in his eyes.

(12.) Grace will eternalize your names, grace will perfume and embalm your names: Heb. 11:2, "By faith the elders obtained a good report." Verse 39, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." Nothing raises a man's name and fame in the world like grace. [1 John 4:17, 1:1-2; 2 Cor. 13:14; Zech. 3:7; Mal. 2:2; Proverbs 2:11-12.] A man may obtain a great report without grace—but he can never obtain a good report without grace. Nothing below grace will perpetuate a

man's name. The seven deacons that the church chose, Acts 6:3, 5, were gracious men, and they were men of "good report," they were men well witnessed unto, well testified of, as the Greek word imports, Acts 10:1-4, 22. Cornelius was a gracious man, and he was a man of good report among all the nation of the Jews, Acts 9:10, 20, comp. with chapter 22:12. Ananias was a gracious man, and he was a man of a "good report." Gaius and Demetrius, they were both gracious men, and they were men of good report; witness that third epistle of John. How renowned was Abraham for his faith! and Moses for his meekness! and Jacob for his plain-heartedness! and Job for his uprightness! and David for his zeal! and Joshua for his courage! Holy Abel has been dead over five thousand years, and yet his name is as fresh and fragrant as a rose to this very day, Heb. 11:4. Grace will make your names immortal. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," Psalm 112:6. "The memory of the just is blessed—but the name of the wicked shall rot," Proverbs 10:7. Wicked men many times outlive their names—but the names of just men outlive them.

When a gracious man dies, he leaves his name as a sweet and as a lasting scent behind him; his fame shall live when he is dead. According to the Hebrew the words may be read thus: "The memory of the just shall be for a blessing." The very remembering of the just shall bring a blessing upon those who remember them. When a gracious man dies, as he carries a good conscience with him, so he leaves a perfumed name behind him.

Grace is the image of God, the delight of God, the honor of God, the glory of God; grace is the purchase of Christ, and the birth of the Spirit, and the pledge of glory; grace is the joy of angels, the glory of man, and the wonder of the world. What is the body without the soul? what is the cabinet without the jewels? what is the sun without light? what is the fountain without water? what is paradise without the tree of life? what is heaven without Christ? That is a soul without grace.

Now, every gracious soul sees a real eternal excellency, beauty, and glory in grace—and accordingly it is carried out in its desires after it. It sees such an innate excellency, beauty, and glory in that faith, wisdom, humility, meekness, patience, zeal, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, uprightness, etc., that sparkles and shines in such and such saints, that it

many times strives with God in secret—even to sweat and tears, that it may be bedecked and enriched with those singular graces which are so shining in others. Oh that I had the *wisdom* of such a Christian, and the faith of such a Christian, and the *love* of such a Christian, and the *humility* of such a Christian, and the *meekness* of such a Christian, and the *zeal* of such a Christian, and the *integrity* of such a Christian, etc. Oh that my soul was but in their case! I don't covet their *riches*—but their *graces*. Oh that I had but these graces! Oh that I had much of those graces which sparkles and shines in the hearts and lives of such and such Christians! I see a beauty and glory upon sun, moon, and stars, yes, upon the whole creation—but what is that to that beauty and glory that I see stamped upon grace? And this fires his heart with desires after grace. But,

**[8.] Eighthly, No man can sincerely desire all grace, every grace, or the whole chain of graces—but he who has true grace.**

2 Peter 1:5-9. Vain men, when they are under some outward or inward distresses, may, to serve their present turns, desire, in a cold, formal, customary way—patience, or contentment, or meekness, or hope, or faith, etc. But they don't, nor can't, while they are wicked, while they are in their natural estate, while they are "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," Acts 8:19-25, sincerely desire every grace, especially those particular graces which are most opposite to their master sin, to their darling lusts, to their constitution sins, to their complexion sins, to those particular lusts which are to them as dear as their right eyes or right hands.

Austin before his conversion he was much given to whoredom, and he would often pray, "Lord, give me chastity—but not yet." He was afraid lest God would have heard him too soon, as he himself confesses. Wicked men would be very sorry if God would take them at their words, and in good earnest answer the cold and lazy desires of their souls. If when the drunkard in a good mood should desire sobriety, and God should take him at his word—he would be very angry. Or if when the unclean person should desire chastity, God should answer his desires—he would not be very well pleased. If when the covetous person should, under some pangs of conscience, desire a free, a charitable, a noble, generous spirit, God should take him at his word—he would be greatly displeased. The same

may be said of all other sorts of sinners.

But now a real Christian, though he be ever so weak—yet he seriously desires every grace; he is for every link of the golden chain of graces; he finds in his own heart *sins* which are contrary to every grace. And therefore he desires every grace, that he may make headway against every sin. He finds his heart and life so attended and surrounded with all sorts and kinds of *temptations*, that he earnestly, seriously, and frequently desires the presence and assistance of every grace, that so he may be temptation-proof, yes, victorious over every temptation. And he sees and feels the need of every grace to fill up every place, station, and condition wherein the Lord has set him, and therefore he begs hard for every grace. And he sees a beauty, and a glory, and an excellency upon every grace, and therefore he desires every grace as well as any one single grace—which no hypocrite or profane person in the world does. But,

**[9.] Ninthly, No man can sincerely and seriously desire grace for gracious ends and purposes—but he who has true grace in his soul.** No man can truly desire grace, that he may enjoy communion and fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and that he may be made conformable to Christ, and that he may be serviceable and useful to the saving interest of Christ, and that he may walk even as Christ walked, in the exercise of every grace, and that he may be rid of his sins, yes, all his sins, especially his special bosom sins; and that he may run the ways of God's commands more easily, more readily, more delightfully, more resolutely, more patiently, more unweariedly, and more zealously; and that he may be made victorious over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and that he may so live, as to be a praise, a name, an honor, and a glory to Christ; and that after all and by all he may be prepared and fitted for an eternal fruition and enjoyment of Christ, [John 1:1-4, and 2:6; Mat. 11:29-30; Psalm 119:32; 1 John 5:4-5; Romans 14:7-8; Philip. 1:20.] —but he who has true grace in his soul. Now, every weak believer is able to appeal to God, that he desires grace for gracious ends and purposes, as for the ends last cited, and others of the like nature with them.

Wicked men may in a fit desire grace, as Simon Magus did desire the Holy Spirit, to get money by it, Acts 8:18-20; or when they are under some pangs of conscience, they may desire grace to be rid of their horrors

and terrors, or when they are upon a dying bed they may desire so much grace as may keep them out of hell, and bring them to heaven. But in all this they look no further than SELF; they are far from desiring of grace for gracious ends and purposes. There is nothing in all the world that the great God so much regards as **man**, "All these things have my hands made—but to this *man* will I look," Isaiah 66:2. There is nothing in man the great God so much regards—as the **heart**; "My son, give me your *heart*." There is nothing in the heart so much as the **aim** and **end** of it.

Let a man's profession be ever so glorious, let him be ever so abundant in the performance of duties, let his desires after this and that good thing be ever so strong—yet if his ends and aims are wrong, all his pretensions and performances are but *beautiful abominations*. Did David pray three times a day? So did the pharisees. Did David and Daniel fast? So did the pharisees, and that twice in the week. Did Cornelius give alms? So did the pharisees. Did Abraham pay tithes? So did the pharisees; they tithed their very mint and rue. But their *ends* being wrong, their time was lost, and their pains were lost, and their duties were lost, and their alms were lost, and their souls were lost—and that forever. [Mark 12:40; Luke 18:12; Mat. 6:2; Luke 11:42; Mat. 23:1, seq.] God writes a *zero* upon all those services wherein men's ends are not right, Jer. 32:23. But,

**[10.] Tenthly, No man can sincerely desire and earnestly endeavor after the highest pitches of grace—but he who has true grace.** Though the weak Christian has but a little grace in his heart—yet he has the top of grace, the perfection of grace in his sincere aims, in his sincere desires, and in his earnest and constant endeavors, Philip. 3:12-16, etc. And if the weakest saint might have his desires, his mind, his wish, his will, his choice—he would never more sin; he would never more dishonor Jesus Christ; he would never more grieve the Spirit of grace; he would yield unsinning obedience; he would obey in this lower world, as the angels, and as the "spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. 12:22-23, do obey in that upper world. The weakest Christian has his eye to the highest round in Jacob's ladder, and sincerely would he be at the top of it, Luke 17:5. And oh, how sweet is every providence, and every ordinance, and every duty, and every mercy, and every opportunity—which helps his soul more Christ-wards, and heaven-wards, and holiness-wards!

Sincere desires, and serious endeavors to grow in grace, is an infallible evidence of the truth of grace, 2 Peter 3:18, 1 Peter 2:2, 1 John 5:11, 1 John 3:9. Look! as a man may have grace and not know it, so a man may grow in grace and yet not discern it. As in the lopping of a tree, there seems to be a kind of diminution and destruction—yet the end and outcome of it is better growth. And as the weakening of the body by medicine seems to tend to death—yet it produces better health and more strength. The Christian's spiritual growth, when seemingly dead and declining, and be at a standstill—is still carried on by the hidden method of God to increase; for every true Christian is a member of a thriving body, in which there is no atrophy—but a continual issuing of vitality from the head; so that life, being wrought by the Spirit of life, never dies—but is always upon the growing hand—except in the dark winter night of desertion and temptations—and ripening and increasing even in the midst of all ordinary troubles and trials. ["The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree," Psalm 91:12-14. The palm-tree never loses his leaf or fruit.—Pliny. Grace grows not alike in all saints. In the parable, some brought forth thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.]

The apostle tells us, that the whole body of Christ, whereof every true Christian is a limb, is so compact together in itself, and so firmly fastened with certain spiritual nerves and ligaments to the head, that from it there is by them conveyed to each part a continual supply of spiritual grace, both sufficient to furnish it, and to further the growth of it. Let me give a little further light into this particular, by this similitude: A man is sets sail for the East Indies, and shapes his course thitherward; but along the way is often hindered by cross winds; he is by contrary winds compelled to dock at various harbors, and to stay there for a time, either to shift off stormy weather, or to take in fresh water, or to stop a leak, or to get some fresh provisions. And yet all this while we truly say, that he is going on in his way in his voyage, because his settled purpose and constant resolution is to make to his port, his haven, where he is bound; and all these seeming hindrances shall help forward his voyage. It is so in spiritual things; for our very growth in grace consists much in sincere desires, in fixed resolutions, and in faithful endeavors to grow in grace.

Aristotle makes it the mark of a good man, that he studies how he may

grow better than he is, not contenting himself with any degree or measure of goodness. And another heathen observes, that "the earnest desire of what men would have, makes them forgetful of what they have." "I forget what is past," says the apostle, "and press on to what is before," Philip. 3:13. Their eye is more upon what they want—than upon what they have. It is with good Christians in this case as it is with rich worldlings, that, like men in a race, have their eye on those who be before them, not on those who are behind them; they are ever eyeing those who seem to outstrip and outgo them in wealth, and think they have nothing, and that they are but poor men—so long as they come short of such and such, who are rich and great in the world.

And so it is with many precious Christians; they have still their eye fixed upon those whose examples they either read of, or whose courses and graces they are eyewitnesses of. And hereupon they think that they have no grace, or else that they make no progress in grace, at least worth speaking of, so long as they come behind and fall short of such and such, who are very eminent, or most eminent, in grace and holiness. And upon this account it is, that they make such sore complaints of their spiritual needs, and of their slow progress in grace and holiness, and that they can hardly perceive but that they stand still at a stop. Now mark, these sad complaints of theirs, and their serious desires to grow in grace—are a sure and infallible evidence of the truth of grace in them; yes, it is a sure argument that they love grace as it is grace, that they love grace for grace's sake, which none can do, but such as have grace.

It is a sure sign that he was never truly godly, who desires not to be better; yes, he has very great cause to fear, that his heart is rotten, very rotten, if not stark rotten—who desires not to be as godly as the best, to be as gracious as he who is most gracious, and to be as holy as he who is most holy. Well, sirs! this will be found an everlasting truth, namely, *That no man can sincerely desire, and habitually endeavor after the highest pitches of grace—but he who has true grace.*

**[11.] Eleventhly, No man can always desire grace—but he who has true grace.** Constant desires after grace argues the reality of grace. Constant desires after grace manifests a state of grace. Psalm 119:20, "My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto your judgments at all times."

Isaiah 26:7-9, Cant. 3:1-4, Psalm 106:3. Pliny speaks of a golden vine which never withers. All gracious desires are such golden desires which never wither. Take a Christian when you will, and where you will, and among whom you will, and in what condition you will, and still you shall find his heart full of gracious desires. Oh that I had grace! Oh that I had much grace! etc.

Balaam in a fit, in a good mood, desires to die the death of the righteous—but his desires were fleeting and flashy, they were transient, not permanent, Num. 23:10. Some poor sinners, when they are in a good mood, or under some distress of conscience, or under some grievous trials, or when they see the handwriting upon the wall, Dan. 5:6; and when death, which is the king of terrors, and the terror of kings, knocks at their doors—oh then they cry out, "Oh that we had grace! Oh, what shall we do for grace! Oh, send to such a minister, and to such a Christian, whom we have hated, scorned, reproached, and opposed, and desire them to be earnest with God, that he would give us grace; for now we see, that without grace there is no escaping of hell, nor no coming to heaven!" But all these desires of theirs are but like the morning cloud, or the early dew—which quickly passes away, Hosea 6:4, Psalm 78:37, Psalm 5:9.

But now if you look upon the weak Christian, as you shall commonly find a tear in his eye, a sigh in his bosom, and a complaint in his mouth; so you shall always find desires in his heart after grace—"Oh that I had grace! Oh that I had much grace! Oh that I did but excel in grace! Oh that I had as much grace as such a Christian! Oh that I had a greater exercise of grace!" Psalm 42:1-3, and 63:1-3, 8. Whatever outward or inward changes may attend a Christian in this world—yet you shall still find him full of holy desires, and breathings, and hankerings, and longings after God, and Christ, and grace, and holiness. "Oh that I had more of these! Oh, when shall I have more of these! Oh that God would cut me short in anything, yes, in everything, rather than cut me short in these things, that the desires of my soul are so much running after!"

These desires of theirs may further be set forth by a spring between a couple of hills; the spring will always run through those hindrances that stop it, or else it will run over them—for it cannot cease running if it is a living spring. Just so, the desires of a gracious soul will still be running

after God, and Christ, and grace. The good desires of bad men after God, and Christ, and grace, and holiness, are like water in a cistern, that quickly runs out. But the desires of a godly man after God, Christ, grace, holiness, are like water in a fountain that is still a-running. An unsound Christian is never good at all times; he is only good by fits, and starts, and turns, sometimes when he is sermon-sick, or under a smarting rod, or a galled conscience, or when he is under some heavy cross or sadness. Oh, then he will be good! Oh, then he will have God, and he will have Christ, and he will have grace, and he will have heaven. But this good frame, this good temper of his, is not lasting, it is not abiding; it is like a vapor that quickly vanishes, or like a windmill that goes as long as the wind fills the sails—but no longer. These are like Sigismund the emperor, who, when he was sick, would be very godly—but when he was well, none more wicked. But,

**[12.] Twelfthly, No man can sincerely desire to abound and excel most in those particular graces which are most opposite and contrary to those particular sins which his natural temper, constitution, complexion, calling, or condition, does most expose him and incline him to—but he who has true grace—but he whose heart is sincere with God.** Psalm 18:23, "I was upright before him, and I kept myself from my iniquity." If *passion* is a sincere Christian's bosom sin—then his desires run most out for meekness. If *pride* is a sincere Christian's bosom sin—then his desires are most for humility. If *earthliness* is a sincere Christian's bosom sin—then his desires are most for heavenly-mindedness. If *unbelief* is a sincere Christian's bosom sin—then his desires are most for faith. You shall then find him with the disciples, crying out, "Lord, increase our faith," Luke 7:5.

But now, though a wicked man's heart rise against every grace—yet it rises most strongly against those particular graces which are most opposite and contrary to those particular lusts which are a wicked man's bosom lusts, his darling sins, etc. Hence the *covetous* heart rises and swells most against liberality, as you see in Judas, "What need for this waste?" Mat. 26:8-9. He looks upon all as lost, which is laid out upon Christ, his servants and services. And the *lukewarm* professor's heart

rises and swells most against zeal and fervency, Rev. 3:15-17, Luke 19. And the griping *usurer's* heart rises and swells most against restitution; and the *adulterer's* heart rises and swells most against purity, chastity, self-restraint; and the *ignorant* man's heart rises and swells most against light and knowledge. The ignorant man is willing to go to hell in the dark, and ready and bold enough to conclude that we never had such sad and bad times as we have had since there has been so much preaching, and so much hearing, and so much fasting, and so much praying, and so much light and knowledge in the world.

But all is quite otherwise with a true child of God; for his heart rises and swells most against the toad or toads which are in his own bosom, Romans 7:22-23. And the daily and earnest desires of his soul are, that God would make him eminent in every grace, yes, that God would make him most eminent in those particular graces which are most opposite and contrary to those particular lusts and corruptions which more peculiarly, more especially he has cause to call his bosom iniquity, or the iniquities of his heart, and of his heels, Psalm 49:5. Look! as we have some dirt, more or less, which will still cleave to our heels while we are walking in a dirty road; just so, there is some defilements and pollutions that will still be cleaving to all our duties, services, ways, and walkings in this world—which we may well call the iniquity of our heels. Now, a gracious heart rises most against these, etc.

**[13.] Thirteenthly, No man can truly love grace in another—but he who has true grace in his own soul.** 1 John 3:10. No man can love a saint as a saint—but he who is a real saint. No man can love holiness in another—but he who has holiness in his own soul. No man can love a godly man for goodness' sake—but he who is really godly. "We know that we have passed from death to life—because we love the brethren," 1 John 3:14. Sincere love to the brethren is a most evident sign of a Christian's being already passed or translated from death to life, that is, from a state of nature into a state of grace. Such a poor soul that dares not say that he has grace in his own heart—yet dares say before the Lord—that he loves, delights, and takes pleasure to see the holy graces of the Spirit sparkling and shining in the hearts, lives, and lips of other saints, secretly wishing in himself that his soul were but in their case; and who

dares say before the Lord that there are no men in all the world who are so precious, so admirable, so lovely, so excellent, and so honorable in his account, in his eye—as those who have the image of God, of Christ, of grace, of holiness, most clearly, most fairly, and most fully stamped upon them. When a poor Christian can rejoice in every light, in every sun which outshines his own; when he sees wisdom and knowledge shining in one saint, and faith and love shining in another saint, and humility and lowliness shining in another saint, and meekness and uprightness shining in another saint, and zeal and courage shining in another saint, and patience and constancy shining in another—and then can make his retreat to his closet, admiring and blessing of the Lord for the various graces of his Spirit shining in his children, and be frequent and earnest with God, that those very graces might shine as so many suns in his soul; doubtless such a poor soul has true grace, and is saved, and will be happy to all eternity. [Psalm 15:1, 4, 16:3.] In Tertullian's time, the heathen would point out the Christians by this mark, "See how they love one another." Now, to prevent mistakes, I shall show you **the several properties of sincere love to the saints.**

**(1.) First, True love to the saints is spiritual;** it is a love for the image of God which is stamped upon the soul. 1 John 5:1, "Everyone who loves him who begat—loves him also who is begotten of him;" 1 John 4:7. A soul that truly loves, loves God the father for his own sake—and the children for the father's sake. If the image of God is the magnet which draws out our love to the saints—then our love is real to them. He who does not love the saints as saints, he who does not love them under a spiritual notion—he has no true affection to them. Naturally we hate God, because he is a holy God; and his law, because it is a holy law; and his people, because they are a holy people, Gen. 3:15; 1 John 3:12. It is only the Spirit of God, who can enable a man to love a saint for the image of God which is in him. Many there are which love Christians for their goods, not for their good; they love them for the money which is in their purses—but not for the grace which is in their hearts.

Love to the saints, for the image of God which is stamped upon them—is a flower which does not grow in sinful human nature's garden. No man can love grace in another man's heart—but he who has grace in his own.

Men do not more naturally love their parents, and love their children, and love themselves—than they do naturally hate the image of God upon his people and ways, Proverbs 29:10; Ezek. 25:15. I have read of one who was so lusty and quarrelsome, that he was ready to fight with his own image so often as he saw it in a mirror. Oh how many are there in these days, who are still a-quarreling and fighting with the image of God wherever they see it!

True love is for what of the divine nature, for what of Christ and grace shines in a man. **It is one thing to love a godly man, and another thing to love him for godliness.** Many love godly men as they are politicians, or helpful, or learned, or of a sweet nature, or affable, or related, or as those who have been kind to them. But all this is but natural love. But to love them because they are spiritually lovely, because of the seed of God in them, because they are all glorious within—is to love them as becomes saints; it is to love them at a higher and nobler rate than any hypocrite in the world can reach to, John 3:9, Psalm 45:13. The wasps fly about the tradesman's shop, not out of love to him—but the honey and fruit which is there. But,

**(2.) Secondly, True love to the saints is appreciating.** A gracious soul sets the highest price and the greatest value and esteem upon those who are gracious, Psalm 15:4. He honors those who fear the Lord; he looks upon the wicked as lumber—but upon the saints as jewels; he looks upon the wicked as dross—but upon the saints as the gold of Ophir; he looks upon the wicked as chaff—but upon the saints as wheat; he looks upon the saints as sons—but upon the wicked as slaves; he looks upon the saints as heirs of salvation—but upon the wicked as heirs of damnation, Psalm 119:119; Psalm 1:4; John 1:12; Heb. 1:14. Gracious souls do not value people by their great places, offices, names, professions, arts, parts, gifts, mirthful clothes, gold chains, honors, riches—but by what they are worth for another world. As the great God, so gracious souls look not how educated men are—but how pious; not how great—but how gracious; not how high—but how holy; and accordingly they value them. "My goodness extends not to you—but to the saints who are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight," Psalm 16:3. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor," Prov 12:26.

It is grace which differences one man from another, and which exalts one man above another. A gracious man, though ever so poor, and low, and contemptible in the world—is a better man than his wicked neighbor, though he be ever so great or rich in the world. In the eye, account, and esteem of God, angels, and saints—there is no man compared to the gracious man. The sun does not more excel and outshine the stars, than a righteous man does excel and outshine his unrighteous neighbor. "Better is the poor who walks in his uprightness, than he who is perverse in his ways, though he be rich," Proverbs 28:6. A gracious man prefers a holy Job upon the ash-heap, before a wicked Ahab upon the throne. He sets a higher price upon a gracious Lazarus, though clothed with rags and full of sores—than upon a rich and wretched Dives, though he be clothed gloriously, and fares sumptuously every day, Luke 16.

This is, and this must be for a lamentation—that this poor, blind, mad, besotted world rates and values men according to their worldly interest, greatness, glory, and grandeur. But gracious souls, they rate and value men by their graces, by their inward excellencies, and by what they are worth for eternity. In the eye of a gracious man, there is no wife like a gracious wife; no child like a gracious child; no friend like a gracious friend; no neighbor like a gracious neighbor; no magistrate like a gracious magistrate; no minister like a gracious minister; no master like a gracious master; nor any servant like a gracious servant. *Internal excellencies* are far more important with a gracious man, than all *external glories*. [Psalm 45:13. Wicked men may highly prize and admire the common gifts of the saints, as Pharaoh admired at the wisdom of Joseph, and Nebuchadnezzar admired at the wisdom of Daniel. But they never prize nor admire at their graces. "Everyone who does evil, hates the light." John 3:20.]

The Jews say, that those seventy people who went with Jacob into Egypt, were as much worth as all the seventy nations in the world. Doubtless, seventy gracious people, in the esteem and judgment of those who are gracious, are more worth than a whole world, yes, than seventy worlds of graceless people. Well sirs, remember this: No man can truly prize, and highly value grace in another—but he who has grace in his own heart. Some prize Christians for their wit, others prize them for their wealth;

some prize them for their birth and breeding, others prize them for their beauty and worldly glory; some prize them for the great things that have been done by them, others prize them for the good things that they have received from them; some prize them for their eagle eyes, others prize them for their silver tongues, and others prize them for their golden parts. But he who is truly gracious, he prizes them for the grace of God that is in them, he sets the highest value upon them for their holiness, etc. But,

**(3.) Thirdly, True love to the saints is universal, to one Christian as well as another, to all as well as any—to poor Lazarus as well as to rich Abraham, to a despised Job as well as to an admired David, to an afflicted Joseph as well as to a raised Jacob, to a despised disciple as well as to an exalted apostle. [No unregenerate person has a love to all the saints; for though he seems to love some—yet he loathes others; he is guilty of sinful partiality. They seem to love the rich, and despise the poor, James 2.]**

Eph. 1:15, "I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto **all** the saints." Col. 1:4, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to **all** the saints." *Faith* in Christ Jesus issues in *love* to all the saints; therefore they go commonly coupled in Paul's Epistles. It was the glory of the Ephesians and Colossians that their faith and love reached to all the saints. Their love was not a narrow love, a love confined to some particular saints—but it was universal to all saints: Philip. 4:21, "Greet *every* saint in Christ Jesus;" the poorest as well as the richest, the weakest as well as the strongest, the lowest as well as the highest, and those who have many infirmities as well as those who have fewer infirmities, and those who have but weak parts and gifts as well as those who have the strongest parts and the most raised gifts, Eph. 1:21-23; 1 Pet. 2:17.

All the saints have the same Spirit, the same Jesus, the same faith, etc.; they are all fellow-members, fellow-travelers, fellow-soldiers, fellow-citizens, fellow-heirs, and therefore must they all be loved with a sincere and cordial love. Love is set upon the brotherhood, upon the whole fraternity of believers, and not here and there upon one. Divine love casts an eye of favor upon grace in rags, upon a ash-heap, in a dungeon, a den,

a prison, a fiery furnace. Grace is as lovely in the illiterate as in the greatest scholar, in the servant as in the master, in the maid as in the mistress, in the child as in the father, in the subject as in the prince, in the buyer as in the seller, etc.

Look! as all our delight must be in the saints—so our delight must be in *all* the saints. It is sad and sinful to despise our poor brethren. And yet this was the very case of the Corinthians, for they in their love-feasts behaved so unequally, "that one was hungry," namely, the poor, "and another was drunken," namely, the rich. And this made the apostle put that question to them, "What! have you not houses to eat and drink in? or despise you the church of God, and shame those who have not?" 1 Cor. 11:21-22, or put those who have nothing to shame.

And the apostle James does very roundly reprove and condemn that partial love that was generally among the Jews in his days: "My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" James 2:1-4. Not that the apostle does simply or absolutely prohibit a *civil* differencing of men in place from others; for it cannot be denied but that there is a holy and warrantable respect of people in respect of their age, callings, gifts, graces, and greatness in the world. But when the rich man's *wealth* is more regarded than the poor man's godliness, and when men behave so to the rich as to cast scorn, contempt, disgrace, and discouragement upon the godly poor; those who respect a rich man who has but a little grace, before a poor man who is rich in grace—are worthy of blame.

All true-born sons love to see the image and picture of their father, though hung in ever so poor a frame, and in ever so mean a cottage. Just so, the true-born sons of God, they love to see the image of God, the picture of God, upon the poorest saints. It is sad to prefer a worldly splendor—before heavenly grace; a gold ring—before a rich faith; a chain of gold—before a chain of grace. Verse 5, "Hearken, my beloved brethren,

has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" We judge of people, by their faith. It is the great wisdom of a Christian not to judge of men by their outwards—but by their inwards; not by their externals—but by their internals; not by what they are worth for this world—but by what they are worth for that eternal world. The poorest saints are God's portion, Deut. 32:9; they are his pleasant portion, Jer. 12:10; they are his peculiar treasure, Exod. 19:5; they are his jewels, Mal. 3:17; they are the apple of his eye, Zech. 2:8; they are his glory, Isaiah 4:5; they are the crown of his glory and royal diadem, Isaiah 62:3. And therefore it is a dangerous thing to slight them, to disown them, to look frowningly upon them, or to behave unworthily towards them.

Pompey told his Cornelia, It is no praise to you to have loved *Pompeium Magnum*, Pompey the Great—but if you love *Pompeium miserum*, Pompey the miserable, you shall be a pattern for imitation to all posterity. So I say, It is no great matter to love those who are rich and pious, great and gracious, high and holy. But to love the poor saints of God in their lowest and most miserable condition, when they have not a rag to cover them, nor a crust to refresh them, nor a fire to warm them, nor a friend to stand by them, nor a penny to help them—this is praiseworthy, this manifests much of God, of Christ, of grace within.

Romanus the martyr, who was born of noble parentage, entreated his persecutors that they would not favor him for his nobility; for it is not, said he, the blood of my ancestors—but my Christian faith, that makes me noble. It is not race nor place—but grace, which makes a man truly noble. Without question, he who loves one saint for the image of God which is upon him—he cannot but fall in love with every saint that bears the lovely image of the Father upon him; he cannot but love a saint in rags as well as a saint in robes; a saint upon the ash-heap as well as a saint upon the throne. **Usually, those Christians that have least of the world, have most of Christ.** Commonly, those Christians that have least of the world, have most of heaven in their hearts, houses, and lives. But,

**(4.) Fourthly, True love to the saints will extend to those who are most remote in respect of place, as well as to those who are near.** They of Macedonia and Achaia made a contribution for the poor

saints at Jerusalem, Romans 15:26. The saints of Macedonia and Achaia did freely and cheerfully contribute to the poor saints at Jerusalem, whose faces probably they had never seen. And Gaius is commended for his love to strangers, 3 John 5. A gracious man who has an estate, a treasury, an inheritance—he is like a common fountain—which freely gives out to strangers as well as to near neighbors. A great fire will warm those who sit far from it, as well as those who sit near unto it. Just so, sincere love will extend and stretch out itself to those saints who are most remote. Gracious souls do dearly love and highly value those saints whose faces they have never seen, nor are likely to see in this world, and from whose hands they have not received the least civility. And all upon the serious reports that they have had of the grace of God that has been sparkling and shining in them, whose habitations are at a great distance from them. A sincere love, a genuine love, a hearty love, will be running out towards those who live most remote from us, if we do but understand that God is in them and with them of truth, Romans 12:9, 1 Peter. 1:22, 1 John 3:18. But,

**(5.) Fifthly, Our love to the saints is right, when we love them best and most—in whom the spiritual and supernatural causes of love are most sparkling and shining.** Where grace draws the affections, where the more grace we see—the more we shall love them. Psalm 16:3, "My goodness extends not to you—but to the saints who are in the earth, and to the *excellent*, in whom is all my delight." There are saints, and there are *excellent* saints. The Hebrew word that is here rendered *excellent*, signifies magnificent ones, noble ones, glorious ones, wonderful ones. O sirs! there are some saints who are magnificent in grace, noble in grace, glorious in grace, wonderful in grace. Now this is certain—if grace is the true reason why we love any, then the more excellent, the more magnificent any are in grace, the more highly we shall prize them, and the more dearly we shall love them, and the more abundantly in our hearts we shall honor them, Psalm 15:4.

Look! as grace rises higher and higher in the same person, so we shall rise higher and higher in our love to the same person. Daniel was greatly beloved, Dan. 9:23, and John was singularly beloved, John 21:20. And why? Because they were more eminently gracious than others were.

Where there is most grace, there God is most honored, and there Christ is most exalted, and there the Spirit is best pleased, and there true religion is most adorned, and there Satan is most dethroned, and there the world is most conquered, and there sin is most subdued, and there duties are most exactly performed. And therefore there the gracious soul can't but love best and most.

There are some who seem to love such and such godly men, whose judgments are weak, and light little, and parts low, and grace small; who yet look with a squint eye, an envious eye, upon every *sun* which outshines their own—upon everyone's graces and excellencies which are more sparkling than their own. **Though pride and envy have received their death's wound at the soul's first conversion—yet they are not quite slain in a believer.** There is an aptness even in real saints to grudge and repine at those gifts, graces, and excellencies in others, which outshine their own. John's disciples muttered and murmured because Christ had more followers and admirers than John, Luke 7:16-23, and that spirit that lived in John's disciples is still alive to this very day. This is, and this must be, for a lamentation.

Well, sirs, look, as the fairest day has its clouds, the finest linen its spots, the richest jewels their flaws, the sweetest fruits their worms—just so, when many precious Christians are not themselves, when they are in an hour of temptation, when their corruptions are up and their graces down, they may, and too often do, envy and repine at those graces, excellencies, and abilities, that do overcast, cloud, darken, and outshine their own, Num. 11:29.

The best of men are but men at the best, and there is still those bitter roots of pride, vain-glory, self-love, envy, etc., remaining in them, which occasions their hearts to rise and swell, yes, sometimes to cast disgrace upon those excellencies in others that themselves lack, Heb. 12:15, as that man who could not write his own name, and yet called the liberal arts a public poison and pestilence. This *spiritual disease of envy*, is mostly to be found among Christians who are got into some of the highest forms in Christianity. Take your ordinary common Christians, and they commonly rejoice most where they see most grace. And so do your Christians in a higher form too, when they come to themselves, and to make up their

accounts, and have wept over those cursed roots of bitterness which are so apt to be sprouting out.

Now, there is no greater argument that our grace is true, and that we love others for grace's sake, than our loving those best who have most grace, though they have but little of the world. A pearl is rich if found on a ash-heap, though it may glisten more when set in a ring of gold; so many a poor believer is rich in grace, and precious and glorious in the eye of Christ, and should be so in ours, though like Job he sits upon a ash-heap. Though in the eyes of the world he may seem to glisten most when adorned with riches, honor, and outward pomp; if grace be the true reason why we love any person, then the more grace that person has, the more we shall love him. A godly man loves all who are godly—but he loves them most who excel most in the power, purity, and practice of godliness, etc. But,

**(6.) Sixthly and lastly, True love to the saints is constant, it is permanent.** 1 Cor. 13:8, "Love never fails;" Heb. 13:1, "Let brotherly love continue." It is a love like that of Christ's, who loved his people to the end: 1 John 4:16, "He who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him." John 13:1, and 15:12, etc., Our love to our brother must not only lodge with us for a night—but we must dwell in brotherly love. Look! as our love must be sincere without hypocrisy, so it must be constant without deficiency. That love was never true—which is not constant. True love, like the pulse, will still be beating, it will still be working and running out to the person beloved. True love will not fawn upon a Christian when high—and frown upon him when low; it will not kiss him upon the throne—and kick him upon the ash-heap.

The grounds and causes of their love are constant, namely, God's commands, their spiritual relations, and the truth of grace in their souls; and therefore their love cannot but be constant. "A friend," says Solomon, "loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity," Proverbs 7:17. Euripides hit it when he said, that a faithful friend in adversity, is better than a calm sea to a weather-beaten mariner. He who truly loves—will love in adversity as well as in prosperity, in storms as well as in calms, in winter nights as well as in summer days. He who sincerely loves the saints—he will love them as well when men frown upon them, as when

they smile upon them; as well when men strike them, as when they stroke them; as well when men cast them down, as when they lift them up; as well when men cry, "Crucify them, crucify them," as when they cry, "Hosanna, hosanna," to them.

Consalvus, a Spanish bishop and inquisitor, wondered how the Christians had that commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," so indelibly printed in their hearts, that no torture could blot it out, and make them confess and betray one another, or cease from loving one another. I have read of Ursinus, a Christian physician, who being to suffer martyrdom for the gospel of Christ, began to waver and faint; which, when Vitalis, a holy man, saw, he stepped to him, and though he knew it would cost him his life—yet he thus comforted and encouraged him, saying, 'What! have you been heretofore so industrious to preserve men's bodies, and will you now shrink at the saving of your own soul? Be courageous, fear not,' etc. For which faithful counsel, he also was condemned to death, and suffered accordingly.

A true friend is neither known in prosperity, nor hidden in adversity. True love is like that of Ruth's to Naomi, that of Jonathan's to David, permanent and constant. Many there be whose love to the saints is like Job's brooks, which in the winter, when men have no need of them, overflows with offers of service and shows of love. But when the season is hot and dry, and the poor thirsty traveler stands in most need of water to refresh him, then the brooks are quite dried up. They are like the swallow, that will stay by you in the summer of prosperity—but fly from you in the winter of adversity. It is observed by Josephus of the Samaritans, that whenever the Jews' affairs prospered, they would be their friends, and profess much love to them; yes, they would vaunt of their alliance, saying, that they were near akin, and of the race of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph. But when the Jews were in trouble and affliction, and brought down, then they would not own them, nor have anything to do with them; yes, then they would set themselves with all their might against them, as the same historian tells us. This age is full of such Samaritans.

Yet certainly, such as truly love, they will always love; such as truly love the people of God, they will love them to the end. In the primitive times it

was very much taken notice of by the very heathen, that in the depth of misery, when fathers and mothers forsook their children, Christians, otherwise strangers, stuck close one to another. Their love of religion and one of another, proved firmer than that of sinful human nature. They seem to take away the sun out of the world, said the orator, who take away friendship from the life of man; for we do not more need fire and water than constant friendship. Though wicked men may pretend great love to the saints—yet their love is not constant. God sometimes indeed overrules their spirits with a very strong hand, as he did Laban's and Esau's, or as he overruled the spirits of the lions to preserve Daniel; and of the ravens to feed Elijah, Gen. 31:24, 29, 33:1-5; Dan. 6—but so soon as that overruling providence is over, they are as they were before. God for a time gave the Israelites favor in the eyes of the Egyptians—but before and after they were their utter enemies. But now a gracious soul, he loves the saints at all times, his love to them is constant. But,

**[14.] Fourteenthly, That soul that dares not say that he has grace—yet can truly say before the Lord, that he prizes the least grain of grace above ten thousand thousand worlds, certainly that soul has true grace in him.** Doubtless there are none who can prize grace in their understandings and judgments above all the world—but such as are first taken out of the world by grace, Micah 6:6-7; Philip. 3:18-19; Mat. 19:16-25; Psalm 2:21. There is no man on earth whose heart is void and empty of grace—but sets a higher value and price upon his lusts, or upon his relations, or upon his honors, or riches, or pleasures, or upon this or that worldly enjoyment, than he does upon grace, or the fountain of grace; yes, how many thousands are there, who set a higher price or value upon a hound, a hawk, a horse, a harlot, a good trade, a fair estate, a rich inheritance, yes, upon the very toys and trifles of this world, than they do upon God, or Christ, or grace! It was never yet known in the world, that ever God sent such a man to hell, who prized grace above heaven itself, who had rather have grace and holiness without heaven, than heaven itself without grace and holiness.

**[15.] Fifteenthly, That soul that dares not say that his condition is good—yet can say in truth of heart before the Lord, that he would not change his condition with the vain, carnal, formal,**

**and profane men of the world, for ten thousand worlds;** that man is certainly for heaven, and heaven is certainly for that man. We may be very highly and groundedly confident, that God will never cast that man to hell, among devils and damned spirits, at the great day, who in his day of life would not choose to be in the condition of the men of the world, for as many worlds as there be men in the world. Look! as none meet in heaven—but such as alike in their renewed natures, principles, and practices; so none meet in hell but such as alike in their old natures, principles, and practices. That God that would not allow an ox to be yoked with an donkey in this world, Deut. 22:10; nor a believer with an infidel, 2 Coy. 6:14-18; will never suffer such to be yoked with devils and damned reprobrates in that lower world, who would not, to gain many worlds, be willingly yoked with wicked men in this world. Certainly they shall never be a Christian's companions in that eternal world, whose society and company, and whose wickedness and baseness have been a grief, a torment, a hell to him in this world, Psalm 119:53, 136; Jer. 9:1-2; Ezek. 9:4, 6; 2 Peter 2:7-8. When Mrs. Catherine Brettergh was upon her dying bed, and most grievously assaulted by temptations, in the midst of her sore conflicts, this was no small support and comfort to her—that surely God would not send her to hell, to live forever among such wicked people, whose company and whose sin was a burden to her in this world, etc. But,

**[16.] Sixteenthly, That soul that dares not say that he does not sin**—"For in many things we offend all;" "and there is not a just man upon the earth that does good, and sins not;" and who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?" "And if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," [James 3:2; Eccles. 7:20; Proverbs 20:7; John 1:1, 8.]—**yet, can say in uprightness before the Lord, that he would not willingly, resolutely, maliciously, willfully, wickedly, and habitually sin against the Lord to gain a world; that soul which don't or won't, through grace assisting, allow himself, or indulge himself in a course of sin, or in a trade of sin, or in the common practice of any known sin—that soul is certainly a gracious soul.** "The evil that I do, I allow not," Romans 7:15.

It is one thing for a man to sin, it is another thing for a man to allow himself in sin; it is one thing for a godly man to step into a sin, and it is another thing to keep the road of sin. "Search me and try me, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me," or as the Hebrew runs, "any way of pain, or of grief, or of provocation," Psalm 139:24, that is, any course of sin that is grievous or provoking to the eyes of divine glory. A real saint can neither allow of sin, nor wallow in sin, nor be transformed into the image of sin, nor mix itself with sin. It is possible for a sincere Christian to step into a sinful path, or to touch upon sinful facts, and now and then in an hour of temptation, to slide, to trip, and to be overtaken unawares. But his main way, his principal work, is to depart from iniquity, Gal. 6:1, Proverbs 16:17, as a true *traveler* may now and then step a few steps out of his way, who yet for the main keeps his way, keeps the road. Or as a *bee* may now and then light upon a thistle—but her main work is to be gathering at the flowers. Or as a *sheep* may now and then slip into the dirt, or into a slough—but its main work is to be grazing upon the mountains.

Certainly, O soul, if sin is now your greatest burden, it shall never hereafter prove your eternal bane. God never yet sent any man to hell for sin, to whom sin has commonly been the greatest hell in this world. God has but one hell, and that is for those to whom sin has been commonly a heaven in this world. That man who hates sin, and that daily enters his protest against sin—that man shall never be made miserable by sin. Sin in a wicked man is like poison in a serpent; it is in its natural place, it is delightful to a sinner. But sin in a saint is like poison in a man's body, it is offensive, and the heart rises against it, and uses all divine antidotes whereby it may be expelled and destroyed. Nothing will satisfy a gracious soul—but the heart blood of his lusts. Now, he shall never be damned for his sins, whose heart is set upon killing his sins.

**[17.] Seventeenthly, Such a poor soul that dares not say, that God is his God, or that Christ is his redeemer, or that he has a work of grace upon his heart—yet can say with some integrity of heart before the Lord, that if God and Christ, grace and glory, holiness and happiness, were offered to him on the one hand, and all the honors, pleasures, profits, delights, and**

**carnal contents of the world were offered him on the other hand—he had infinitely rather ten thousand thousand times choose God and Christ, grace and glory, holiness and happiness, than the contrary;** certainly such a soul has true grace in him, and a saving work passed upon him; for none can freely, seriously, habitually, resolutely, choose God and Christ, grace and glory, holiness and happiness, as their chief good—but such who are really godly. Look! as our love to God is but an effect of his love to us—"We love him because he first loved us," 1 John 4:19—so our choosing of God for our God, is but an effect of God's choosing us for his people; we choose him because he first chose us, Deut. 7:6-9, 26:17-19. Such who, in their serious choice, set up God and Christ above all other people and things—such God will certainly make happy and blessed forever. God never did, nor never will, reject those, or damn those, who really choose him for their God, and for their great all.

The greatest part of the world choose their lusts rather than God, and the creatures rather than Christ; they choose rather to be great than gracious, to be rich in this world than to be rich towards God, Luke 12:21, to be outwardly happy than to be inwardly holy, to have a heaven on earth than to have a heaven after death—and so they miscarry forever, Mat. 10:42. That soul who with Mary has chosen the better part, that soul with Mary shall be happy forever; every man must stand or fall forever as his choice has been. But,

**[18.] Eighteenthly, Can you truly say, in the presence of the great and glorious God, who is the searcher of all hearts, that you have given up your heart and life to the rule, authority, and government of Jesus Christ?** and that you have chosen him to be your sovereign Lord and King, and are truly willing to submit to his dominion, as the only precious and righteous government, and as the only holy and heavenly, sweet and pleasant, profitable and comfortable, safe and best dominion in all the world, and to resign up your heart, your will, your affections, your life, your all—really to Christ, wholly to Christ, and only to Christ?

Can you, O poor soul! look up to heaven and truly say, "O dear Lord Jesus! other lords, namely, the world, the flesh, and the devil, have had

dominion too long over me. But now these lords I do heartily renounce, I do utterly renounce, I do forever renounce, and do give up myself to you as my only Lord, beseeching you to rule and reign over me forever and ever! O Lord! though *sin* rages, and *Satan* roars, and the *world* sometimes frowns, and sometimes fawns—yet I am resolved to own you as my only Lord, and to serve you as my only Lord. And my greatest fear, by divine assistance, shall be of offending you, and my chief care shall be to please you, and my only joy shall be to be a praise and an honor to you, Isaiah 26:13, 33:22. O Lord! I can appeal to you in the sincerity of my heart, that though I have many invincible sins, weaknesses, and infirmities which hang upon me; and though I am often worsted by my sins, and overcome in an hour of temptation—yet you who know all thoughts and hearts—you know that I have given up my heart and life to the obedience of Jesus Christ, and do daily give them up to his rule and government. And it is the earnest desire of my soul, above all things in this world, that Jesus Christ may still set up his laws in my heart, and exercise his dominion over me," Psalm 65:3, Romans 7:23.

Now certainly, there is not the weakest Christian in all the world but can venture himself upon such an appeal to God as this is. And without all question, where such a frame and temper of spirit is, there the dominion of Jesus Christ is set up. And where the dominion of Christ is set up, there sin has no dominion; for the dominion of sin and the dominion of Christ are inconsistent, and therefore such a soul is happy, and will be happy to all eternity. But,

**[19.] Nineteenthly, That man who will venture his soul upon Christ, and who will lean upon Christ, and cleave to Christ with full purpose of heart, [Cant. 8:5; Acts 11:21-23; Psalm 71:15; Isaiah 61:10.] and who will cleave to his blood, and cleave to his righteousness, and cleave to his merits and satisfaction, in the face of all fears, doubts, disputes, cavils, and objections—and though it cannot clear its title to Christ—yet will stay and hang itself upon Christ for life and happiness; that man is certainly a believer, and will be everlastingly saved.**

"Though he slays me—yet will I trust in him," Job 13:15; if I must die, I will die at his feet, and in the midst of death expect a better life. That man

is a true believer, who can love a frowning God, and hang upon an angry God, and follow hard after a withdrawing God, yes, and trust in a killing God, as here, Mat. 15:22-28. Job had his feverish fits, and his impatient slips, and yet he kept up his heroic resolution to lean upon the Lord, while he had but one minute to live. And this manifests not only the *reality* of faith—but also the *strength* of Job's faith in the midst of his extraordinary combats.

When the soul is peremptorily and habitually resolved to cleave to the person of Christ, and to cleave to the merits of Christ, and to cleave to the transactions of Christ with the Father for the salvation of sinners, as the wife cleaves to her husband, or as the child cleaves to the father, or as Ruth cleaved to Naomi, or as the ivy cleaves to the oak, with an "If I perish, I perish," Ruth 1:14-17, Esther 4:16, then it is safe, then it is happy, then it is out of the danger of hell, then it is within the suburbs of heaven. God never did, nor ever will cast such a man to hell, whose soul is drawn forth to a secret resting, staying, leaning, and relying alone upon Christ, for the obtaining of all that good, and all that glory that he has purchased, and his Father has promised. But,

**[20.] Lastly, That man who makes it his principal care, his main business, his work of works, to look to his heart, to watch his heart, and to reform his heart—that man doubtless has a saving work of God upon his heart.** There are two things which a gracious soul most looks at—his God and his heart. Though a gracious man looks to the cleansing of his hands—yet his principal care is the reformation of his heart, the cleansing of his heart, according to that command of the apostle James: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded," James 4:8. And that of the prophet Jeremiah: "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved," Jer. 4:14. Man must labor after a clean inside, as well as a clean outside. The outward life must not be only unspotted before the world—but the heart also must be unspotted before God; the heart is as capable of inward defilements as the body is of outward defilements, 2 Cor. 7:1.

O sirs! though heart defilement is least taken notice of—yet heart defilement is the worst defilement, and the most dangerous defilement in

the world. Heart defilement is spiritual defilement, and spiritual defilement is the defilement of devils, which of all defilement is the most hateful, odious, and pernicious defilement, Eph. 6:12. The hypocrite's only care is to keep his outward life from defilement—but the sincere Christian's care is mainly to keep his heart from defilement; for he very well knows, that if he can but keep his heart clean—he shall with more ease keep his life clean. If the fountain is kept pure—the streams will run pure. The heart is the spring of all actions, and therefore every action is as the spring is from whence it flows; if the spring is good—the action is good which flows from it; if the spring is evil, the action is evil which flows from it. "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart." Luke 6:45

Certainly, the great work of a Christian lies with his heart. The reformation of the heart is the highest and choicest part of reformation, because it is the reformation of the noblest part of man, and is that which God looks most after, Proverbs 23:26. The reformation of the heart is indeed the heart of reformation. There is nothing reformed to purpose, until the heart is reformed; if the heart is bad, all is bad; if that is very bad, all is very bad; if that is stark bad, all is stark bad. But if that is reformed, all is reformed.

A gracious man's watch is mainly about his *heart*: [Psalm 51:10, 86:11, 119:36, 119:80, 27:8, 119:2, 10; Acts 8:36; Heb. 8:11; Jer. 31:33.] "Create in me a clean *heart*, O God! and renew a right *spirit* within me." "Unite my *heart* to fear your name." "Incline my heart unto your testimonies." "Let my *heart* be sound in your statutes, that I be not ashamed." "When you said, Seek my face, my *heart* answered, Your face, Lord, will I seek." "With my whole *heart* have I sought you." "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you." "Incline my *heart* unto your testimonies, and not unto covetousness."

The heart of man is the fountain of life or death, and therefore sin in the heart, in some respects, is worse and more dangerous than sin in the life. And hence it is that the sincere Christian doubles his guard about his heart. Luther hit it when he said, "I more fear what is within me—than what comes from without." The storms and winds without do never move

the earth; it is only vapors within which cause earthquakes.

Hypocrites, as our Savior testifies, are all for the outside; they wash the platters and the cups, and beautify the tombs, like an adulteress whose care is to paint a fair face upon a foul heart, Mat. 23:25-30. But now a sincere Christian, though he has a great concern for the well ordering of his life—yet his main business and work is about his heart. "Oh that this *ignorant* heart were but more enlightened! Oh that this *proud* heart were but more humble! Oh that this *profane* heart were but more holy! Oh that this *earthly* heart were but more heavenly! Oh that this *unbelieving* heart were but more believing! Oh that this *passionate* heart were but more meek! Oh that this *carnal* heart were but more spiritual! Oh that this *lukewarm* heart were but more zealous for God, and Christ, and the gospel, and the great concerns of eternity! Oh that this *vain* heart were but more serious! Oh that this *dull* heart were but more quickened! Oh that this dead heart were but more enlivened!" etc.

**The highest and hardest work of a Christian lies with his heart.**

Mark, common light, common conviction, education, enforcement of conscience, principles of common honesty and morality, the eye of man, the fear of man, the examples of man, the laws of man, and the rewards of man, with a hundred other things, may be very prevalent to reform the life, to regulate the outward life, and to keep that in some due decorum. And yet all these things will be found too weak, too low to change the heart, to reform the heart, to mend the heart, to purify the heart. To this great work there are principles of a higher nature required: "Purifying their hearts by faith," Acts 15:9.

It is not a guard of moral virtues—but a guard of saving graces that can keep the heart in order. To reform the heart, to keep the heart in a gracious frame, is one of the best and hardest works in the world: Proverbs 4:23, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The text is about matter of life and death. The words are mandatory, for all counsels in Scripture carry in them the force of a command. In the words you have two things observable: (1.) A duty enjoined, "Keep your heart with all diligence." (2.) The reason or motive enforcing it, "For out of it are the issues of life." In the duty there are two things considerable: (1.) Here is the subject matter, the thing that is to be

done, and that is, "keep your heart." This duty is charged upon all in peremptory and undispensable terms. (2.) Here is the manner how it must be done, and that is, "with all diligence."

(1.) "Keep." The Hebrew word *natsar*, to keep, has various significations—but the main is to keep in safe custody; we should keep our hearts as under lock and key, that they may be always at hand when the Lord shall call for them, etc.

(2.) "Your heart." By the heart we are not to understand that particular vital member of the body that in common speech we call the heart. Heart is not here taken properly for that part of the body which philosophers call the first that lives and the last that dies. But by heart, in a metaphor, the Scripture sometimes understands some particular noble faculty of the soul. Sometimes the heart is put for the **understanding**: Romans 1:21, "Their foolish heart was darkened," that is, their understanding was darkened. Sometimes it is put for the will and **affections**: Mat. 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," that is, with your will and with all your affections. So Proverbs 23:26, Deut. 10:12. The **will** is the chief power of the soul, as the heart is the principal part of the body. And it commands all the affections, as the centurion did his servants, Mat. 8. Sometimes it is put for the **conscience**: 1 John 3:20, "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things," that is, if our conscience condemns us justly, then our case must be assuredly sad, because God knows much more by us than we know by ourselves, and can charge us with many sins that conscience is not privy to, Psalm 19:12. Sometimes it is put for the **memory**: Psalm 119:11, "Your word have I hid in my heart," that is, in my memory. So Luke 2:19. But here it is taken comprehensively for the whole soul, with all its powers, noble faculties, and endowments, together with their several operations—all which are to be watched over.

(3.) "With all diligence," or as the Hebrew runs, "with all keeping." The Hebrew word *shamar*; signifies, to keep with watch and ward. [Cato, Cicero, Seneca, Socrates, and other heathens, have laid down excellent rules for the government of the outward man. But none for the government of the heart.] A Christian is to keep a perpetual guard about his heart. The Hebrew word is borrowed from military affairs. We should

keep our hearts as soldiers keep a garrison, with watch and ward. The word shamar is taken from a besieged garrison, begirt by many enemies without, and in danger of being betrayed by treacherous citizens within; in which danger the soldiers upon pain of death are commanded to watch.

Junius reads the word thus, "Keep your heart," above all keeping. So Jerome reads, above all keeping keep your heart, that is, keep, keep, watch, watch, etc. So Rhodoiphus reads it; and so we read it in the margin of our Bibles. And the Syriac reads it in the same manner that our English does, with all caution and wariness we are to keep our hearts.

Oh what guards and double guards! Oh what watches and double watches, should men put upon their hearts! These words, keeping, keep, import both a universal watchfulness over the heart, and a diligent watchfulness over the heart, and a constant watchfulness over the heart; and thrice happy are those people who keep such a watch upon their hearts. A man is to keep his eye, and keep his mouth, and keep his feet—but above all keeping, he is to keep his heart. It is a duty incumbent upon every Christian to keep his own heart, "Keep your heart yourself." You may make another person your yard-keeper, or your house-keeper, or your shop-keeper, or your cash-keeper, or your horse-keeper, or your purse-keeper. But you must be your own heart-keeper. "Keep your heart with all diligence." Some understand this of all kind of watchfulness. The Hebrew word is applied to several sorts of keeping. As,

**First, It is applied to those who are the keepers of a prison,** where dangerous felons or malefactors are to be looked to, that they do not break away. 1 Kings 20:39, "Keep this man," So Joseph was made the keeper of the prison, Gen. 39:21-23; so Job, 7:12. The Hebrew word is the same with that in Proverbs 4:23. Now, oh how diligent, how vigilant are men in looking after their prisoners! Even so should we be in looking after our hearts, etc.

**Secondly, It signifies to keep, as men would keep a besieged garrison,** or city, or castle, in time of war. So it is used in that Hab. 2:1. Now what strong guards, what watchful guards do men keep up at such a time! A gracious heart is Christ's fort-royal. Now, against this fort Satan

will employ the utmost of his strength, art, and craft. And therefore how highly does it concern every Christian to keep a strong guard, a constant guard about his heart! But,

**Thirdly, It signifies to keep, as the priests and Levites kept the sanctuary of God,** the temple of God, and all the holy things that were committed to their charge; so the word is often used by the prophet, Ezek. 44:8, 15-16, etc. The temple, and all the vessels of the temple, were to be kept pure, and clean, and sweet. Our hearts are the temples of God, the temples of the Holy Spirit. And therefore we should always keep a strong and diligent guard about them, that nothing may pass in or out, that may be either displeasing, provoking, or grieving to them. But,

**Fourthly, The word signifies to keep, as a man keeps his life.** Job 10:12, "Your care has preserved," here is *shamar*, "my life." Now with what care, with what diligence, with what labor, with what watchfulness do men labor to preserve their natural lives! What a guard, what a watch do men daily set about their lives; the same they should set about their hearts. But,

**Fifthly, Men should keep their hearts, as they keep a rich treasure of money or jewels.** Now, to preserve a rich treasure, what locks, what bolts, what bars, what chains are made use of! Our hearts are jewels more worth than all the kingdoms, crowns, and scepters of this world. There are few men that know how to value a God, a Christ, a gospel, a covenant of grace, a heaven, or their own hearts as they should. What are mountains of gold, and rocks of pearl—compared to the heart, the soul of man! The heart is that pearl of great price for which a man should venture his all, and lay down his all. Oh then, what a guard, what a watch should a man continually keep upon his heart!

The heart is the presence-chamber of the King of heaven. And upon this account it becomes a Christian always to keep a guard upon his heart. He keeps his heart best, who keeps it as his choicest treasure, etc. All our spiritual riches are in our hearts. A godly man may say—All my goods I carry about with me. But,

**Sixthly, Men should keep their hearts, as a fond father keeps**

**his only child.** The fond father will still keep his child within doors, he will still have him under his eye, and in his presence, so that no hurt, no harm may befall him day or night. Our eye should be still upon our hearts, or else they will give us the slip, and play the harlot with us. But,

**Seventhly, Men should keep their hearts, as lovers keep the love-tokens which are mutually sent one to another.** They love to be often a-looking upon them, and a-thinking of them, and a-talking of them; and will be sure to keep the strictest and the strongest guard upon them. So a Christian should still be a-looking upon his heart, and a-thinking upon his heart, and a-speaking of his heart, either of the badness of it, or of the needs of it, and a-keeping of the strictest and strongest guard upon his heart. But,

**Eighthly, A man should keep his heart as a man keeps his house, when he is afraid and in danger of being robbed by thieves in the night.** Oh how wakeful, and watchful, and active will a man now be! But what is a man's house to his heart? A man's heart is in ten thousand times more danger than his house, and accordingly his guard should be most about his heart. But,

**Ninthly, A man should keep his heart, as men keep their gardens which are full of choice, rich, rare, ripe fruits and flowers.** Now, what care, cost, and pains men are at to keep such gardens, you well know. And oh that you did but every day more and more experimentally know what it is to spend your greatest care and pains about your hearts, which are Christ's garden, his bed of spices, where all graces flourish! Cant. 4:16.

**Tenthly, and last, A man should keep his heart as stylish men and women do their fine clothes.** Oh they won't endure a speck, a spot upon them! It is your wisdom, and oh that you would more and more make it your work, to keep your hearts from all sinful specks and spots! Let not others be more careful to keep their outsides clean, than you are to keep your insides clean; for what are clean clothes, compared to a clean heart? **It is better to go to heaven in ragged clothes with a clean heart—than to go to hell in fine clothes with an unclean heart.**

Doubtless that man who makes it his business to keep his heart as men keep dangerous felons or traitors; or as soldiers keep their garrisons or castles when closely besieged; or as the priests and Levites kept the sanctuary of God; or as a man keeps his natural life; or as a man keeps a rich treasure; or as a fond father keeps an only child; or as lovers keep their love-tokens; or as a man keeps his house when he is in danger to be robbed; or as a man keeps his pleasant garden; or as stylish men and women keep their fine clothes—that man is doubtless a true Nathanael—a man who has a work of God passed in power upon his soul.

Yes, that man whose sincere desires, and whose gracious purposes, and fixed resolutions, and faithful endeavors, is to guard and watch his heart, according to the particulars we have now hinted, that man, without a perhaps, is a gracious man, and one who has the root of the matter in him, and shall be happy to all eternity.

Look! as no man can *hear* as he would and should; nor *pray* as he would and should; nor *believe* as he would and should; nor *repent* as he would and should; nor *walk* as he would and should—so no man can *keep his heart* as he would and should. But if a man makes it his great business and work to keep his heart, to watch his heart, to reform his heart, to better his heart—he is accepted of God, and shall be blessed forever.

It is one of the greatest and clearest evidences of grace, for a man to make it his greatest business, work, and concern—to keep his heart always in a gracious frame, to keep his heart always in a wakeful frame, in a watchful frame, in a tender frame, in a believing frame, in a repenting frame, in a humble frame, in a patient frame, in a serious frame, in a heavenly frame, and in a jealous frame; for the more gracious the heart is, the more suspicious it will be. [Cant. 5:2; 2 Kings 22:19; 2 Chron. 32:26; James 5:11; Eccles. 5:1,2; Col. 3:1,2; 2 Cor. 7:11.]

Satan has a strong party, a numerous party, an experienced party, a subtle party, in all our hearts, and therefore it highly concerns us to watch our hearts with a holy jealousy. O sirs! God has never said, Above all keepings, keep your shops; or above all keepings, keep your estates; or above all keepings, keep your flocks; or above all keepings, keep your money-bags; or above all keepings, keep your friends; or above all

keepings, keep your bodies; or above all keepings, keep your names; or above all keepings, keep your lives. But he has said, Above all keepings, keep your hearts.

Look! as the heart is the fountain of natural life, and if it fails, life fails. And therefore it is strongly secured with ribs about it, it is guarded in a castle of flesh and bones; so is the soul the fountain of spiritual life, and runs invisibly through all the body. Fountains were to be kept pure, by the Roman laws; and the heart, which is the spring and fountain of all actions, is to be kept pure, by the laws of the great God, 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thes. 5:23, etc. Men keep the heart principally from hurt, because every wound there is mortal.

Oh that men were as wise for their souls! **God's eye is mainly upon the heart.** The heart, well guarded and watched, keeps all in security. Alexander was safe while Antipater kept the watch, so all within that little world *MAN* will be safe while the heart is strongly guarded. The heart is the fountain, the root, the store-house, the great wheel that sets all a-going, and therefore, above all keepings, keep your hearts. It is a foolish thing to watch the outworks, and leave the fort-royal without a guard; so it is a foolish thing to watch the out-works, the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand, the feet—though these must all be watched—and to leave the heart, which is a Christian's fort-royal, without a guard.

"If all things else must needs be lost,

Yet save your soul, Whatever it cost."

He who makes it his business to watch, and weep, and sigh, and groan most over his own heart—he doubtless is in a gracious estate. He who makes it his work, his daily work, his greatest work, his work of works—to keep a continual guard upon his heart, he certainly is in a blessed estate. He who lamentingly cries out, "Oh that my soul did but prosper as my body! Oh that my inward man were but in as good a frame as my outward man! Oh that this proud heart were but more humble! Oh that this hard heart were but more softened! Oh that this carnal heart were but more spiritual! Oh that this earthly heart were but more heavenly! Oh that this unbelieving heart were but more believing! Oh that this passionate heart

were but more meek! Oh that this vain heart were but more serious! Oh that this blind heart were but more enlightened! Oh that this dull heart were but more quickened! Oh my heart, my heart! when will you be better? Oh my God, my God! when shall my heart be better? Oh bring it into a gracious frame, and forever keep it in a gracious frame!" He who thus lamentingly cries out of his heart, he certainly has an honest heart, and will be happy forever.

"O Lord, my memory is weak, and my utterance is bad, and my understanding is dark, and my gifts are low, and my affections are flat, and my temptations are strong, and my corruptions are prevalent, Psalm 39:22-24. But you, who are the great heart-searcher, you know that I would sincerely have my heart in a better temper; I had rather have my heart brought into a gracious frame, and kept in a gracious frame, than to have all the riches of the Indies, than to be an emperor, yes, than to be king over all the earth."

If it be indeed thus with you, you are blessed, and shall be blessed forever; 2 Cor. 8:1 2, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not." I know the apostle speaks this in point of alms—but it is applicable to the case in hand, and to a hundred other cases. God measures his people not by their *works*—but by their *wills*. If they desire to be to be more holy, humble, heavenly, and to have their hearts always in a most gracious frame—then they are accepted of God; for every godly man is as good in the eye of God, in the judgment of God, and in the account of God—as he would be.

Not long before Mr. Baynes died, some friends who were with him in his library, which was an excellent one, fell a-commending of it; "Ay," says he, "there stand my books—but the Lord knows that for many years last past I have studied my heart more than books." Oh no minister compared to him, no scholar compared to him—who studies his heart more than his books. Nor is there any Christian compared to him who studies his heart more than his day-books, or more than his shop books, or that studies his heart more than his counting-house, or that studies his heart more than a good bargain, etc. That man is for heaven, and heaven is for that man—who makes it his greatest business in this world to watch his heart, to

guard his heart.

The hypocrite looks most to externals—but the sincere Christian looks most to internals. The hypocrite's main watch is about his lips—but a sincere Christian's main watch is about his heart. The hypocrite's main work lies without doors—but the sincere Christian's main work lies within doors. All know, that know anything, that both nature and grace begin at the heart—but art begins at the face. A painter does not begin a picture at the heart; a picture has but a face—but an outside. And as nature begins at the heart—but art at the face, so grace begins at the heart—but hypocrisy at the face, at the outside of religion.

**Every man is that in reality—which he is inwardly.** "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God," Romans 2:28-29. Certainly that man who makes it his great business to watch his heart, and to keep his heart always in a gracious frame, that man is a gracious man.

It is true our hearts are like our watches, seldom got to go well; and when they do go well, how hard a work is it to keep them going well! The motions of our watches are not constant; sometimes they go faster, and sometimes they go slower, and often they stand in need of mending. Though in these, and many other respects, our hearts are like our watches—yet if we make it our grand work to keep a constant guard upon our hearts, and our main design in this world to have our hearts brought and kept in a gracious frame, our spiritual estate is good, and we shall be happy forever, etc.

In my other writings there are variety of special evidences, which the Christian reader, if he pleases, and if need requires, may make use of, in order to the further clearing up of his gracious estate, and therefore let these twenty suffice at this time. And thus much for this chapter, etc.

## Evangelical Repentance

Now, in this chapter I shall treat of sound, saving repentance, of repentance unto life; yes, of that evangelical repentance that has the precious promises of remission of sin and salvation running out unto it. My purpose at this time is not to handle the doctrine of repentance at large—but only to speak so far of it as may speak it out to be evidential of the goodness and happiness of a Christian's spiritual and eternal condition.

Now, before I come to open myself more particularly, give me permission to premise this in the general, namely, that **there is a repentance that does accompany salvation**: 2 Cor. 7:10, "For godly sorrow works *repentance to salvation* not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world works death." Jer. 4:14, "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved." Acts 11:18, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then has God also to the Gentiles granted *repentance unto life*." Mat. 18:3, "And Jesus said, Truly I say unto you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Acts 3:19, "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Having premised thus much in the general, give me now permission to say, That there are **three parts of true, sound, saving repentance, unto all which forgiveness of sin is promised**. And the

**1. First, is contrition or grief of heart for sins committed.** Now this is called sometimes godly sorrow, 2 Cor. 7:10; and sometimes a contrite spirit, Isaiah 66:2; and sometimes a broken and contrite heart, Psalm 51:17; and sometimes the afflicting of our souls, Lev. 16:29; and sometimes the humbling of the heart, 2 Chron. 7:14, Lam. 3:20; and sometimes a mourning, Zech. 12:10; and sometimes a weeping, Mark 14:72. All repenting sinners are mourning sinners. *David* repents—and waters his couch with his tears, Psalm 6:6. *Hezekiah* repents—and humbles himself for the pride of his heart, 2 Chron. 32:26. *Ephraim* repents—and Ephraim bemoans himself and smites upon his thigh, and is

even confounded, Jer. 31:18-19. *Mary Magdalene* repents—and weeps, and washes Christ's feet with her tears, Luke 7:38. The *Corinthians* repented—and they were made sorrowful after a godly manner, 2 Cor. 7:9. Repentance in the Hebrew is called an *irking of the soul*; and in Greek, *after-grief*; and in the Latin, *poenitentia*; all which do import, that contrition or sorrow for sin is one part of true repentance. Oh the sighs, the groans, the sobs, the tears, which are to be found among repenting sinners, etc. Luther hit the mark when he said, "What are all the palaces of the world to a contrite heart; yes, heaven and earth, seeing penitential heart is the seat of divine majesty?"

**2. Secondly, It is very observable, that all mourning people for their sins, are within the compass of the promise of forgiveness of sins:** Zech. 12:11, "In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo." Zech. 13:1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." Jer. 31:18, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning of himself," etc. Verse 20, "I will surely have mercy on him;" or, as the Hebrew has it, I will, having mercy, have mercy on him. As soon as Ephraim's heart is troubled for his sins, God's affections are troubled for Ephraim; as soon as Ephraim, like a penitent child, falls a-weeping at God's foot, God, like a tender indulgent father, falls a-bemoaning of Ephraim. Ephraim could not refrain from tears, and God could not refrain from opening his affections of mercy towards him. Just so in Isaiah 57:15. And how can the contrite heart be indeed revived and cheered without forgiveness of sins, without a pardon in the bosom?

Melancthon makes mention of a godly woman, who having upon her deathbed been in much conflict, and afterwards much comforted, broke out into these words: Now, and not until now, did I understand the meaning of these words, "Your sins are forgiven." There is no comfort to that which arises from the sense of forgiveness: Isaiah 40:1-2, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God; speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her iniquities are pardoned." And why is the mourning soul pronounced the blessed soul: Mat. 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted:" but because the mourning soul is the

pardoned soul?

Question. **But what is that sorrow or mourning for sin, which is a part of true repentance?** The resolution of this question is very necessary for the preventing of all soul-deceits and mistakes, and for the quieting, settling, and satisfying of souls truly penitent, and therefore I shall give these eight following answers to it.

**[1.] First, It is a sorrow or grief that is SPIRITUAL, that is, SUPERNATURAL.** No man is born with godly sorrow in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. Godly sorrow is a plant of God's own planting; it is a seed of his own sowing; it is a flower of his own setting; it is of a heavenly offspring; it is from God, and God alone. The spirit of mourning is from above; it is from a supernatural power and principle. There is nothing that can turn a heart of stone into flesh—but the Spirit of God, Ezek. 36:25-26. Godly sorrow is a gift from God: Job 23:16, "God makes my heart soft." No hand but a divine hand can make the heart soft and tender under the sight and sense of sin. Nature may easily work a man to mourn, and melt, and weep, under worldly losses, crosses, and miseries, as it did David's men, 1 Sam. 30:4; but it must be grace, it must be a supernatural principle, that must work the heart to mourn for sin.

**[2.] Secondly, Godly sorrow is a sorrow FOR SIN AS SIN. Godly sorrow is a mourning rather for sin—than for the trouble which sin brings;** it is not so much for loss of goods, lands, wife, child, credit, name, etc.—but for that a holy God is offended, a righteous law violated, Christ dishonored, the Spirit grieved, and the gospel blemished, etc. *Peter's* sorrow was godly—but *Judas'* sorrow was worldly; Peter mourns over the evil of sin—but Judas mourns over the evil of punishment.

*David* mourns over his sin, "Against you, you only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight," Psalm 51:4. And so 2 Sam. 24:10, "And David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people; and David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done, and now I beseech you, O Lord! take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done foolishly." David does not cry cut, Take away the threatened famine,

but, Take away the iniquity of your servant. He does not cry out, Take away the enemies of your servant, but, Take away the iniquity of your servant. Nor he does not say, Take away the pestilence from the land—but, Take away the iniquity of your servant.

But now when *Pharaoh* was under judgments, he never cries to the Lord to take away his sins, his pride, his hardness, his obdurateness, his envy, his malice, his hatred, etc.—but he cries out, Take away the judgment, take away the punishment, take away the frogs, take away the lice, take away the caterpillars, etc. But under all these dreadful and amazing judgments that he was under, such a word as this never fell from his lips, Take away my sin, O Lord! take away my sins; your judgments do terrify me—but my sins will damn me, and therefore whatever becomes of my life, kingdom, and crown, take away my sins and save my soul.

*David* saw sin to be a greater evil than fleeing before his enemies, or than famine or pestilence was; and therefore he desires rather to be rid of his sins, than to be rid of the punishment which was due to his sin. But *Pharaoh* saw no such evil in sin, and therefore he cries out, Take away the plague, take away the plague.

And *Job* upon the ash-heap cries out, "I have sinned, what shall I do unto you, O preserver of men!" Job 7:20. Job does not cry out, Oh, I have lost all my substance, I am bereaved of all my children, I am set as naked upon the ash-heap! My friends reproach me, my wife tempts me to curse my God, which is ten thousand times worse than to curse myself; Satan persecutes me, and God has not only forsaken me—but has also become a severe enemy to me, etc. Job cries out of his sin, and not of his sufferings. A deep sense of his sins swallows up as it were all sense of his sufferings.

And so that great apostle *Paul* does not cry out, O wretched man that I am! that bonds attend me in every place, and that I have neither house nor home to go to, and that I am despised, scorned, reproached, and persecuted, and that I am accounted factious, seditious, rebellious, erroneous, and that I am looked upon as the offscouring of the world, etc. Oh no! but he cries out of his sin: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Romans 7:23, 24.

Likewise, the prophet *Micah*, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned," Micah 7:9. Though of all burdens the indignation of the Lord be the greatest burden—yet divine indignation is but a light burden in comparison of sin. A gracious soul can better stand under the burden of God's indignation for sin, than it can stand under the burden of sin itself, which has kindled that indignation, etc.

**[3.] Thirdly, Godly sorrow is a GREAT sorrow, it is a SUPERLATIVE sorrow, it is a sad and SERIOUS sorrow.** A sincere mourning is a deep mourning, it springs from serious and deep apprehensions of the great anger and deep displeasure of God, and of the woeful nature, demerit, burden, bitterness, vileness, and filthiness of sin, etc. The blessed Scripture seems to make godly sorrow a superlative sorrow, calling it a *great* mourning, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo, and a *bitterness*, as one is in for his first-born, Zech. 12:10-11. And so the church, "My affections are troubled within me, my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled," Lament. 1:20. And *David* watered his couch with his tears, Psalm 6:6. And *Mary Magdalene* wept much, as well as she loved much, Luke 7. And *Peter* went out and wept bitterly, Mat. 26:15. Clement observes, that all the time that Peter lived after this great fall, he would every night, when he heard the rooster crow, fall upon his knees and weep bitterly.

Look! as shallow brooks make the greatest noise, so hypocrites and formalists may howl, and roar, and cry, and make more noise than the true penitent; but yet the sorrow of a true penitent is more inward, secret, solid, still, and deep, Hosea 7:14. As, you know, the deepest rivers run most silently, and make least noise—so the deepest sorrow makes least noise. The mourning of repenting souls, under the apprehensions of their sins, is like the mourning of doves; but the mourning of wicked men under the apprehension of their sins, is like the bellowing of bulls and roaring of bears, Ezek. 7:16; Isaiah 51:20, 59:11.

**[4.] Fourthly, A sincere mourning is an EXTENSIVE mourning, it is an UNIVERSAL mourning.** Godly sorrow and grief extends itself, not only to some sins—but to all sins, great and small. Look! as a holy heart *hates* all sin, so a holy heart *mourns* over all sin that it sees and knows to be sin. *God* hates one sin as well as another, and he has

forbidden one sin as well as another, and he has revealed his wrath from heaven against one sin as well as another, and he is provoked by one sin as well as another; and *Christ* is crucified by one sin as well as another; and the *Spirit* is grieved as well by one sin as by another, and the *gospel* is reproached by one sin as well as another, and the *conscience* is wounded by one sin as well as another, and *Satan* is gratified by one sin as well as another, and wicked men's mouths are opened by one sin as well as another, and inquirers of religion are stumbled, grieved, and offended by one sin as well as another, and the soul is endangered by one sin as well as another.

An unsound heart may mourn for *great* sins—which make great wounds in his conscience and credit, and which leave a great blot upon his name, or that waste or rot his body, or destroy his estate, or which expose him to public scorn and shame, etc. But for sins of omission, for wandering thoughts, idle words, deadness, coldness, slightness in pious duties and services, unbelief, secret pride, self-confidence, and a thousand more—such gnats as these he can swallow without any remorse, Proverbs 5:8-14.

But now godly sorrow is of a general extent, it mourns as well for small sins as for great. David's heart smote him, as well for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment, as it did for killing of Uriah with the sword. A gracious soul weeps over many sins which none can charge upon him but God and his own conscience: Psalm 19:12, "Oh cleanse me from secret faults."

Yes, let me say that godly sorrow and grief extends not only to a man's own sins—but also to the sins of others as well as his own, Ezek. 9:4-5. And this you may see also in David, Psalm 119:53, 136, 158; and in Jeremiah, Jer. 9:1-3; and in Paul, Philip. 3:18; and in Lot, 2 Peter 2:7-8.

**[5.] Fifthly, Godly sorrow is a LASTING sorrow, it is a durable sorrow. As long as a Christian continues sinning, he cannot but continue mourning.** David's sins were always before him, Psalm 51:3, though his Absalom nor his Bathsheba were not ever before him. Godly sorrow will every day follow sin hard at heels. Look! as a wicked man, in respect of his desire and will to sin—would sin forever, if he should live forever; so I may say, if a godly man should live forever—he would sorrow forever. After Paul had been converted many years, some think fourteen,

you shall find him a-mourning and lamenting over his sins, Romans 7. An sincere child will never cease mourning, until he ceases from offending an indulgent father. Though sin and godly sorrow were never born together—yet while a believer lives in this world, they must live together. And indeed holy joy and godly sorrow are in no way inconsistent, Psalm 2:11; yes, a godly man's eyes are always fullest of tears, when his heart is fullest of holy joy, etc. A man may go joying and mourning to his grave, yes, to heaven, at the same time.

But now the sorrow, the grief of wicked men for sin, it is like a morning cloud, or the early dew, or the crackling of thorns under a pot, or a runner who quickly passes by, or a dream which soon vanishes, or like a tale which is told, etc., their sorrowful hearts and mournful eyes soon dry up together, as you may see in Esau, Ahab, Pharaoh, and Judas. But the streams of godly sorrow will last and run as long as sin hangs upon us, and dwells in us: 1 Cor. 15:9, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Psalm 25:7, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." David prays to the Lord, not only to forgive—but also to forget, both the sins of his youth and the sins of his age. David remembered all his faults, both of former and of later times. David was well in years when he defiled himself with Bathsheba; and this he remembers and mourns over, Psalm 51.

And it is very observable, that God charged his people to remember old sins: Deut. 9:7, "Remember, and forget not, how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness." **Repentance is a grace, and must have its daily operation as well as other graces.** witness the very covenant of grace itself: Ezek. 16:62-63, "I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord: that you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when I am pacified towards you for all that you have done." Certainly a true penitent can no more satisfy himself with one act of repentance, than he can satisfy himself with one act of faith, or with one act of hope, or with one act of love, or with one act of humility, or with one act of patience, or with one act of self-denial. Godly sorrow is a gospel grace which will live and last as well and as long as other graces; it is a spring which in this life can never be drawn dry.

**[6.] Sixthly, Godly sorrow is a DIVORCING sorrow; it divorces the heart from sin, it breaks that ancient league which has been between the heart and sin.** There is a strong firm league between every sinner and his sin, Isaiah 28:15, 18; but when godly sorrow enters, it dissolves that league, it separates between a sinner and his sin, it sets the soul at an everlasting distance from sin. It is an excellent saying of Austin, *He does truly bewail the sins he has committed, who never commits the sins he has bewailed.* The union between the root and the branches, the foundation and the building, the head and the members, the father and the child, the husband and the wife, the body and the soul, are all near, very near unions; yet, that between a sinner and his sin seems to be a nearer union.

Observable is the story of Phaltiel. You know when David had married Michal, Saul injuriously gave her to another; but when David came to the crown, and sent forth his royal command that his wife should be brought to him. Her husband, Phaltiel, dares not but obey, brings her on her journey, and then not without great reluctancy of spirit takes his leave of her, 2 Sam. 3:14-16. But what—was Phaltiel weary of his wife, that he now forsakes her? Oh no, he was forced, and though she was gone—yet he had many a sad thought about parting with her, and he never leaves looking until he sees her as far as Bahurim, weeping and bemoaning her absence. Just thus stands the heart of every unregenerate man towards his sins—as Phaltiel's heart stood towards his wife.

But when the springs of godly sorrow rise in the soul, the league, the friendship, the union which was between the sinner and his sins, comes to be dissolved and broken in pieces, Hosea 14:8. All godly sorrow sets the heart against sin. He who divinely mourns over sin, cannot live in a course of sin. When of all bitters, God makes sin to be the greatest bitter to the soul, then the soul bids an everlasting farewell to sin; now the soul in good earnest bids adieu to sin forever. O sirs! this is a most certain maxim, to live and die with—that either a man's sins will make an end of his mourning, or else his mourning will make an end of his sin; for he who holds on sinning, will certainly leave off mourning. No man can make a trade of sin, and yet keep his heart in a mourning frame. But he who holds on mourning for sin, will certainly leave off the trade of sin. Holy grief for sin will sooner or later break off all leagues and friendships with sin. As sin makes a separation between God and a man's soul—so godly sorrow makes a separation between a man's soul and his sin, Isaiah 59:1-2. All holy mournings over sin will by degrees issue in the wasting and weakening of the strength and power of sin; nothing below the death and destruction of sin will satisfy that soul who truly mourns over sin.

But now, though you may find an unsound heart sometimes a-lamenting over his sins—yet you shall never find him a-leaving of his sins. Pharaoh lamented over his sin, crying out, "I have sinned, the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." And again, "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron in haste, and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you," Exod. 9:27, 10:16. But though you find him here lamenting and complaining over his sin—yet you never find him leaving or forsaking of his sin. Just so, Saul could cry out that he had sinned—but yet he still continued in his sin; he acknowledged that he did evil in persecuting of David, and yet he still held on persecuting of him. An unsound heart mourns over sin—and yet he holds on in a course of sin; he sins and mourns—and mourns and sins, and commonly all his mourning for sin does but the more embolden him in a way of sin.

But the gracious soul says with Job, "If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more," Job 34:32. He laments over sin and leaves it; he confesses it, and forsakes it, and he is as willing to forego it as he is willing that God should forgive it.

[7.] **Seventhly, All godly sorrow is the fruit and effect of evangelical faith.** It flows from faith as the stream from the fountain, the branch from the root, and the effect from the cause: Zech. 12:10, "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced—and shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Look! as all legal sorrow flows from a legal faith, as you may see in Ahab's and the Ninevites; so all evangelical sorrow flows from an evangelical faith: "they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced—and shall mourn." All gracious mourning flows from looking, from believing. Nothing breaks the heart of a sinner like a look of faith. **All tears of godly sorrow drop from the eye of faith.** Godly sorrow rises and falls, as faith rises and falls. Faith and godly sorrow are like the fountain and the flood, which rise and fall together. The more a man is able by faith to look upon a pierced Christ, the more his heart will mourn over all the dishonors which he has done to Christ. The more deep and wide the wounds are which faith shows me in the heart and sides of Christ, the more my heart will be wounded for sinning against Christ.

Again, **godly sorrow is not an enemy—but a friend to holy joy.** I have read of a holy man, who lying upon his sick-bed, and being asked which were his joyfulest days which ever he had, cried out, "Oh give me my mourning days, give me my mourning days again, for they were the joyfulest days which ever I had." The higher the springs of godly sorrow rise, the higher the tides of holy joy rise. His graces will flourish most—who evangelically mourns most. Grace always thrives best in that garden, that heart, which is watered most with the tears of godly sorrow. He who grieves most for sin, will rejoice most in God. And he who rejoices most in God, will grieve most for sin.

Again, the more a man apprehends of the love of God, and of the love of Christ; and the more a man tastes and is assured of the love of the Father, and of the love of the Son—the more that person will grieve and mourn that he has offended, provoked, and grieved such a Father, and such a Son. Remember this, as a man's assurance of peace and reconciliation with God rises—so his grief for sin rises. The more clear and certain evidences a man has of the love and favor of God to his soul, the more

that man will grieve and mourn for sinning against such a God. There is nothing which thaws and melts the heart, which softens and breaks the heart, like the warm beams of divine love; as you may see in the case of Mary Magdalene, Luke 7; she loved much, and she wept much, for much was forgiven her. A sight of the free grace and love of Christ towards her, in an act of forgiveness, broke her heart all in pieces. "Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them." Luke 7:38.

A man cannot stand under the shinings of divine love with a frozen heart, nor yet with dry eyes. The more a man sees of the love of Christ, and the more a man tastes and enjoys of the love of Christ, the more that man will grieve and mourn for all the dishonors that he has done to Christ. The more a sincere child sees, and tastes, and enjoys of his father's love, the more he grieves and mourns that ever he should offend such a father, or provoke such a father, who has been so loving and indulgent towards him. Injuries done to a friend cut deep, and the more near, and dear, and beloved a man's friend is to him, the more a man is afflicted and troubled for any wrongs or injuries which are done to him; and just so it is between God and a gracious soul.

The free love and favor of God, and his unspeakable goodness and mercy manifested in Jesus Christ to poor sinners, is the very spring and fountain of all evangelical sorrow. Nothing breaks the heart of a poor sinner like the sight of God's free love in a redeemer. A man cannot seriously look upon the firstness, the freeness, the greatness, the unchangeableness, the everlastingness, and the matchlessness of God's free favor and love in Christ—with a hard heart, or with dry eyes! Ezek. 36:31, compared with verses 25-26.

Oh! who is there that has but one spark of sincerity, who can read over that heart-breaking scripture with dry eyes? "Yet you have not called upon me, O Jacob, you have not wearied yourselves for me, O Israel. You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings nor wearied you with demands for incense. You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened

me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses. I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." Isaiah 43:22-25

"I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger—yet he kept on in his willful ways. I have seen his ways—but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near,' says the Lord. 'And I will heal them.'" Isaiah 57:17-19. Now a man would think, after all this horrid abuse put upon God, this would certainly follow: therefore I will plague and punish you; therefore my wrath shall smoke against you; therefore my soul shall abhor you; therefore I will shut up my loving-kindness in displeasure against you; therefore I will show no more mercy towards you; therefore I will hide my face forever from you; therefore I will take vengeance on you; therefore I will rain hell out of heaven upon you, etc. Oh! but read and wonder, read and admire, read and stand amazed and astonished, read and refrain from tears if you can: verse 25, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins."

The prophet's expression in that Zech. 12:10 is very observable, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourns for his only son." Now it is observable in a father's mourning for an only son, there is nothing but pure love, sincere love, hearty love. But in a son's mourning for his father, there may be, and often is a great deal of self-love, self-respect, because the child may run and read in his father's death, his own loss, his own ruin, his own undoing. But in the father's mourning for an only son, a man may run and read the integrity, purity, and sincerity of the father's love. And it is only such a love as this, which sets the soul a-mourning and a-lamenting over a crucified Christ. The thoughts and fears of wrath, of hell, and of condemnation—works unsound hearts to mourn. But it is the sight of a bleeding, dying Savior—which sets sincere, gracious souls a-mourning.

**[8.] Eighthly, and lastly, Godly sorrow, grief, or mourning, may be known by the inseparable attendants or companions which attend it and wait on it, 2 Cor. 7:11; and they are these seven:**

**First, "What carefulness"** or study; the word notes the serious intension of the mind, and the diligence and dexterity of the soul in shunning and avoiding sin, and arming of the soul against all occasions and temptations thereunto. The great care and concern of the repenting soul is to leave all sin, to shake off all sin, to avoid all sin, and to weaken and subdue, and bring under all sin. Oh! the care, the caution, the circumspection, the vigilancy, the strivings and the strugglings of the repenting soul against temptations and corruptions.

**Secondly, Yes, "what clearing of yourselves,"** apology or defense; which is *not* done either by denying of sin, or by excusing of sin committed—but by confession of sin, and disliking of sin, and bewailing of sin, and by walking quite cross and contrary to the sin confessed, disliked, and bewailed; as Zaccheus did, Luke 19:8; and as the jailor did, Acts 16:13. The true penitent has no ways to clear himself—but by arraigning, judging, and condemning of himself: 1 Cor. 11:31, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." When men judge themselves, and condemn themselves, God is justified, and the devil defeated—as having nothing to say against them, but what they have said before. When men acknowledge their sins, and aggravate their sins, and pass the sentence of condemnation upon themselves for their sins—they shall find their acquittance from them clearly drawn in the blood of Christ. Repentance for sin takes off the guilt of sin; and sin bewailed is as if it had never been committed; and this becomes the soul's apology, Ezek. 18:21-22. [As the child makes his defense and apology to his father, not by denying or defending his faults—but by confessing and disclaiming of them; so does the penitent soul carry it towards God.]

**Thirdly, "Yes, what indignation,"** or stomach, or wrath unto grief. It notes the very rising of the stomach with rage, and a being angry unto fretting, fuming, and sickness. Again, it notes the very height of anger and rage. The true penitent is not so exceeding angry with himself for anything—as he is angry with himself for his sins. Indignation here imports the turning of all the passions of the soul wholly against sin. There are no men in the world so hot and angry against themselves for their sins, as penitents are. "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a

menstrual cloth and say to them—Away with you!" Isaiah 30:22. Witness David, Psalm 73:22; witness Ephraim, Hosea 14:8; and witness Paul, Romans 7:22-23.

There are none who fret, and fume, and chafe at themselves for sin, as penitent souls do. There are none who loathe themselves, who abhor themselves, and who are weary of themselves, upon the account of their sins—like penitent souls. It is not this thing nor that, nor this enemy nor that, nor this party nor that, nor this design nor that—but sin, which is the main—the grand object of a penitent's hatred, scorn, wrath, rage, reproach, disgrace, and contempt, etc. He who would be angry and sin not, must be angry at nothing but sin. If some men would but spend more of their anger and indignation against their sins, they would not be so angry as they are with their brethren, that in disputable things differ from them.

**Fourthly, "Yes, what fear"** of God's displeasure, and of doing anything wickedly before the Lord. Penitent souls are of all souls the most trembling souls, the most timorous souls: Proverbs 28:14, "Blessed is the man who fears always." The penitent Christian has still a jealous eye upon his own heart, words, and ways. He is very apt to suspect a snake under every flower, and to fear a snare in every creature-comfort. The burnt child dreads the fire. He who has been once stung hates a snake; he who has been in danger of drowning, trembles at the thoughts of going by water; and he who has once broken his leg, rides and walks with a fear of diligence and vigilancy all his life after.

I have read of the dove, that she is afraid of every feather that has grown upon a hawk; the very sight of any of the hawk's feathers brings as much terror upon her as if she had seen the hawk herself. Such a native dread is, it seems, implanted in her, that it detests and abhors the very sight of any such feather. In every penitent, God implants such a holy fear, such a filial fear, such a reverential fear, such a fear leading to diligence and vigilancy, that the penitent Christian's heart rises, detests and abhors, not only gross sins—but the least motions, inclinations, and temptations to sin. Those who have paid dear for past guilt—have known what an aching heart, a wounded conscience, and a bleeding soul means. Those who have experienced what the frowns of God, the threatenings of God, and the

wrath of God means—will certainly beware of sin, watch and war against it, and fear to fall into it.

**Fifthly, "Yes, what vehement desire."** It signifies such a desire of fervency that can admit of no delay; it notes such a desire as produces diligence, activity, and industry. The true penitent is full of fervent and vehement desires to be rid of his sins. Rachel was never more vehement and fervent in her desires after children, nor David after the water of the well Bethlehem, nor the hunted deer after the water-brooks, nor the betrothed virgin for her marriage-day, nor the slave for his freedom, nor the captive for his ransom, nor the soldier for the conquest, nor the sick man for his cure, nor the condemned man for his pardon—than the true penitent is vehement and fervent in his desires to have his lusts subdued, mortified, and destroyed, Romans 7:22-24.

*Many a day have I sought death with tears, said blessed Cowper, not out of distrust, impatience, or perturbation—but because I am weary of sin, and fearful of falling into it.* If you ask the penitent, Why do you hear, pray, read, and apply yourself so seriously, so frequently, so unweariedly, and so constantly to all sin-subduing ministrations? he will tell you that it is out of a vehement and fervent desire that he has to be rid of his sins. If you ask him again, why he is so much in complaining against sin, in mourning over sin, and in warring against sin? etc., he will tell you that it is out of a vehement and earnest desire that he has to be fully and finally delivered from sin.

**Sixthly, "Yes, what zeal."** Zeal is an extreme heat of all the affections set against sin, and working strongly towards God. David's zeal did eat up his sin as well as himself. And Paul was as zealous in propagating the gospel, as he had been furious in persecuting of it. Many men's zeal is hot and burning, when scorns and reproaches are cast upon them; but the penitent man's zeal is most hot and burning, when religion is scorned, saints persecuted, truth endangered, and the great and dreadful name of God blasphemed, etc. The zeal of a true penitent will carry him on in a course of godliness, and in a course of mortification, in spite of all the diversions and oppositions that the world, the flesh, and the devil can make. Holy zeal is a fire that will make its way through all things that stand between God and the soul. The true penitent is unchangeably

resolved to be rid of his sins, whatever it cost him. Whatever escapes, whatever lives—he is fully determined his lusts shall die for it. Only remember this, though zeal should eat up our sins—yet it must not eat up our wisdom, no more than public policy should eat up our zeal.

**Seventhly, "Yes, what revenge."** The true penitent revenges himself upon himself for his sins, not by whips and scourges, as the papists do—but by buffeting the flesh, and bringing it into subjection by fasting and prayer, and by crossing of his lusts, and loading of them with chains, and by drawing the sword of mortification against them, and by withholding from them that fuel that might feed them, and by the use of all other holy exercises, whereby the old man, the body of sin and death, may be subdued to the obedience and discipline of the Spirit of God. [1 Cor. 9:27. A penitent sinner loathes the very scars of his sins after they are healed.—Gregory Nazianzen.]

Holy revenge will show itself by contradicting of corrupt self, and by a severe chastising and punishing of all these instruments that have been servants to the flesh; as you may see by the daughters of Israel in dedicating their looking-glasses, by which they had sinned, to the service of the sanctuary, Exod. 38:8; and as you may see by the Ephesians' burning of their costly and blasphemous books before all men, Acts 19:19; and by Mary Magdalene's wiping of Christ's feet with her hair, wherewith formerly her fond and foolish lovers were enticed and entangled, Luke 7. And the same spirit you may see working in Zaccheus, Luke 19:8-9; and in the jailor, Acts 16:23-34. And so blessed Cranmer thrust his right hand first into the fire, that being the hand by which he subscribed the popish articles, revengefully crying out, "This unworthy right hand, this unworthy right hand," as long as he could speak.

The common language of holy revenge is this: "Lord, pour out all your wrath, and all your fierce anger, and all your fiery indignation, upon this lust and that lust. Lord, bend your bow, and shoot all the arrows of your displeasure, into the very heart of my strong corruptions; Lord, when will you rain hell out of heaven upon this proud heart, this unbelieving heart, this unclean heart, this worldly heart, this froward heart, this treacherous heart of mine, etc."

I have read of Hannibal, that when he saw a pit full of the blood of his enemies, he cried out with much contentment and delight, "Oh beautiful sight!" Just so, when a penitent Christian sees his spiritual enemies, his strong corruptions, all in a gore-blood, oh how delightfully and rejoicingly does he cry out, "Oh beautiful sight! Oh blessed sight, that ever I have seen!" When the children of Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore, then they sang a song of praise, Exod. 15. The application is easy.

O sirs! let no man deceive his own immortal soul; for it is most certain, that repentance to life has all these lively companions attending of it. Sound repentance, and the companions of it, are born together, and will live and continue together until the penitent soul changes earth for heaven, grace for glory. And let this much suffice for the first part of true repentance, etc.

**2. The second part of true repentance lies in CONFESSION of sin, which flows out of a contrite heart.** I mean, not a bare, formal, empty confession, such as is common among the worst of sinners, as that "we are all sinners, and stand in need of a Savior. God help us! God be merciful unto us!" etc.; but of such a confession of sin as arises from a true sight and full sense of sin, and from the due apprehensions of a righteous law that is transgressed, and a holy God who is provoked, etc. When tongue and heart goes together; when the tongue speaks out of the abundance of the heart; when the tongue is the faithful interpreter of the heart, freely, sincerely and humbly acknowledging iniquity, transgression, and sin; and the penitent judging himself worthy of death, of wrath, of hell, and unworthy of the least mercy and favor from God, etc.

New such a confession as this is you shall find in repenting sinners; and if you look again, you shall find those people so confessing, to be under the capacity of the promise of the forgiveness of their sins, etc.

**[1.] First, You shall find repenting sinners confessing their sins.** Ezra 9:6, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto you, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our sin is grown up unto the heavens." Verse 10, "And now, O our God, what

shall we say after this? for we have forsaken your commandments," etc. Psalm 51:3, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." Verse 4, "Against you, you only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight." Dan. 9:4-5, "I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and awesome God, etc.; we have sinned and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from your precepts, and from your judgments," etc. Verse 8, "O Lord, righteousness belongs unto you—but unto us confusion of face, as at this day." Luke 15:18, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;" verse 19, "And I am no more worthy to be called your son," etc. 1 Cor. 15:9, "For I am the least of all the apostles, that am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." 1 Tim. 1:13, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," etc. Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." I might easily produce a hundred other scriptures to prove that repenting sinners are confessing sinners—but let these suffice, etc.

**[2.] Secondly,** If you please to cast your eyes upon other scriptures, you shall find these **penitent confessing sinners to be expressly under the promises of the forgiveness of sins.** [Confessing penitents are under the promises of forgiveness, etc. Turn to Job 33:27, 28, and ponder upon it. Proverbs 28:13, "He who covers his sins shall not prosper; but he who confesses and forsakes shall have mercy," etc.] 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Psalm 32:5, "I acknowledged my sin unto you, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." Lev. 26:40-42, "But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers--their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land." Jer. 3:12-13, "Return, O backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord. Only acknowledge your iniquity." And observable

is that prayer of Solomon, 1 Kings 8:47-50, "If they shall bethink themselves, and repent, and make supplication to you, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; then hear their prayer, and forgive your people that have sinned against you."

**Question. But what are the properties or qualifications of true penitential confession of sin?**

Answer. They are these eight that follow.

**(1.) First, It is free, it is VOLUNTARY, not forced, not extorted.** Nehemiah, Ezra, Job, David, Daniel, Paul, etc., were free and voluntary in the confession of their sins, as all know that have but read the Scripture. [Acts 26:10-11; Ezra 9:9; Neh. 9; Dan. 9; Psalm 5; Job 40:4-5] The true penitent confesses his sins with much candor, sincerity, and freedom of spirit. He is as free in his confession of sin, as he has been free in the commission of sin. His confessions are like water which runs out of a spring with a voluntary freeness—but the confessions of wicked men are like water that is forced out of a still with fire. Their confessions are forced and extracted merely from sense of pain, or from fear of punishments, etc. Pharaoh never confessed his sin until God brought him to the rack, nor Saul until he was in danger of losing his crown and kingdom, nor Balaam until he sees the angel stand with his drawn sword ready to slay him, nor Judas until horror of conscience and the pangs of hell had surprised him, and taken fast hold on him. [Exod. 10:16; 1 Sam. 15:24; Num. 22:23-35; Mat. 27:3-5.]

Wicked men cast out their sins by confession, as mariners do their wares in a storm, wishing for them again in a calm. The confessions of wicked men are commonly extorted or squeezed out, either by some outward trouble, or by some inward distress. But penitential confession is free and sincere, arising from an inward detestation of sin, and from the contrariety of the heart to sin; and, therefore, were there no rod, no rack, no wrath, no hell—the true penitent would very freely and readily confess his sins. When God is most free in bestowing of mercies, then are they most free in confessing their iniquities, Hosea 14:1-4. Look! as that is the best wine that flows from the grape with least pressing, and as that is the best honey which drops from the honeycomb without crushing—so those

are the best confessions that flow, that drop freely, voluntarily from the soul, etc.

**(2.) Secondly, True penitential confession is FULL as well as free.** That confession is not sincere that is not full, Lam. 1:18-19. God loves neither halting nor mincing confessions. These undid the pharisee, Luke 18:11. As penitential confessions are not extorted, so they are not straitened. Sin must be confessed in its particular species and parts; all known sins must be confessed fully, plainly, particularly, as you may see by turning to these scriptures, Lev. 26:40-42, and 19:21; Judges 10:10; Psalm 51; 1 Sam. 12:19; 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 26:10, 11; Dan. 9:5-17; Lev. 16:21-22, etc. Some there are who **deny** their sins, with the harlot: Proverbs 30:20, "Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eats and wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no wickedness." And others there are who **blame** their sins on others, as Adam did, Gen. 3:12; and as Eve did, verse 13; and as Aaron did, Exod. 32:22; and as Saul did, 1 Sam. 15:22. And many there are who **hide** their wickedness, that conceal their wickedness, as that proud pharisee did, Luke 18:11-12. That expression of the prophet Hosea, chapter 10:13, "You have ploughed wickedness," is rendered by the Septuagint, "You have concealed wickedness;" and, indeed, there is nothing more common to a wicked heart, than to keep close his sin, than to cover and hide his transgressions. And, certainly, this is that sore disease that our first parents were sick to death of, almost six thousand years ago; and, therefore, it is no wonder if we are all infected with it.

Man by nature is a vain-glorious creature, apt to boast and brag of the sins that he is free of—but unwilling to confess the sins that he is guilty of. There are no men so prone to conceal their own wickedness, as those who are most forward to proclaim their own goodness. There are many who are not ashamed to commit sin, who yet are ashamed to confess sin; but certainly of all shame, that is the most shameful shame, which leads a man to hide his sins.

But now the true penitent, he makes conscience of confessing small sins as well as great sins, secret sins as well as open sins, Psalm 90:8, 19:12. David confesses not only his great sins of murder and adultery—but he confesses also his self-revenge intended against Nabal, and of his knife

being so near Saul's throat, when he cut off the tip of Saul's garment. [Job 31:33. *We are but flesh and blood*, says one; *it is my nature*, says a second; *I cannot help it*, says a third; *I am not the first*, says a fourth; *it was bad company drew me*, says a fifth; *if it be a sin, I am sorry for it*, says a sixth; *if it is bad, I cry God's mercy*, says a seventh. And thus wicked men are as hypocritical in their confessions as they are in their professions, etc.]

A true penitent is much in confessing and lamenting over that secret pride, that secret fleshliness, that secret worldliness, that secret hypocrisy, that secret vain glory, etc., which is only obvious to God and his own soul. But it is quite otherwise with wicked men; for they confess their grosser sins—but never observe their lesser sins; they confess their open sins—but never lay open their secret sins. Cain confesses the murdering of his brother—but never confesses his secret enmity, which put him upon washing his hands in his brother's blood. Pharaoh confesses his oppression of the children of Israel—but he does not confess the pride of his heart, nor the hardness of his heart. Judas confesses his betraying of innocent blood—but he never confesses his covetousness, which put him upon betraying of the Lord of glory. And others have confessed their apostasy, who have never confessed their hypocrisy that has led them to apostasy, etc. Well, this is certain, that those little sins, those secret sins, that never break a sinner's sleep—do often break a believer's heart.

**(3.) Thirdly, As true penitential confession is full, so it is SINCERE and heartfelt.** It is not a feigned, nor a formal, nor a mere verbal confession—but an affectionate confession. It is a confession that has the mind, the heart, the soul, as well as the lip in it. [Psalm 51:31; Jer. 18:19, 20; Isaiah 26:8-9; Ezra 9:6; Pi. 38:4; Job 42:6; Luke 18:13.] The penitent man's confession springs from inward impressions of grace upon his soul, he feels what he confesses, and his affections go along with his confessions. The poor publican smote upon his bosom and confessed.

Look! as the sick man opens his disease to his physician, feelingly, sincerely; and as the client opens his case to his lawyer, feelingly, sincerely—so the penitent opens his case, his heart to God, feelingly, sincerely. Cold, careless, verbal, formal, customary confessions are great

abominations in the eye of God, Jer. 12:2. Such men's confessions will be their condemnation at last—their tongues will one day cut their throats. Though confession to men is a work of the voice—yet confession to God must be the voice of the heart. Sometimes the heart alone is sufficient without the voice, as you may see in Hannah, 1 Sam. 1:13-15; but the voice is never sufficient without the heart, as you may see in that Isaiah 29:13. Such who make confession of sin to be only a lip labor—such, instead of offering the calves of their lips as the prophet requires, Hosea 14:2, do but offer the lips of calves!

Heart-confessions, without words, shall be effectual with God, and carry the day in heaven, when all formal, verbal confessions, though they are ever so eloquent or excellent, shall be cast as dung in sinners' faces, Isaiah 1:12-16. Mary Magdalene weeps, and sighs, and sobs—but speaks never a word, Luke 7:38; and yet by her heart-confessions are accepted by Christ—as is evident by his answer to her: Luke 7:48, "He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven." Penitent souls confess sins feelingly—but wicked men's confessions make no impression upon them; their confessions run through them as water runs through a pipe, without leaving any impression at all upon the pipe. Wicked men do no more taste nor relish the evil of sin, the poison of sin, the bitterness of sin in any of their confessions, than the pipe does taste or relish the water that runs through it. Such who confess sin formally, or rhetorically, and yet love sin dearly, heartily—shall never get good by their confessions. Certainly such confessions will never reach the heart of God—which do not reach our own hearts; nor will such confessions ever affect the heart of God—which do not first affect our own hearts. Such as speak very ill of sin with their tongues, and yet secretly wish well to sin in their hearts—will be found at last of all men the most miserablest. But,

**(4.) Fourthly, As penitential confession is sincere and heartfelt, so it is DISTINCT and not confused.** The true penitent has his particular and special bills of indictment, he knows his sins of omission, and his sins of commission; he remembers the sins that he has most rejoiced and delighted in; he cannot forget the sins that have had most of his eye, his ear, his head, his hand, his heart; the by-paths in which he has most walked, and the transgressions by which God has been most

dishonored, his conscience most wounded, and his corrupt nature most pleased and gratified, are always before him, Ezra 10:3. A general confession is almost as bad as a general faith; wicked men commonly confess their sins by wholesale, *We are all sinners*. But the true penitent confesses his sins by retail, Psalm 51:3. Though it cannot be denied but that in some cases a general confession may be penitent, as you see in the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," Luke 18:13; yet it must be granted that a true penitent cannot content nor satisfy himself with a general confession. And therefore David confesses his particular sins of adultery and blood-guiltiness, and Paul particularizes his sins of blasphemy, and persecution, and injuriousness against the saints, 1 Tim. 1:13.

And more you have of this in that Acts 26:10-11, "And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them." Likewise, Judges 10:10, "And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against you, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Balaam." "We have sinned," there is their general confession; "we have forsaken our God, and also served Balaam," there is their distinct and particular confession, both of their apostasy and idolatry. And so 1 Sam. 12:19, "The people all said to Samuel—Pray to the Lord your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king." They were discontented with that government that the Lord had set over them, and they would need be governed by a king, after the mode of other nations; and this sin they confess distinctly and particularly before the Lord and Samuel.

And so David, in that 1 Chron. 21:17, "And David said to God—I am the one who called for the census! I am the one who has sinned and done wrong! But these people are innocent—what have they done? O Lord my God, let your anger fall against me and my family, but do not destroy your people." Thus that princely prophet confesses that particular sin that he then lay under the guilt of. And so Zaccheus makes a particular

confession; he does as it were point with his finger at that wrong and injustice that he had been guilty of: "Behold, Lord, half my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

Thus you see that true penitents make a particular confession of their right-eye sins, and of their right-hand sins. Indeed, what is confession of sin but a setting our sins in order before the Lord? And how can this be done but by a distinct and particular enumeration of them? But to prevent mistakes, this must be taken with a grain of salt, this must be understood with this limitation; we are to confess our sins distinctly, particularly—so far as we know them, so far as we are acquainted with them. There are many thousand sins which we commit that we know not to be sins, and there are many thousand sins committed by us that cannot be remembered by us. Now certainly it is impossible for us to recount or confess those sins that we knew not, that we remember not; so that our particular confessions can only reach to known sins, so far as we can call them to mind; for indeed our particular acts of sin are innumerable; they are "more in number than the hairs of our head;" and indeed we are as well able to count the stars of heaven, and to number the sands of the sea, and to recount all the sparing mercies, the pitying mercies, the preventing mercies, the supporting mercies, the sustaining mercies, and the delivering mercies of God—as we are able to count, to number, to recount, the individual particular acts of sin that we are guilty of; yet so far as the knowledge and memory of a penitent Christian reaches, so far his confession reaches. But now wicked men confess sin in the general, in the lump; as Pharaoh, "I have sinned;" and their confessions are commonly confused, and at random. When and where do you find wicked men confessing their sins distinctly or particularly before God or man? This is none of the least of their miseries—that they have not a clear, distinct, particular view of their own corruptions and abominations. But,

**(5.) Fifthly, The true penitent does not only distinctly and particularly confess his sins—but he does very highly AGGRAVATE his sins,** by confessing not only the kinds and acts, so far as he knows and remembers them—but the circumstances of them also, Psalm 32:5, Lev. 16:21. There are sometimes some circumstances that

may somewhat lessen a penitent man's sins. Now these he readily and easily passes over. But then there are other circumstances which do exceedingly heighten and aggravate his sins, and that makes them more heinous and dangerous; and these he carefully and faithfully acknowledges. The penitential confessions recorded in the Old and New Testament are full of exaggerating expressions, as is evident in these instances: Ezra at once heightens and aggravates their sins by this circumstance, that they had been committed against manifold experiences that they had—both of the severity and also the mercy of the Lord, Ezra 9. And so does Nehemiah also, Neh. 9.

The like instance you have in Daniel, chapter 9:5-6, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from your precepts, and from your judgments; neither have we hearkened unto your servants the prophets, which spoke in your name, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land." In these words you have seven circumstances that Daniel uses in confessing of his and the people's sins, and all to heighten and to aggravate them.

First, "We have sinned;"

secondly, "We have committed iniquity;"

thirdly, "We have done wickedly;"

fourthly, "We have rebelled against you;"

fifthly "We have departed from your precepts;"

sixthly, "We have not hearkened unto your servants;"

seventhly, "Nor our princes, nor all the people of the land."

These seven aggravations which Daniel reckons up in his confession, are worthy of our most serious consideration.

The same spirit you may find working in Peter: Mark 14:72, "When he thought thereon he wept;" or nearer the original, "When he cast all these

things one upon another, he wept." Ah wretch! that ever I was born, that ever I should deny the Lord who bought me; that ever I should deny him who has not only externally—but also internally, called me; that ever I should deny him who made me an apostle, that fed me at his table, that beautified me with his grace, and that in the mount showed me some glimpses of his glory; that ever I should deny him who has brought me out of a state of death and wrath, into a state of life and love; that ever I should deny him who has been the best, the wisest, the holiest, the tenderest, the faithfullest, and the noblest master that ever man served. Ah wretch that I am! he forewarned me of this sin beforehand, that I might be not only cautioned but armed against it—and yet I denied him! I promised him beforehand, that I would never deny him, that I would never forsake him, that I would never turn my back upon him, and yet like a base coward, I have denied the Captain of my salvation! Yes, this very night—did I say again and again, that I would not deny him, and yet now, even now, I have most shamefully denied him! Yes, I told him, that though all others should deny him—yet would not I deny him, and yet in all the world there is not such another to be found, that has so sadly, so desperately denied him, as I have denied him, and that before a silly maid! Nay, more—beast that I am! to my denying of him, I have added a most incredible lie, saying, I know not the man, when there was not a man in all the world that I was so well acquainted with as I was with Christ, feeding constantly at his table, and drinking constantly of his cup, and living constantly upon his purse, and waiting constantly upon his person, and being a constant eye-witness of all the famous miracles that were wrought by him! Nay, yet more— monster that I am, I did not only lie—but I also bound that lie with a hideous oath; I did not only say that I knew not the man—but I also swore that I knew not the man! Nay—yet more than all this, I did not only basely deny him, I did not only tell an incredible lie against my own light and conscience. I did not only bind a fearful lie with a hideous oath—but I also fell a-cursing and damning of myself (for so much the Greek word imports) I wished that the curse, the wrath, or vengeance of God might fall upon me if I knew the man, I wished myself separated from the presence and glory of God if I knew the man! And woe and alas to me! all this I did when my Lord and Master was near me, yes, when he was upon his trial; yes, and yet more, when all the world had forsaken him; yes, and yet more, when I had the greatest

and loudest call that ever I had to have stood by him, and to have given my testimony for him! And thus Peter, casting up all these circumstances and aggravations together, and meditating seriously on them, "he went out and wept bitterly."

Another famous instance of this you have in Paul, "Authorized by the leading priests, I caused many of the believers in Jerusalem to be sent to prison. And I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death. Many times I had them whipped in the synagogues to try to get them to curse Christ. I was so violently opposed to them that I even hounded them in distant cities of foreign lands." Acts 26:10-11. In these two verses the apostle lays down no less than eight aggravations of his sins, and all to greaten and heighten them, that his soul might be the more ashamed and humbled in him, etc.

First, That they were not the worst men—but the best of men, namely, saints; that they were not sinners but saints; that they were not drunkards, swearers, adulterers, murderers, oppressors—but saints; saints by calling, saints by their high and holy calling, saints by profession, saints by a gospel-living. "The saints have I cast into prison."

Secondly, To cast a man into prison for theft, for murder, for perjury, is no iniquity. Ay—but says he, many have I cast into prison for "professing the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Oh! it is dreadful to persecute men merely for professing of Christ! and yet this I did. Though their profession and practice went together; though they lived as they professed; though I had nothing against them—but in the matters of their God—yet upon that very single account I did persecute them.

Thirdly, If it had been but one, or two, or three, or five, or ten saints that I had persecuted, the matter had not been much. Oh! but they were a great number; "many of the saints did I cast into prison." I have been a cruel ravening wolf, who has sucked the blood, not of a few—but of many of the precious lambs of Christ; I have neither spared nor pitied any gender—but have broken into every house, hauling and dragging both men and women to prison. Acts 8:3, "Saul was going everywhere to devastate the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into jail."

Fourthly, Though he had cast them into prison—yet if he had given them but some liberty in a prison, as Joseph had, and as others have had, and as he himself once had when he begot Onesimus in his bonds, Philem. 10, and when Onesiphorus oft refreshed him, and was not ashamed of his chains, 2 Tim. 1:16, etc., or as the primitive Christians had—the matter had not been so great. Oh! but I kept them close prisoners; "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison." I shut them up from friends, from relations, and from all comfortable accommodations; and thus he further aggravates his sin, Acts 9:1-2.

Fifthly, If he had rested there, if he had proceeded no further, the matter had not been so bad; Oh! "but I gave my voice against them to put them to death." My heart and my hand was not only against them—but my tongue also. If I could not kill them with my hand, I was ready and willing to kill them with my tongue; if the casting voice fell upon me, I would be sure to give it against them; I never lacked a word to do them mischief. If they needed a word, instead of a knife, to cut their throats—I would be sure to lend them one.

Sixthly, He rises yet higher, for he does not only severely punish their bodies—but he does what he can to damn their souls; I compelled them to blaspheme—like that Italian, who first made his enemy deny God, and then stabbed him, and so at once murdered both body and soul. As there is no love compared to soul love, so there is no cruelty compared to soul cruelty; and as there is no mischief compared to soul mischief, so there is no murder compared to soul murder; and yet in this murder had Paul a hand. It is sad to compel a man to bear a burden beyond his strength, to lie in chains, to forsake his own country, etc.—but it is infinitely more sad to compel a man to sin, to the least sin; but saddest of all to compel a man to blaspheme, "And yet this I did," says Paul, etc.

Seventhly, He yet further aggravates his sin by his madness, by his exceeding madness against the saints, in those words: "and I was exceeding mad against them." He was mad with rage and wrath, he was exceedingly mad with passion and fury against the dear saints of God. Madmen think madly, and madmen speak madly, and madmen act madly against those they are mad with; and so did he against the saints. The Alcoran says, that God created the angels of light, and the devils of flame.

Certainly, as God's children are children of the light, so Satan's children are furious children, wrathful children, children of the flame, children of madness; and such a one was Paul, etc.

Eighthly, and lastly, "I did persecute them to strange cities;" them I did not kill I did scatter; I forced them to leave both house and home; them whom God had joined together I put asunder: I made the husband run one way, and the wife and children another way, and all of them glad to hide their heads in a corner.

And thus you see, that true penitents, in the confession of their sins, so clothe their sins with the highest aggravations imaginable. A penitent in his confession of sin cries out, Oh the sparing mercies, the preventing mercies, the supporting mercies, the sustaining mercies, the renewing mercies, the delivering mercies—which I have with a high hand sinned against! Oh that clear light! oh that free love! oh that gospel grace! oh those affections of mercy—which I have sinned against! Oh the fatherly corrections, the dreadful warnings, the high resolutions, the serious protestations, the frequent vows and promises—which I have desperately sinned against! Oh the checks of conscience, the rebukes of conscience, the lashes of conscience, the wounds of conscience, and the frequent motions of the Spirit, and strivings of the Spirit—which I have sinned against! etc.

But now wicked men confess their sins slightly, carelessly, triflingly. They are careful and skillful to hide their sins, to cloak their sins, and to extenuate and lessen their sins; and with the unjust steward, for an hundred to set down fifty, Luke 16:6. All wicked men do commonly flatter themselves, that either their sins are not sins—when indeed they are; or that they are not great and grievous sins—when indeed they are; or that they are not so great and grievous as other men's sins are—when indeed they are more grievous and heinous than other men's sins are—so far are they from aggravating of their sins. The truth is, wicked men are so far from aggravating of their sins, that they are still extenuating of them, and that by blaming of them, sometimes upon their constitutions, sometimes upon bad company, sometimes upon their callings, sometimes upon Satan, and sometimes upon *chance*, as they call it, etc. But no more of this; enough is as good as a feast.

**(6.) Sixthly, The true penitent confesses his sins HUMBLY, SORROWFULLY.** In his confessions he appears before the Lord with ropes about his neck, as Benhadad's servants—and with tears in his eyes. His confessions savor of contrition of heart, and not of ostentation of spirit. Contrition of heart, and confusion of face, is the common result of a penitential confession, Lev. 23:27-28. David waters his couch with his tears, Psalm 6:6; and he mingles his food with his tears, Psalm 42:3; and Ezra and Daniel confess their sins with wet eyes and blushing cheeks, Ezra 9, Daniel 9.

Confession without contrition neither pleases God—nor profits man. Confession is the language of the tongue, contrition is the language of the heart, and God looks for both. The publican does not only confess his sins—but he smites also upon his bosom, as a man full of grief and sorrow, Luke 18:13. Lying in the dust, and rending of garments, and putting on sackcloth and ashes, were of old required of those who confessed their iniquities. The spirit of repentance is a spirit of mourning.

**Penitential confessions are commonly attended with grief in the heart, and with shame in the face.** Psalm 38:18, "For I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin. [Compare these scriptures together: Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 61:1, and 57:15; Job 16:20; Psalm 119:1, 36; Jer. 9:1, 31:18-19.] He tells you not only that he will declare his iniquity—but he tells you also, that he will be sorry for his sin. The same spirit you may find working in Jacob, Hosea 12:4; yes, he had "power over the angel and prevailed, he wept and made supplication unto him." The people of God, in the day of their confession, do not only say, We have sinned—but they also draw water and pour it out before the Lord in token of contrition, 1 Sam. 7:6. Every sin is as a sword in a penitent man's bosom, and therefore while confessions are in his mouth—you shall mostly find either tears in his eyes or sorrow in his heart. And indeed, true confession of sin is many times rather a voice of mourning than a voice of words.

Sometimes a penitent man's eyes will in some way tell what his tongue can in no way utter. Many times the penitent is better at weeping than he is at speaking: Psalm 39:12, "Hold not your peace at my tears." Tears have a voice as well as blood has—and are very prevalent orators with

God: Psalm 6:8, "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping." Penitent tears are undeniable ambassadors, and they never return from the throne of grace without an answer of grace. Tears are a kind of silent prayers, which though they say nothing—yet they obtain pardon; they prevail for mercy, and they carry the day with God, as you may see in that great and clear instance of Peter. He said nothing, he confessed nothing that we read of—but "went out and wept bitterly," and obtained mercy.

That prescription that God gave to the leper in the law is worthy of your most serious consideration. Lev. 13:45, "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be torn, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean!" In these words the leper stands charged with four things:

(1.) to go in torn garments, to note that there must be brokenness and sorrow of heart joined with confession of sin;

(2.) to go bareheaded, and that partly that men might not mistake him—but mainly to show his humility under his present misery;

(3.) to put a covering upon his upper lip, some read it, upon his moustache. The Jews in their mournings used this ceremony among the rest—of covering their chin, mouth, mouchaches, all under the nose. Now, the use of this ceremony in lepers, was partly to preserve others from being infected by his loathsome breath, and partly to show that God takes no pleasure nor delight in the breathings, the prayers of spiritual lepers, of wicked men,—God loves not to hear good words drop from an evil mouth—and partly to note that shame that must be mingled with his sorrow.

(4.) Twice to proclaim his own uncleanness, "Unclean, unclean!" And thus you see that there was to be a close connection between the leper's confession and his contrition; and thus it is with the true penitent; he does not only cry out, Unclean, unclean!—but he also rents and tears his garments, that is, he joins contrition to his confession.

But to prevent mistakes, and that I may not shoot an arrow, instead of giving a cordial, to the weak and weary soul; let me only give you this

short hint, namely—that when the true penitent cannot pour out his soul in heart-melting confessions before the Lord—yet then he can mourn over his own hardness of heart. When he is at worst—he can grieve that he cannot grieve, and mourn that he cannot mourn, and melt that he cannot melt, and break that he cannot break; and he can bless God for every rod, and every stroke, and every word, and every work, and every ordinance, and every frown, and every reproof, and every cross, and every comfort—which has the least tendency to the melting and mollifying of his soul.

The true penitent always sets a very high price and value upon a broken heart—though he has not the happiness always to have his heart broken. I know that sometimes the penitent soul is so shut up, that if he might have all the world he cannot mourn; he can only sit down and sigh, and groan; nay, if all the joys and delights of heaven were to be bought for one single tear, he cannot shed it. And yet all this time he can grieve that he cannot grieve for sin, and he can be sorry that he cannot be sorry for sin; and without all question, this is in a measure true godly gospel sorrow for sin, etc.

But now wicked men confess their sins—but they never grieve for their sins. They confess their sins—but they are not ashamed of their sins; they confess their sins—but they cannot blush for their sins. [Compare these scriptures together, Jer. 6:15, 8:12; Zeph. 3:5; Isaiah 3:9, 42:23; Heb. 6:6. Caligula used to say of himself, that he loved nothing better in himself, "than that he could not be ashamed, etc.] Though men of good names, and of good natures, would be ashamed to be found doing base things, things which are below them, which are not worthy of them—yet the generality of sinners are so bold and base, so ignorant, arrogant, and impudent, so without shame, and graceless, etc., that they are no ways ashamed, no, not of those very sins that has put Christ to an open shame, yes, that has put the sun and moon to a blush.

Most sinners in these days have brows of brass, and whores' foreheads—which cannot blush. They are so far from being ashamed of their sins, that they think it a shame and disgrace not to sin, not to swear, and whore, and curse, and be drunk, and despise ordinances; yes, there are many who are so far from being ashamed of their abominations, that they

even glory in them, like those in that Philip. 3:19. They show their sins as Sodom, they make both a sport of sinning, and a jest of confessing their sins. "Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush!" Jeremiah 6:15

Thus Austin confesses that it was sometimes with himself before the Lord wrought upon him—I was stricken with such blindness, as that I thought it a shame unto me to be less vile and wicked than my companions whom I heard boast of their lewdness, and glory so much the more, by how much they were the more filthy! Therefore, lest I should be of no account, I was the more wicked; and when I could not otherwise match others, I would feign that I had done those things which I never did, that I should seem so much the more vile. [Augustine, Confess. lib. 2:cap. 3.] But for a close remember this, the true penitent knows, that the more God has been displeased with the blackness of sin, the better he will be pleased with the blushing of the sinner; and therefore he cannot but blush when either he looks upon sin within him, or God above him. But,

**(7.) Seventhly, Penitential confession, it is BELIEVING and authentic; it is mixed with some faith,** though not always with a strong faith, Hosea 14:2. It is not like the confession of a malefactor to the judge—but like the confession of a child to his father, or like the confession of a sick man to his physician. As a penitent man has one eye of sorrow upon his sin, so he has another eye of hope upon pardoning grace. Thus David, though he had sinned greatly—yet he hangs upon free mercy, and begs his pardon believingly, Psalm 51. Thus Daniel, "To the Lord our God belongs mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him," Dan. 9:9. Thus Shechaniah, Ezra 10:2, "And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra—We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." If it were not for hope, the heart would break. There was hope among them that Israel would repent, and there was hope among them that God would have mercy upon their repentance.

And the same spirit was working in the prodigal: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you," Luke 18:18. Though he was a prodigal—yet he would go

to God as to a *father*—who knew how to pity and forgive the mourning and repenting child. When confessions of sin are mingled with hopes of mercy, and the soul draws near to God as a father—then the heart breaks most and melts and mourns most. That confession of sin which is not mixed with some hope of pardon, and with some faith in the mercy of God, is not penitential—but desperate. *Cain* in some sort confesses—but then he flies into the land of Nod, and there he falls a-building and planting, partly in contempt of the dreadful doom God had passed upon him, and partly to drown the noise of his conscience, and despairing of ever obtaining pardon in this world, or enjoying a house not made with hands in another world, Gen. 4:16, 2 Cor. 5:1-2. *Judas* likewise confesses his most heinous sins, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood," Mat. 27:3-4; but having no hope of pardon, no faith in that innocent blood he had shed, he goes out and hangs himself. Judas had no faith to mingle with his confession; he confesses despairingly, not believingly, and so goes forth and strangles himself.

Since Adam fell in paradise, there has not been one wicked man in the world, continuing in that state, who has ever mixed faith with his sorrows, believing with his confessing. It is only the penitent man who confesses sin believingly, and that is pardoned graciously. The confessing penitent reasons thus with God: Lord, though I am a sinful creature—yet you are a merciful God; though I am unworthy of mercy—yet you forgive sins freely; though my sins reach as high as heaven—yet your mercies reach above the heavens; I am here ready and willing to accuse and condemn myself; and therefore you are as ready and as willing to absolve me, and forgive me. O Lord! though my sins are very many—yet your mercies are exceeding more; though I have multiplied my sins—yet you can multiply your pardons; though I am a sinner, a very great sinner—yet there is mercy with you, that you may be feared and loved, served and trusted; and therefore in the face of all my sins, provocations, and unworthiness, I will look up for mercy, and wait for mercy. But,

**(8.) Eighthly, and lastly, True penitential confession is joined with reformation.** That confession of sin which carries forgiveness of sin with it—is attended with serious desires, and earnest endeavors to reformation, Psalm 51:10; therefore forsaking of sin is annexed to

confession of sin. Proverbs 28:13, "He who covers his sins shall not prosper; but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." Confession of sin must be joined with confusion for sin—or all is lost. God will never cross the book—he will never draw the red lines of Christ's blood over the black lines of our transgressions—unless confessing and forsaking go hand in hand. He who does not forsake his sin, as well as confess it, forsakes the benefit of his confession. And indeed, there is no real confession of sin, where there is no real forsaking of sin. It is not enough for us to confess the sins we have committed—but we must unmistakably resolve against the committing again the sins we have confessed. We must desire as freely to forego our sins, as we do desire God to forgive us our sins.

Confession of sin is a spiritual vomit. Now you know, a man who is sickened in his stomach, is heartily willing to be rid of that load on his stomach which is sickening him. And so a man who is real in his confession of sin, is as heartily willing to be rid of his sin, which lies as a sickening load upon his conscience, as any sick man can be heartily willing to be rid of that sickening load which lies upon his stomach. The penitential confessor does as heartily desire to be delivered from the *power* of his sins, as he does desire to be delivered from the *sting* and *punishment* of his sins. This is observable in the confession of good Shechaniah: Ezra 10:2-3, "We confess that we have been unfaithful to our God, for we have married these pagan women of the land. But there is hope for Israel in spite of this. Let us now make a covenant with our God to divorce our pagan wives and to send them away with their children. We will follow the advice given by you and by the others who respect the commands of our God. We will obey the law of God." And this was the former practice of the children of Israel, who joined reformation with their confession, as you may see in that Judges 10:15, "We have sinned;" verse 16, "So they got rid of the foreign gods among them and worshiped the Lord."

That Job 34:31-32, is observable, "I am guilty but will offend no more. Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again." And the same spirit you may find working in those who were once given up to sorcery and witchcraft: Acts 19:18, "Many who became believers

confessed their sinful practices. A number of them who had been practicing magic brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars."

Penitential confession leaves a holy awe and dread on the soul, to take heed of committing sins confessed. Though a godly man may, in an hour of temptation, or in a day of desertion, or in a season of God's withholding the gracious influences of heaven from falling upon his soul—commit a sin which he has seriously confessed and sadly bewailed—yet he retains in his course and practice such a holy fear and awe upon his heart, as in some measure proves armor of proof against future commissions of sin.

But now wicked men are very ready, bold, and venturous to commit the same sins they have confessed, as you may see in *Saul*; one time you shall have him confessing his sinful injuries against David with tears; and soon after you shall find him pursuing of him in the wilderness of Ziph with three thousand chosen men at his heels. The same evil spirit was predominant in *Pharaoh*; one day you shall have him confessing his sin, and promising to let Israel go, and the next day you shall find his heart hardened, and he urgently resolved that Israel shall not go. [Compare 1 Sam. 24:16, 17, with chap 26:2-4; Exod. 9:27-34.] And so the harlot made the confession of her sin to be but a provocation to more sin, Proverbs 7:14.

The wicked sometimes *confess* their sins—but they never *forsake* their sins; after confession they commonly return with the dog to the vomit, as Fulgentius has worthily observed. "Many," says he, "being pricked in conscience, confess that they have done ill, and yet put no end to their ill deeds; they humbly accuse themselves in God's sight of the sins which oppresses them, and yet with a perverse heart rebelliously heap up those sins whereof they accuse themselves. The very pardon which they beg with mournful sighs, they impede with their wicked actions; they ask help of the physician, and still increase matter to the disease, thus in vain endeavoring to appease him with penitent words, whom they go on to provoke by an impenitent course."

Well, remember this—**real confession of sin is always attended**

**with real endeavors of turning from sin.** Look! as the patient lays open his diseases to the physician for this very purpose that he may be cured and healed, so the penitent soul confesses his sins to the physician of souls on purpose to be cured and healed. The daily language of the penitent soul is this, "Lord, when will you heal the maladies of my soul? When will you heal my unbelief, and heal my pride, and heal my vain-glory, and heal my hypocrisy, and heal my impurity, and heal my hard-heartedness, and heal my carnalness, and heal my worldliness, and heal my selfishness? etc. Lord! I do as earnestly beg grace to heal my soul, as I do mercy to pardon my soul." And let thus much suffice for the second part of true evangelical repentance.

**3. The third part of true repentance lies in turning from all sin to God.** That great and precious promise of forgiveness of sin is made over to those who are repenting and turning from sin. All who truly repent of their sins, and turn from their sins, shall receive the forgiveness of their sins. Pardon of sin is for that man, and that man is for pardon of sin—who truly repents and returns from his sin. Four things speak out this, etc.

**[1.] First, Scripture exhortations to repent, that so our sins may be forgiven:** Ezek. 18:30, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Acts 2:38, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins." Verse 19, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," etc.

**[2.] Secondly, Express promises that our sins shall be forgiven upon our repentance:** 2 Chron. 7:14, "If my people shall turn from their evil way, then will I forgive their sin." Proverbs 28:13, "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy." Ezek. 18:21, "If the wicked will turn from all his sins which he has committed, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die;" verse 22, "All his transgressions which he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him."

**[3.] Thirdly, A most certain assurance of the forgiveness of sins, upon repentance, though they have been ever so great and**

**heinous:** Isaiah 1:16-18, "Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. Remove your evil deeds from My sight. Stop doing evil. Learn to do what is good. Seek justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool."

**[4.] Fourthly, Express records and instances of forgiveness unto such as have repented and turned from their sins:** 2 Sam. 12:13, "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord; and Nathan said to David, The Lord has also put away your sin." Jer. 31:18-20, "I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the Lord my God. After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.' Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him, declares the Lord."

Luke 7:38, "And she stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head; and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment." Verse 47, "Therefore, I say, her sins, which were many, are forgiven." Chapter 15:18-20, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son. And he arose, and came to his father; but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him."

**Question.** But what are the properties or qualifications of that right turning from sin, which brings poor sinners within the compass of the promise of forgiveness of sins? Now, to this great question I shall give these four following answers:

**Answer 1. First, That turning from sin which brings a man within the compass of the promise of forgiveness of sin, is a HEART turning from sin:** Joel 2:12, "Turn, even to me, with all your

*heart.*" 2 Chron. 6:38-39, "If they return to you with all their *heart*, and with all their soul—then hear you from the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and forgive their sins." Deut. 30:10, "If you turn unto the Lord your God, with all your *heart*, and with all your soul," etc. Jer. 3:10, "In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her *heart*, but only in pretense." Chapter 24:7, "And I will give them a *heart* to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole *heart.*"

Wicked men are serious and hearty in their sinning, and they must be as serious and cordial in their returning—or they are lost and undone forever. The true penitent turns from sin with his heart, with all his heart, and with all his soul. He is truly turned from his sins—whose heart is turned from his sins. If the heart turns not—all is bad, all is stark bad. He who turns from sin—but not with his heart, turns but in pretense, partially, hypocritically, deceitfully. God is a jealous God, and he will never endure co-rivals or co-partners in the throne—the heart of man. A holy God will never share with an unholy devil. The true God is a righteous God, and he will never share his glory with another. The true God must be served truly, heartily; he loves neither halting nor halving. Such as divide the rooms of their souls between God and sin, God and Satan, God and the world; who swear by God and Molech; who sometimes pray devoutly, and at other times curse most hideously; who halt between God and Baal—are mere hypocrites in religion, and such whom God abhors. When a man's heart gives a bill of divorce to his sins, when his heart breaks the league with sin, when his heart casts it off, and casts it out as an abominable thing—then the heart is turned from sin really, effectually, etc. If, notwithstanding all the professions that a man makes against his sins, his heart still loves them, and delights in them, and he will still retain them, and welcome them, and cleave to them, and make provision for them, etc.—his repentance is but pretense—and not real, etc. But,

**Answer 2. A true penitential turning is an UNIVERSAL turning, a turning not from some sins—but from all sins:** Ezek. 18:30, "Repent, and turn yourselves from *all* your transgressions." Verse 31, "Cast away from you *all* your transgressions." 2 Cor. 7:1, "Let us cleanse

ourselves from *all* filthiness, both of flesh and spirit." Psalm 119:101, "I have refrained my feet from *every* evil way." Verse 128, "I hate *every* false way." Ezek. 14:14, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God, Repent, and turn from your idols; and turn away your faces from *all* your abominations." Chapter 18:28, "Because he considers, and turns away from *all* his transgressions that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die."

True repentance is a turning from all sin, without any reservation or exception. He never truly repented of any sin, whose heart is not turned against every sin. The true penitent casts off all the rags of old Adam; he throws down every stone of the old building; he will not leave a horn nor a hoof behind. That which Nehemiah speaks of himself in that Neh. 13:7-8, is very observable to our purpose. "And I came to Jerusalem, and I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. I was greatly displeased," (but he rests not there; but goes further); "therefore I threw all of Tobiah's belongings out of the room." Thus the true penitent, when he considers all the evil that sin has done, how it has taken up not only one chamber—but every chamber in the soul, and how it has for many years quite shut out God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and everything that is good; he is greatly displeased, and so falls upon the purging out of every lust; being highly resolved that neither Satan nor any of his retinue shall ever find the least entertainment in his soul any more.

Such as are resolved against turning from any sin, are horribly profane; such as turn from some sins—but cherish others, are hideous hypocrites. Such as turn from one sin to another, or change their sins as men do their fashions—are most sadly blinded, and desperately deluded by Satan. But such as turn not from some sins—but from every sin, are sincerely penitent.

**And certainly there are very great reasons why the true penitent does turn, and must turn from sin universally. As,**

**[1.] First, It is to no purpose for a man to turn from some sins, if he does not turn from all his sins:** James 1:26, "If any man seems to be religious, and bridles not his tongue—but deceives his own heart,

this man's religion is in vain." This at first sight may seem to be a hard saying, that for one fault, for one fault in the tongue, all a man's religion should be counted vain; and yet this you see the Holy Spirit does insistently conclude. [One stab at the heart kills; one act of treason makes a traitor; one spark of fire sets the house on fire; one flaw in a diamond spoils the price of it; one puddle, if we wallow in it, will defile us; one head of garlic will poison a leopard, say the naturalists.] Let a man make ever so glorious a profession of religion—yet if he gives himself liberty to live in the practice of any known lust, yes, though it be but a sin of the tongue—his religion is in vain, and that one lust will separate him from God forever.

If a wife is ever so kind to her husband in many things, and though she gives him contentment in several ways—yet if she entertains any other lover into his bed besides himself, it will alienate his affections from her, and forever separate him from her. The application is easy. To turn from one sin to another, is but to be tossed from one hand of the devil to another; it is but, with Benhadad, to recover from one disease and die of another, it is but to take pains to go to hell. If a ship spring three leaks, and only two be stopped, the third will sink the ship; or if a man has two grievous wounds in his body, and take care only to cure one, that wound which is neglected will certainly kill him. It is so here; if a man who has divers lusts fighting against the life of his precious soul, shall only mortify and slay some of them, the rest will certainly destroy him, and all his pains in subduing some of them will be lost.

I have read of a devout man, who had among many other virtues the gift of healing, unto whom divers made resort for cure; among the rest, one Chromatius being sick, sent for him. Being come, he told him of his sickness, and desired that he might have the benefit of cure, as others had before him. I cannot do it, said the devout person, until you have beaten all the idols and images in your house to pieces. Oh that shall be done, said Chromatius; here take my keys, and where you find any images let them be destroyed, which was done accordingly. To prayer went the holy man—but no cure was wrought. Oh, says Chromatius, I am as sick as ever! Oh I am very weak and sick! It cannot be otherwise, replied the holy man, nor can I help it; for certainly there is one more idol in your house

undiscovered, and that must be destroyed too. True, says Chromatius, there is so indeed; there is one all of beaten gold, and very costly, I would like to have saved it; but here take my keys again, you shall find it locked up fast in my chest, take it and break it in pieces; which done, the holy man prayed, and Chromatius was healed.

The moral of this story is this: we are all spiritually sick, full of wounds and putrefied sores; Christ our spiritual physician tells us, that if we will be cured, we must break off our sins by repentance. Now this we are willing to do in part—but not in whole; we would like to keep one Delilah, one darling beloved sin—but it must not be; there must not be one sin unrepented of; we must repent as well for our Achans as our Absaloms, our Rimmons as our Mammons, our Davids as our Goliaths, our covert as well as our open sins, our beloved as well as our loathed lusts, our heart abominations as well as our gross transgressions, our babe iniquities as well as our giant-like provocations. **Our repentance must be universal, or it will be to no purpose.**

*Herod* turned from many evils—but would not turn from his Herodias, and that was his ruin, Mat. 6:18-20. *Judas'* life was as fair and as free from spots and blots as the lives of any of the apostles; no scandalous sin was to be found upon him; only that *golden devil* 'covetousness' was his sin, and his everlasting ruin. His apostleship, preaching, working of miracles, hearing of Christ, and conversing with him, etc., was to no purpose, because of that serpent he kept in his bosom, which at last stung him to death.

If a man lives in the practice of any known sin, the union between sin and his soul is not dissolved; and if that union be not dissolved, Christ and his soul were never united, and therefore such a person can never be saved. Saul spared Agag and the witch of Endor, whom he should have destroyed—and so lost his crown, his kingdom, and his soul, which was saddest of all. Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard son, and yet that one bastard destroyed all the rest, Judges 8:13. The Jewish Rabbis report, that the same night that Israel departed out of Egypt towards Canaan, all the idols and idolatrous temples in Egypt, by lightning and earthquakes, were broken down; so, when a man truly repents, all the idols that were set up in his soul are cast down. But,

**[2.] Secondly, God has so joined the duties of his law one to another, that if there be not a conscientious care to walk according to all that the law requires, a man becomes a transgressor of the whole law,** according to that of James, chapter 2:10, "Whoever keeps the entire law, yet fails in one point, is guilty of breaking it all." [He who prevaricates with God as to any one particular commandment of his, his heart is bad, stark bad—and he is guilty of all. He has no real regard to any of the commandments of God—who has not a regard to all the commandments of God, etc.] The bond of all is broken, the authority of all is slighted, and that evil disposition, that sinful frame of heart—which works a man to venture upon the breach of one command, would make him venture upon the breach of any command, were it not for some infirmity of nature, or because his purse will not hold out to maintain it; or for shame, or loss, or because of the eye of friends, or the sword of the magistrate, or for some sinister respects; and might the breach of any other of the commands of God serve his turn, and advance his ends, he stands as strongly pressed in spirit to transgress them all, as to transgress any one of them.

He who gives himself liberty to live in the breach of any one command of God, has a disposition of heart to break them all. Every single sin contains virtually all sin in it. He who allows himself a liberty to live in the breach of any one particular law of God, he casts contempt and scorn upon the authority of God, who made the whole law—and upon this account breaks it all. And the apostle gives the reason of it in verse 11, "For he who said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if you commit no adultery—yet if you kill, you have become a transgressor of the law." Not that he is guilty of all individually—but collectively; for the law is connected; there is a chain of duties, and these are all so linked one to another, that you cannot break one link of the chain—but you break the whole chain. All the precepts of the law are, as it were, a string of pearls strung by the authority of God. Now break this string in any place, and all the pearls fall to the ground. No man can live in the breach of any known command of God—but he wrongs every command of God. This at last he shall find to his cost—without sound repentance on his side, and pardoning grace on God's. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, One sin never goes alone.** Cain's anger is seconded with murder. Ahab's covetousness is attended with bloody cruelty. Jeroboam's rebellion is attended with idolatry. Judas' thievery is attended with treason. I might give instances of this in Adam and Eve, and in Lot, Abraham, Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Solomon, and Peter, etc.—but a touch on this string is enough. One sin commonly disposes the heart to another sin. A small sin many times draws the heart to a greater, and one great sin draws the heart to another great sin, and that to a greater—until at last the soul comes to be drowned in all excess.

Augustine relates the story of Manicheus, who being tormented with flies, was of opinion that the devil made them and not God. "Why then," said one who stood by, "if the devil made flies, then the devil made worms, and not God, for they are living creatures as well as flies." "True," said he, "the devil did make worms." "But," said the other, "if the devil made worms, then he made birds, beasts, and man." He granted all. And thus, says that old man, by denying God in the fly, he came to deny God in man, and so consequently the whole creation. And thus yielding to lesser sins, draws the soul to the commission of greater, yes, often to the greatest of all.

I have both heard and read a story of a young man, who being often tempted by the devil and his own wicked heart, to commit three sins, namely, to kill his father, to lie with his mother, and to be drunk; the two former sins, his heart would not yield to, as being things abhorrent to the light and law of nature, and therefore to free himself from the temptation, he yielded to the last and least; but when he was drunk, he killed his father, and ravished his mother. Thus these two abominable sins, murder and incest, were ushered in by one that was not of so deep a dye.

There is something in sin, like the *growing principle* which is in the seed of herbs and plants. The seed is but a small inconsiderable thing in itself—yet let it be but cast into the ground, and there rests quietly a time, and it will take root, and grow up to a great stock, and bring forth many flourishing branches. Like the grain of mustard-seed, Mat. 13:31-32, which though it be the least of seeds—yet being cast into the ground, grows up to be the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Satan will be sure

to nest himself, to lodge himself in the least sins, as birds nest and lodge themselves in the smallest branches of a tree, and there he will hatch all manner of wickedness.

A sinful **thought**, if it is not rejected, will procure **consent**; and consent will break forth into an **act**; and one act will procure another act, until the multiplying of acts have begotten a **habit**, and that habit has choked and stifled **conscience**; and when once conscience is stifled and benumbed, it will be ready upon all occasions to lay the soul open, and to prostrate it to the basest and worst of sins.

Oh there is a prodigious evil in the least of sins; it will quickly multiply itself into all manner of evils. Unless sin be cut off in the first **motion**, it will proceed to **action**, and from action to **delight**, and from delight to **custom**, and from custom to a **habit**; and so the soul will be in eminent danger of being undone forever. A little thief put in at the window, may open the doors for stronger and greater to come in—who may take away both life and treasure at once. A little wedge makes way for a greater, and so do little sins make way for greater.

Satan and our own hearts will be modest at first, and therefore they are often in a combination, first to draw us to lesser sins and then to greater, and so from sins less obnoxious to sins more scandalous, until we come to be abominable to God, hateful to others, and a terror to ourselves. Such as live in one sin, God will in justice give over to other sins. The Gentiles gave up themselves to idolatry, Romans 1:23; "And God gave them up to uncleanness," verse 24. It is impossible for any man to take one sin into his bosom, and to shut all others out. He who lives but in the allowance of himself in one sin, will find that sin at last to shut the door of heaven against him, and therefore the true penitent turns from sin universally.

**[4.] Fourthly, The reasons of turning from sin, are universally binding to a penitent soul.** [As in a harp, to make the music good and harmonious, it is not enough that all the strings be right tuned except one; one string that jars will spoil the sweetest music. The application is easy, etc.] There are the same reasons and grounds for a penitent man's turning from every sin, as there is for his turning from any one sin. Do

you turn from this or that sin, because the Lord has forbidden it? Why, upon the same ground you must turn from every sin, for God has forbidden every sin—as well as this or that particular sin. There is the same authority forbidding or commanding in all; and if the authority of God awes a man from one sin, it will awe him from all. There is one and the same Lawgiver who gives all of the commandments. He who gave one commandment gave also another; therefore, he who observes one commandment in obedience unto God, whose commandment it is, will observe all, because all are his commandments.

And he who slights one commandment is guilty of all, because he despises the authority and will of him who gave them all. Even in those commands which he does observe, he has no respect to the will and authority of him who gave them. Therefore, there is no obedience towards God, where there is not a uniform endeavor to please God, as well in one thing as in another. The same God who has prohibited one sinful act, has prohibited every sinful act; and, therefore, he who out of conscience and respect to God's will, and word, and authority, turns from any one sin, or abhors any one sin—he will out of conscience of the same will, and word, and authority, turn from every sin, and abhor every sin—because the same God in his word has alike forbidden all sins.

O sirs! A man who truly repents of this or that sin, because it is contrary to the law, will, and authority of God—he will surely repent of whatever he knows to be contrary to the law, will, and authority of God. He who turns from any one sin because it is a transgression of the holy and righteous law of God—he will turn from every sin upon the same account. He who turns from any one sin, because it is a dishonor to God, a reproach to Christ, a grief to the Spirit, a wound to religion, etc.—he will upon the same grounds turn from every sin. He who turns from any one sin, because of the curse, the threatenings, the judgments, the wrath, the hell which hangs, as it were, over the head of that sin—he will turn from every sin, because the curse, the threatenings, the judgments, the wrath, the hell, which hangs over the head of that one sin, hangs over the head of every sin.

By these hints it is most evident, that the reasons of turning from sin, are universally binding to a penitent soul; and therefore he turns not only

from some sins—but from every sin. He says not to one idol—but to all his idols, "Get you hence, for what have I any more to do with you!"

**[5.] Fifthly, One sin allowed, wallowed and tumbled in—is sufficient to deprive a man forever of the glorious presence of God.** Moses came within the sight of Canaan; but for one sin, namely, not sanctifying God's name at the water of Meribah, he was shut out, Exod. 22; for him to be so near the holy land, and yet so far off from entering into it, was doubtless of all strokes the hardest that ever he felt. In the law, the leper who had the spot of leprosy in any one part of his body was accounted a leper, although all the rest of his body was sound and whole, and accordingly he was to be shut up, and shut out from the society and company of the people of God, Lev. 13. Just so—one sin, one leprous spot, allowed and beloved—will forever shut a man out from the glorious presence of God, Christ, the Spirit, angels, and the "spirits of just men made perfect."

One sin wallowed in, will as certainly deprive a man of the blessed vision of God, and of all the treasures, pleasures, and delights which are at God's right hand—as a thousand sins. It was a sore vexation to king Lysimachus, that he should lose his earthly kingdom for one draught of water. O sirs! it will be an everlasting vexation to such, who for one lust shall at last lose not an earthly kingdom—but a heavenly kingdom!

One sin stripped the fallen angels of all their glory! One sin stripped our first parents of all their dignity and excellency, Gen. 3:4-5. Satan, by one loud lie to Adam and Eve, made fruitless all that God had preached to them immediately before. To turn from some sins—but not from all, is gross hypocrisy, Job 20:13. One cherished sin will keep Christ out of his throne. It speaks sin to be rampant, and Satan to be victorious; and what can be the outcome of these things but ruin and damnation? Romans 6:16. One fly in the box of precious ointment spoils the whole box. One thief may rob a man of all his treasure. One disease may deprive a man of all his health. One strong wind may blow down and blow away all a man's comforts. Just so—one sin delighted and wallowed in, will make a man miserable forever! Though this or that particular sin be very pleasant to the flesh, and delightful to the fancy—yet he is the wisest man, and he is the best man, and the only blessed man in all the world, that keeps

furthest from it; and therefore the true penitent turns not merely from this or that sin—but from every sin.

**[6.] Sixthly, The principle of regeneration, and seed of grace, which God lays into the soul of every penitent person at first conversion, is a universal principle, a principle which spreads itself over all the faculties of the soul, and over all the members of the body,** 1 Thes. 5:23: Psalm 45:13, "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." In regeneration there is infused the habits or principles of all grace, which like a divine leaven spreads itself over the whole man, Mat. 13:33. Look! as Absalom's beauty was spread all over him, even from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, 2 Sam. 24:25; so grace spreads itself over every faculty of the soul, and over every member of the body. Look! as Solomon's temple was all glorious both within and without—so that grace which a man receives at first conversion, makes him all glorious both within and without. Look! as Adam's sin spread itself over the whole man—so that grace which we receive from the second Adam spreads itself over the whole man, John 1:16. And as that grace which was in Christ, did diffuse and spread itself over all of Christ—so that grace which is in the true penitent does diffuse and spread itself all over the penitent. Now look, as heaven is contrary to all of hell, and as light is contrary to all darkness, and heat to all cold—so that divine, that noble, that universal principle of grace, which God at first conversion infuses into the penitent's soul, is contrary to all sin; and therefore the penitent turns from all sin. But,

**[7.] Seventhly, The true penitent would have God to forgive him, not only some of his sins—but all his sins; and therefore it is but just and equal that he should turn from all his sins.** "If God is so faithful and just to forgive us all our sins—we must be so faithful and just as to turn from all our sins." The plaster must be as broad as the sore, and the surgeon's knife as long and as deep as the wound. It argues horrid hypocrisy, damnable folly, and astonishing impudency—for a man to beg the pardon for those very sins that he is resolved never to forsake!

Look! as he who has any one sin forgiven has all sins forgiven—so he who has sincerely turned from any one sin, he has turned from every sin. And

he who has not repented of all known sin, he has not yet sincerely repented of any known sin, nor as yet experienced the sweetness of forgiveness of sin. He who will not renounce those sins that he would have God to remit, shall be sure to have a hell of guilt in his conscience. Of all fools there is none compared to him who is very importunate with God to forgive those sins which he is resolved beforehand to commit; for what prince, in his wits, will pardon the treasons of a person, who is resolved to continue a traitor? or what judge will forgive thievery of a person, who is decidedly determined to continue as a thief? Or what husband will pardon his wife—who is resolved to defile his bed with other lovers? Such as continue in the practice of those very sins, which they beg a pardon of, shall certainly go without their pardon!

Pardon of sin is for that man, and that man is for pardon of sin—who is as truly willing to forsake his sins as he is to receive the pardon of his sins. Who would not look upon that man as a madman, who would earnestly beg his pardon, and yet before his pardon is sealed would afresh steal purses, and murder people before the eyes of the judge? The pardoned soul is the repenting soul, and the repenting soul is the pardoned soul! Psalm 32:2, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." He who begs pardon of sin, and is resolved not to turn from sin, shall find no more sweetness in that grand promise of pardon, Proverbs 28:13, than devils or damned spirits do. Look! as one sin unforgiven will as certainly undo a man as a thousand, so one sin unforsaken will us certainly undo and damn a man as a thousand. The true penitent is as willing to turn from all his sins, as he is willing that God should pardon all his sins. But,

**[8.] Eighthly and lastly, There is in every penitent a sincere hatred of sin, a universal hatred of sin:** Psalm 97:18, "You who love the Lord, hate evil." Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Amos 5:15, "Hate the evil and love the good." Psalm 119:104, "Through your precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way." Verse 128, "Therefore I esteem all your precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Verse 113, "I hate vain thoughts—but your law do I love." Verse 163, "I hate and abhor lying—but your law do I love." True hatred is universal—it is to the whole kind. He who hates a

toad because it is a toad, hates every toad; he who hates a serpent because it is a serpent, hates every serpent; he who hates a wolf because it is a wolf, hates every wolf; he who hates a man because he is holy, hates every man who is holy; and so he who hates sin because it is sin, hates every sin, and therefore he cannot but turn from it, and labor to be the death and ruin of it. **Holy hatred** is an implacable and an irreconcilable affection. You shall as soon reconcile God and Satan together, Christ and antichrist together, heaven and hell together—as you shall be able to reconcile a penitent soul and his sin together. A true penitent looks upon every sin as contrary to the law of God, the nature of God, the being of God, the glory of God, and accordingly his heart rises against it. He looks upon every sin as poison, as the vomit of a dog, as the mire of the street, as the menstruous cloth, which of all things in the law was most unclean, defiling and polluting—and this turns his heart against every sin.

He looks upon every sin as having a hand in apprehending, betraying, binding, scourging, condemning and murdering his Lord and Master Jesus Christ; and this works him not only to **refrain** from sin—but to **forsake** it, and not only to forsake it—but also to **abhor** it, and to **loathe** it more than hell itself! The penitent soul will do all he can to be the death of every sin that has a hand in the death of his Lord and Master. He looks upon the sins of his body to be the tormentors of Christ's body; and the sins of his soul to be the tormentors of Christ's soul, to be those which made his soul heavy to the death, and which caused the withdrawals of his Father's love from him, and which forced him in the anguish of his soul to cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mat. 27:46. And this raises up in him a universal hatred of sin; and a universal hatred of sin always issues in a universal turning from sin.

Now these eight arguments do sufficiently prove, that a true penitential turning is a universal turning; a turning not from some sins—but from all sins.

**Objection.** But some may be ready to object, and say, Sir, this is a hard saying—who can hear it, who can bear it, who shall then be saved? For if a man repents not unless he turns from every sin, then there is not a man to be found in all the world who repents; for there is not a man in all the world who turns from every sin, who forsakes every sin, etc.: 1 Kings

8:46, "For there is no man who sins not." Proverbs 20:9, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" It is a question that implies a strong denial. Who can say, and say it truly, that he is pure from his sin? Surely none. [Job 9:30-31; Psalm 130:3; 2 Chron. 6:36; Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5; ponder upon these scriptures, etc.] He who shall say that he has made his heart clean, and that he is pure from his sin, sins in so saying; and commonly there are none more unclean than those who say they have made their hearts clean, nor none more impure than those who say they are pure from their sin.

Eccles. 7:20, "For there is not a just man upon the earth, that does good and sins not." These words, in their absolute sense, are a full testimony of the imperfection of our inherent righteousness in this life, and that even justified people come very short of that exact and perfect obedience which the law requires.

James 3:2, "We all stumble in many ways." It is a metaphor taken from travelers walking on stony or slippery ground, who are very apt to stumble or slide. This apostle was worthily called James the Just, and yet he numbers himself among the rest of the sanctified ones, that in many things offend all. The apostle does not say, in many things *they* all stumble—but in many things *we* all stumble. We who have more *gifts* than others, we who have more *grace* than others, we who have more *assurance* than others, we who have more *experiences* than others, we who have more *preservatives* to keep us from sin than others—even *we* in many things all stumble. Nor the apostle does not say, in *some* things we all stumble—but in *many* things we all stumble; the apostle speaking not of the singular individual acts of sin—but of the divers sorts of sin. Nor the apostle does not say, in many things we *may* all stumble—but in many things we *do* all stumble.

1 John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The apostle does not say, If *you* say you have no sin, you deceive yourself, as if he spoke to some particular person only; but if *we* say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Nor the apostle does not say, If you say you have no sin, you deceive yourselves, as if he intended weak or ordinary Christians alone—but if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; we apostles, we that in all grace, and in all holiness, and in all

spiritual enjoyments exceed and excel all others—even we sin as well as others. He who is so ignorant and so impudent, so saucy and so silly, as to say he has no sin—sins in saying so, and has no sincerity, no integrity, nor any ingenuity in him: Verse 10, "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." As much as in us lies we make God a liar—if we say we have not sinned. He who says he has no sin—he does by consequence charge God with falsehood, who has frequently told us in that word of grace, which cannot deceive us, that all men are sinners, and that they have all gone astray, and that they all need pardoning and purging grace, and that upon these very accounts he sent his beloved Son to lay down his dearest life, and to make himself an offering for sin, Isaiah 53:3, Romans 10:23 and 5:12, etc.

Now, from these scriptures these two things are most evident: first, that sinful qualities do remain in the most sanctified people; secondly, that these sinful qualities are sometimes very prevalent over the most sanctified people, and therefore I shall answer the objection thus, namely —that **a true penitential turning from all sin consists in these six things:**

**(1.) First,** In the alienation and inward averseness and drawing off of the soul from the LOVE and liking of all sin, and from all free and voluntary subjection unto sin—the heart being filled with a loathing and detestation of all sin, Psalm 119:104, 128, as that which is most contrary to all goodness and happiness.

**(2.) Secondly,** In the WILL'S detestation and hatred of all sin. When the very bent and inclination of the will is set against all sin, and opposes and crosses all sin, and is set upon the ruin and destruction of all sin, then the penitent is turned from all sin, Romans 7:15, 19, 21, 23; Isaiah 30:20, "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them—Away with you!" Hosea 14:8, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" When the will stands upon such terms of defiance with all sin as that it will never enter into a league of friendship with any sin—then is the soul turned away from every sin. When the will is set upon avenging itself upon all sin, and upon daily endeavors to mortify and crucify all sin—then is the penitent turned from

all his sins. When those sins which were once to the will as Delilah to Samson, are now to the will as Tamar to Amnon—then is the soul turned from sin with a witness.

**(3.) Thirdly,** In the JUDGMENT'S turning away from all sin, by disapproving, disallowing, and condemning of it: Romans 7:15, "I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate." Oh, says the judgment of a Christian, sin is the greatest evil in all the world. Sin is the only thing—which God abhors, which has brought Jesus Christ to the cross, which damns souls, which shuts heaven, and which has laid the foundations of hell. Oh, sin is the pricking thorn in my eye, the deadly arrow in my side, the two-edged sword that has wounded my conscience, and slain my comforts, and separated between God and my soul. Oh, it is that which has hindered my prayers, and embittered my mercies, and put a sting into all my crosses; and therefore I cannot but disapprove of it, and disallow of it, and condemn it to death, yes, to hell, from whence it came.

"I thus preach and thus think," says Chrysostom, "that it is more bitter to sin against Christ, than to suffer the torments of hell." Plutarch reports of Marcus Cato, that he never declared his opinion in any matter in the senate but he would close it with this passage, "Methinks still, Carthage should be destroyed." Just so, whenever a penitent looks upon his sins in his judgment, he is still saying, "Methinks these sins should be destroyed; methinks this pride, this unbelief, this earthly-mindedness, this hypocrisy, this vainglory, etc., should be destroyed."

**(4.) Fourthly,** In the PURPOSE and RESOLUTION of the soul, the soul sincerely purposing and resolving never willingly, willfully, or wickedly to transgress any more. Psalm 17:3, "I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." The general purpose and resolution of my heart is not to transgress. Though particular failings may attend me—yet my resolutions and purposes are firmly fixed against evil. Psalm 39:1, "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked are before me." [The true penitent holds up his purposes and resolutions to keep off from sin, and to keep close with God, though he be not able in everything, and at all times, to make good his purposes and resolutions, etc.]

David highly resolves so to bridle and muzzle up his mouth, that he would not break out into any impatient or unfitting speeches, that might give the wicked any advantage to reproach religion, or to blaspheme the Holy One of Israel, etc. Anselm was a man of a holy resolution: "I had rather," says he, "go to hell pure from sin, than to heaven polluted with that filth." And says another, "I will rather leap into a bonfire, than willfully to sin against God." When Valens the emperor threatened Basil with imprisonment, banishment, death: "I am resolved neither punishments nor flatteries shall silence me, or draw me to betray a good cause, or a good conscience," etc.

**(5.) Fifthly,** In the earnest and unfeigned DESIRES, and careful ENDEAVORS of the soul to abandon all sin, to forsake all sin, to be rid of all sin, Romans 7:22-23. Now where God sees this frame of spirit, there he will certainly pardon the failings, and pass by the imperfections of his people; and he "will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him," Mal. 3:17. Now you know, when a prudent, tender, indulgent father sees his child to fail and come short in that which he enjoins him to do—yet knowing that his desires and endeavors is to please him and serve him, he will not be harsh, rigid, sour, or severe towards him—but will spare him, and exercise much tenderness and indulgence towards him. And will God, will God whose mercies reach above the heavens, and whose compassions are infinite, and whose love is like himself, behave worse towards his children than men behave towards theirs? Surely not! God's fatherly indulgence accepts of the *will* for the *work*, Heb. 13:18, 2 Cor. 8:12, as a father will accept in his child the *desire* for the *deed*; and if there be a blemish in his child's performance, he will pity it, and cast a mantle of love over it.

A sick man is not more desirous to be rid of all his diseases, nor a *prisoner* to be freed from all his bolts and chains, than the true *penitent* is desirous to be rid of all his sins, etc.

**(6.) Sixthly** and lastly, In the ordinary declining, shunning, and AVOIDING of all known occasions, temptations, provocations, inducements, and enticements to sin, etc. That royal law, 1 Thess. 5:22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," is a law that is very precious in a penitent man's eye, and commonly lies warm upon a penitent man's

heart; so that take him in his ordinary course, and you shall find him very ready to shun and be shy of the very appearances of sin, of the very shows and shadows of sin. [See Judges 23; Exod. 23:7; Proverbs 22:3, and 27:12; Proverbs 5:8.]

*Job* made a covenant with his eyes, Job 31:1; and *Joseph* would not hearken to his bold tempting mistress, to lie with her, or to be with her, Gen. 39:10; and *David*, when himself, would not sit with vain people, Psalm 26:3-5; and at another time he refused to take the threshing-floor, oxen, and threshing instruments of Araunah as a gift—but would buy them, because he would avoid the very show of covetousness, as some conceive, 2 Sam. 24:20, seq. *Austin* being often ensnared in uncleanness in his younger days before his conversion, he was exceeding careful to avoid all occasions of it afterwards.

Now a true penitential turning from all sin lies in these six things, and therefore you had need look about you; for if there be any one way of wickedness wherein you walk, and which you are resolved you will not forsake, you are not true penitents, and you will certainly lose your souls—and all the great and glorious things of another world.

**Answer 3.** A true penitential turning is a CONSTANT and CONTINUED turning from sin, 2 Chron. 7:14. As it is total in respect of the act, so it is final in respect of the time. True repentance takes an everlasting farewell, an everlasting adieu of sin. It says with the spouse, Cant. 5:3, "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?" I have found the pain of sin, I have put off the garments of the old man, the rags of old Adam, and how shall I put them on again? The burnt child will dread the fire. Though you urge him to it ever so frequently, ever so strongly, ever so rhetorically—yet he will tell you he has smarted for it, he has paid dear for it, and therefore you must excuse him; he has peremptorily resolved, nay, he has seriously vowed against it; and though he be never so much entreated, and by variety of arguments importuned—yet still he remains inexorable.

A Christian that has truly repented, is so sensible of the freeness and sweetness of the grace of God on the one hand, and of the weight of sin and wrath of God on the other hand—that he is highly resolved never to have any more to do with idols, never to meddle more with those burning

coals, Psalm 40:12, Hos. 14:8. True repentance is a continued act, "a repentance never to be repented of." The true penitent is every day a-turning further and further from sin, and nearer and nearer to God. There is nothing that fetches so many tears from a penitent man's eyes, nor so many sighs and groans from a penitent man's heart, as this—that he can get no further off from sin, and that he can get no nearer nor no closer to God.

Repentance for sin—and a willing continuance in sin—cannot consist in the same person. A sincere penitent makes as much conscience of repenting daily, as he does of believing daily; and he can as easily content himself with one act of faith, or love, or fear, or hope, or joy, or obedience, as he can content himself with one act of repentance. "My sins are ever before me," Psalm 51:3. This is the voice of every true penitent: "Oh that I might sin no more! Oh that I might never more dishonor God! Oh that I might never more walk contrary to Jesus Christ! Oh that I might never more grieve the Spirit of grace!" To sin is common to man, yes, to the best man in all the world; but to *continue* in a course of sin, is only proper to a wicked man. [1 John 1:8, 10, 5:19; Isaiah 28:15, 18; Psalm 139:24; Romans 7:22-23.]

To err and sin—that is human; but to maintain a league or friendship with sin—that is diabolical. Though a true penitent dares not continue in a trade, a path of sin, while he lives in this world—yet sin will continue in him while he continues in this world. Though sin and grace were not born together, and though sin and grace shall never die together—yet while a penitent man lives in this world they must live together. *It is one thing for sin to continue in us—and it is another thing for us to continue in sin.*

The apostle having closed the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, in the triumph of gospel grace, that "As sin has reigned unto death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," begins the next with a prevention of the abuse of this grace "What should we say then? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may multiply? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" Romans 6:1-2. To live in sin, in the face of gospel grace, is most unreasonable; and to a gracious and sincere nature, impossible. The very question implies a kind of impossibility. Such as were once dead in sin,

and now by gospel grace are dead to sin—such can no longer continue in sin.

Look! as it is not the mere falling into the water which drowns a man—but his lying and continuing in it; so it is not a mere falling into sin that damns a man, that drowns a man, that everlastingly undoes a man—but his living in it, his continuing in it. It is bad to sin—but it is infinitely worse to continue in sin. The first best is not to sin, the next best is not to continue in sin, no not for an hour, as Paul speaks in another case, Gal. 2:5, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour." Certainly to argue from gospel mercy to sinful liberty, is **the devil's logic**. The more a man lives in the sight of gospel grace, the more sin will be discountenanced, resisted, hated, and totally displaced. A man may as truly assert that water burns, or that fire cools, or that the sun darkens the air, as he may assert that the sight, sense, or sweet of gospel grace will breed security or carnality, looseness or wickedness, in a gracious heart.

The true penitent never ceases repenting, until he ceases living. He goes to heaven with the joyful tears of repentance in his eyes. He knows that his whole life is but a day of sowing tears, that he may at last reap everlasting joys. True repentance makes a final and everlasting separation between sin and the soul. It makes such an absolute and complete divorce between sin and the soul, and casts them so far asunder, that no power nor policy can ever bring them to meet as lovers together. The true penitent looks upon sin as an enemy, and deals with it as Amnon dealt with Tamar: 2 Sam. 13:15, "Amnon's love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her. 'Get out of here!' he snarled at her." And just thus does the penitent soul behave towards sin. He who truly repents, so turns from his sins, that he never returns to the bondage and service of his sins any more, Isaiah 30:22, "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them—Away with you!" Isaiah 1:16, Psalm 85:8.

But now the repentance of hypocrites is not constant—but inconstant; it is not steadfast—but unstedfast; it is not permanent—but transient; it is quickly on, as quickly off. "Come," say they, in that Hosea 6:1, "and let us return unto the Lord." But verse 4, "O Ephraim! what shall I do unto you?"

O Judah, what shall I do unto you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away." The hypocrite's repentance is like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night—and perished in a night, Jonah 4:10. A hypocrite's repentance springs from mutable grounds, causes, considerations and circumstances; and therefore it is compared to a deceitful bow, Hosea 7:16; it is as variable as the wind. A hypocrite is only constant in inconstancy, Psalm 78:8, "whose spirit was not steadfast with God." Verse 37, "Neither were they steadfast in his covenant," etc. A hypocrite puts off his sins in the day of adversity, as he does his garments when he goes to bed, with an intent to put them on again in the morning of prosperity. Verse 34-36, When God killed some of them, the rest finally sought him. They repented and turned to God. Then they remembered that God was their rock, that their redeemer was the Most High. But they followed him only with their words; they lied to him with their tongues. Their hearts were not loyal to him. They did not keep his covenant."

In the language of the blessed Scripture, he is a dog that returns to his vomit again—and such a dog was Judas; and he is a swine that returns to the wallowing in the mire again—and such a swine was Demas; and such dogs and swine are all hypocrites, 2 Peter 2:20-22. It is an extraordinary vanity in some men to lay aside their sins for a time—but with a purpose to return to them again; as they fable it of the serpent that lays aside his poison when he goes to drink, and when he has drunk he returns to it again. It is a sad and sore evil, when men say to their lusts, as Abraham said to his servants, "Abide here, and I will go and worship—and return again unto you," Gen. 22:5. Doubtless such souls are as far off from sound repentance as light is from darkness, or as hell is from heaven, etc.

**Question.** But in what respects is a true penitential turning from sin such a turning from sin as never to return to sin any more? in what respects is the penitent's turning from sin a continued and steadfast turning from sin? etc.

**Answer.** This is a very sober, serious, weighty question, and bespeaks a very sober, serious, and satisfactory answer, and therefore I would answer the question, (1.) negatively; (2.) Positively, etc.

**[1.] Negatively,** It is *not* such a turning from sin—as never more to sin.

1 Kings 8:46, "For there is no man who sins not." Proverbs 20:9, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean? I am pure from my sin?" Proverbs 24:16, "A just man falls seven times, and rises again." Eccles. 7:20, "For there is not a just man upon the earth who does good, and sins not." Luke 17:4, "If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again unto you, saying, I repent, you shall forgive him." Mat. 18:21-22. "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him; until seven times? Jesus says unto him, I say not unto you, until seven times—but until seventy times seven." James 3:2, "For in many things we all stumble." 1 John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Verse 10, "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." And what did the continual burnt-offering which was to be *daily* made import—but a daily sinning, and expiating of it? etc., Num. 28:3.

Such is the universal corruption of human nature, that the souls of the best, of the purest, and of the holiest men in the world, do from day to day, yes, from moment to moment, contract some filth and uncleanness. The choicest saints can never acquit themselves from sins of infirmity, such as do inevitably and inseparably cleave unto the best of men, especially considering the state and condition wherein they are, carrying still about them corrupt flesh and blood.

Methodius compares the inbred corruptions of man's heart to a wild fig-tree, growing upon the wall of some goodly temple or stately palace, whereof although the main trunk of the stem is broken off, and stump of the root be plucked up—yet the fibrous strings of it piercing into the joints of the stone-work, will not be utterly extracted—but will be ever and anon shooting and sprouting out, until the whole frame of the building be dissolved, and the stone work thereof be disjointed and pulled in pieces.

**[2.]** It is *not* such a turning from sin, as that the true penitent shall never relapse into the same kind of sin any more; for a true penitent may fall into the same sin again and again.

It was a sin for the *disciples* to sleep when Christ had commanded them to watch and pray—and yet they slept again and again, Mat. 26:40-45.

The prophet *Jonah* was a holy man, and yet he relapsed into anger and discontent with God again and again; he was discontent with the work God set him about; therefore he flies to Tarshish, *Jonah* 1:2-3; and sorrows for it, and confesses that those who "trust upon lying vanities forsake their own mercies," chapter 2:8; and yet when God had showed mercy to Nineveh, he was exceedingly discontented with God again: *Jonah* 4:1, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." And when the Lord, who might have sent him to his grave, or affrowned him to hell, reasons lovingly, sweetly, and mildly with him, to take him off from his angry passion, chapter 4:3-4, and provides for him in his extremity; yet upon a very small occasion, namely, the taking away of a gourd or shrub, which God did to convince him of his folly and waspishness of spirit—he breaks out again into the same passion, or worse, as if he had never seen the evil of it, or been humbled for it: *Jonah* 4:8-9, "I do well to be angry, even unto death."

And that is very considerable that *Job* speaks concerning his *friends*: *Job* 19:3, "These ten times have you reproached me—yet are you not ashamed." It is a sin to reproach any man; it is a greater to reproach a godly man; but yet greater to reproach a godly man under sad and sore afflictions; but yet greatest of all to reproach a godly man under his sufferings, often, frequently; yet, says *Job*, "These ten times have you reproached me;" and yet *Job*'s friends were not only godly—but eminently godly. By this sad instance it is evident, that gracious men, yes, that men eminently gracious, may fall into the same sin again and again, yes, ten times, that is, often.

Though Christ told his *disciples* that his kingdom was not of this world—yet at three several times their pride and sinful ambition put them upon striving for pre-eminence and worldly greatness. [John 18:36; Mat. 18:1-4; Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46, and 22:24, 26.]

King *Jehoshaphat*, though he was a godly man—yet he joins affinity with that wicked Ahab, for which he was sharply reprov'd by the prophet: 2 Chron. 19:2, "And Jehu went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Should you help the ungodly, and love those who hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon you from the Lord." Now, though this gracious prince was thus reprov'd and saved, even by a miracle of mercy—2 Chron. 18:1-3, 30-31 compared;—yet soon after he falls into the same sin again, and joins himself with Ahaziah, king of Israel, who did very wickedly, 2 Chron. 20:35-36, and for which he is severely reprov'd in verse 37. "Then Eliezer prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because you have joined yourself with Ahaziah, the Lord has broken your works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

*Lot* was twice overcome with wine.

*Abraham*, though the father of the faithful—yet falls once and again into the same sin: Gen. 12:11-13, compared with chapter 20:1-4, 13. *Peter* falls once and again into the same sin.

*John* twice worshiped the angel.

*Samson*, who is by the Spirit of the Lord numbered among those worthies of whom this world was not worthy, Heb. 11:32-33, 38, fell again and again into the same gross sin, as is evident in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of the book of Judges.

And the *church* confesses, that their backslidings are many, Jer. 14:7.

By all which it is most evident, that godly men may fall again and again into the same sin; and no wonder, for though their repentance be ever so sincere and sound—yet their graces are but weak, and their mortification but imperfect in this life, and therefore it is possible for a gracious soul to

fall again and again into the same sin. If the fire be not wholly put out, who will think it impossible that it should catch, and burn again and again?

I readily grant that the Lord has graciously promised to heal the backslidings of his people; Hosea 14:4, and so Jer. 3:22, "Return, O backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." See Jer 3:1, 4-8, 12, 14. But I can nowhere find in all the Scriptures, that God has engaged himself by any particular promise or promises, that Christians truly converted, truly penitent, shall never fall again and again into the same sins after their conversion. I cannot find in all the book of God, where God has engaged himself to give such strength or power against this sin or that, as that a Christian shall be forever, in this life, put out of all possibility of falling again and again into the same sins. No person on earth can show such a promise, that when a Christian has been thus or thus troubled, grieved, humbled, or melted for his sins, that then God will assuredly preserve him from ever falling into the same sins again. The sight of such a promise under God's own hand, would be as life from the dead to all real Christians, who fear nothing more than the sin of backsliding.

Certainly, there is no such power or infinite virtue in the greatest horrors or terrors, troubles or sorrows, which the soul can be under for sin; nor in the fullest, sweetest, or choicest discoveries of God's rich grace and free love to the soul, as forever to fence and secure the soul from relapsing into the same sin again and again. Though grace is a glorious creature—yet it is but a creature. Grace is but a created habit, that may be prevailed against by Satan's temptations, and by the strong, secret, and subtle workings of sin in our hearts. But this must be carefully minded and remembered, that though the saints may and do sometimes relapse—yet they do not relapse in such a manner as wicked men do relapse. For,

(1.) First, They do not relapse voluntarily—but involuntarily. Involuntary relapses are when the resolution and full bent of the heart is against sin, when the soul strives with all its might against sin, by sighs and groans, by prayers and tears—and yet by some invincible weakness is forced to fall back into sin again, because there is not spiritual strength enough to overcome.

(2.) Secondly, They do not relapse out of choice, as wicked men do, Isaiah 66:3.

(3.) Thirdly, They do not relapse out of any delight that they take in relapsing. Witness their sad complaints, their great lamentations, and their bitter mournings over their relapses. Relapses into diseases, and relapses into sins, are more troublesome and dangerous—than they are any ways delightful, to all who are truly saved.

(4.) Fourthly, They do not relapse out of any settled purpose or resolution of heart to relapse, as wicked men do, Jer. 2:25. All the relapses of a saint are against the settled bent, bias, and resolution of his soul.

(5.) Fifthly, They do not relapse out of any love or longing to relapse, as wicked men do, who long and love to return to the flesh-pots of Egypt.

(6.) Sixthly, They do not relapse into enormities, as wicked men do, for it is not usual with God to leave his people frequently to relapse into enormities; for by his Spirit and grace, by his smiles and frowns, by his word and rod—he does commonly preserve his people from a common, a frequent relapsing into enormities, into gross wickednesses. The common and ordinary relapses of the people of God are relapses into infirmities, as idle words, anger, hastiness, rashness, vain thoughts, etc., and these God pardons in course. But the common and ordinary relapses of wicked men are relapses into enormities, into gross impieties.

(7.) Seventhly, They do not relapse habitually, constantly, as wicked men do. Their relapses are transient, not permanent; they are not the habitual course of life. A sheep may *fall* into the mire—but a swine *wallows* in the mire, etc.

**[2.] But, secondly, I answer affirmatively,** That notwithstanding all this—yet a true penitential turning from sin is a **continued** and **steadfast** turning from sin, and that in these five respects—

(1.) First, In respect of his **habitual PURPOSE and RESOLUTION not to sin**. Psalm 39:1, "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not

with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." David resolves to lay a law of restraint upon his tongue, and to clap a muzzle upon his mouth, while he was in the presence of the wicked, who were waiting for the opportunity to lure, ensnare and entrap him. Come health, come sickness, come honor, come reproach, come poverty, come plenty, come liberty, come restraint, come life, come death—the true penitent is fixed in his purpose and resolution not to sin. Jerome writes of a brave woman, that being upon the rack, told her persecutors that they might do their worst, for she was firmly resolved rather to die than lie.

(2.) Secondly, In respect of his **habitual DESIRES, which are, that he may not sin.** Psalm 119:133, "Order my steps in your word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." David's great desire is that he may walk as in a frame, that he may walk by line and rule, exactly, accurately; and that though sin did *dwell* in him, that yet it might not *reign* in him; and though it did *rebel* in him, that yet it might not have *dominion* over him. He would have his sins to be like those beasts in Daniel, whose dominion was taken away, though their lives were prolonged for a season, chapter 7:12; Psalm 119:10, "O! let me not wander from your commandments." Verse 36, "Incline my heart unto your testimonies, and not to covetousness." Under the name of covetousness all manner of viciousness is to be understood, that being the root of all evil, 1 Tim. 6:10.

(3.) Thirdly, In respect of his **habitual ENDEAVORS, which still are not to sin.** The ordinary and habitual endeavors of a true penitent are still set against sin. He ordinarily rows against the stream of sin, though sometimes the stream proves too strong for him: Psalm 119:11, "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you." He hides the word in his heart as a *treasure*—that he might not lose it; and as a *rule*—that he might not transgress against it. The law of God kept close in the heart is the best armor against evil lusts. David locks up the law of God in his heart, as in a chest or cabinet, to secure him against Satan's ambushes and assaults on the one hand, and to preserve him from sin on the other hand. Likewise, Psalm 18:23, "I have kept myself from my iniquity."

(4.) Fourthly, In respect of his **habitual HATRED of sin**. Although the true penitent does sometimes sin—yet he always hates the evil he does. There is a firm and fixed hatred in his soul against sin: Psalm 119:104, "Therefore I hate every false way." Verse 113, "I hate vain thoughts." Verse 163, "I hate and abhor lying." Likewise, Romans 7:15, "The evil that I hate—that I do." A penitent heart usually rises and swells against the toad in the bosom. Some say, that there is such a native dread and terror of the hawk implanted in the dove, that she is afraid of every *feather*, and that she detests and abhors the very sight of any feather that has grown upon a hawk. Just so, *there is such a detestation and abhorrency of sin* divinely implanted in every penitent man's heart, that he cannot but hate everything that looks like it, or that belongs to it, or that comes from it.

(5.) Fifthly, In respect of **his constant PATH, or continued way, or course of life, which is quite opposite and contrary to sin**. Gal. 5:17, Isaiah 26:7, "The way of the just is uprightness." Proverbs 16:17, "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil." It is as common and ordinary for upright people to depart from evil, as it is for passengers to keep the king's highways. Though an upright man, through mistake or weakness of grace, or violence of temptation, may step out of a way of holiness—yet *walking in a way of wickedness* cannot be charged upon him: Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."

You know the path and practice of penitent Zaccheus, of penitent Paul, and of the penitent jailor—was quite contrary to those ways of wickedness that they had formerly walked in.

**Answer 4. But fourthly and lastly, As a true penitential turning from sin is a constant and continued turning from sin—so it is also a returning to God.** Sin is an aversion from God, and repentance is a conversion to God, Acts 26:18. Sound repentance is not only a ceasing from doing evil—but also a learning to do well, Isaiah 1:16-17. Repentance and turning to God are joined together, as being one and the same thing, Acts 26:20. The prodigal's repenting was his returning to his father: Luke 15:17, "When he came to himself, he said, I will arise and go to my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you." etc. The

Hebrew word for *repentance* signifies to *return*, implying a going back from what a man had done. It notes a returning or converting from one thing to another—as from sin to God, from evil to good, from hell to heaven.

The common call of sinners to repentance is to turn from sin, and to return to God: Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord," etc. Jer. 4:1, "If you will return, O Israel, return to me—if you put your detestable idols out of my sight and no longer go astray." And so chapter 18:11, "Return you now everyone from his evil way, and make your way and your doings good." 1 Peter 2:25, "For you were as sheep going astray—but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls." [Consult these scriptures: Isaiah 44:22, 19:22, 59:20; Hosea 3:5, 6:1, 14:1.]

It is not enough for a sinner to forsake his sins—but he must also return to the Lord. The true penitent subjects his *heart* to the power of divine grace—and his *life* to the blessed will and word of God. Look! as negative goodness can never *satisfy* a penitent soul, so negative goodness can never *save* an impenitent soul. It is not enough, O man, that you are not thus and thus bad; but you must be thus and thus good—or you will be miserable forever: Ezek. 18:21, "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right—he shall surely live, he shall not die." Negative righteousness and holiness is no righteousness, and no holiness in the account of God. It was not the Pharisee's negative righteousness, nor his comparative goodness, that could prevent his being rejected of God, or his being shut out of heaven, or his being turned into hell, Luke 18:5, Mat. 20:13-14.

It is not enough that the tree bears no bad fruit—but it must bring forth good fruit, else it must be cut down and cast into the fire. That tree which is not for *fruit*—is for the *fire*: "Every tree which does not bring forth good fruit," says Christ, "is hewn down, and cast into the fire," Mat. 7:19. Heaven at last will be found too holy, and too hot—to hold such as please themselves, as satisfy themselves with a negative righteousness. All that negative righteousness and holiness can do, is only to **help a man to**

## **one of the coolest chambers and easiest beds in hell.**

True repentance brings the heart and life, not only off from sin—but on to God also. It takes a man not only off from the ways of death—but it engages him to walk in the paths of life: Psalm 119:3, "They do no iniquity, they walk in his ways." Proverbs 13:14, "The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." Proverbs 15:24, "The way of life is above to the wise—that he may depart from hell beneath." Psalm 34:144, "Depart from evil—and do good."

We read in Scripture of God's returning to us, as well as of our returning to God; in both there is repentance. When **God** returns to us—he turns from that punishment which he has threatened to unbelievers. When **we** return to God, we repent of the evil of sin which we have committed against him. [Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of true repentance, very aptly compares the soul to a pair of writing tables, out of which must be washed whatever was written with sin; and instead thereof the writing of grace must be written upon the soul; both being necessary to true repentance.]

The true penitent does not only sadly smite upon his thigh, and say, "What have I done?" but he also speedily faces about and cries out, "I will do so no more," Jer. 31:19. When God calls for true repentance, it is with an "Return unto me," Jer. 4:1. And when the people of God do provoke and encourage one another to repentance, it is with a "Come let us return unto the Lord," Hosea 6:1. Repentance unto life is not a turning from one sin to another sin; nor it is not a turning from profaneness to civility; nor it is not a turning from civility to formality; but it is a turning from darkness to light, it is a turning from the ways of iniquity into the ways of piety, it is a turning from sin to God, Acts 26:18.

In this respect Israel's repentance was very defective. Witness that sad complaint of the prophet: Hosea 7:16, "They return," that is, they make a show of repentance, "but not to the most High." Just so, those in Joel 2:12 have the half-turn—but returned not to the Lord with all their hearts. Just so, Jehu went far, and gave many a half-turn—but never turned to the Most High; and that was his ruin at last. Such a repentance as never brings the soul the nearer to God—is sham repentance. But that

repentance which brings the soul nearer to God—is a repentance never to be repented of.

And let thus much suffice to have spoken concerning that evangelical repentance, which has the precious promises of remission of sin and salvation running out unto it, etc.

### **How Far a Hypocrite Cannot Go**

Several have observed how far a hypocrite **may go**—but my design in this chapter is to show how far a hypocrite **cannot go**. [It is better that a hundred hypocrites should perish, than that one poor Christian should lack his portion.—John Cotton] Many have discovered at large what a hypocrite **can do**—but my scope in this chapter is to show what a hypocrite **cannot do**. Some have showed what a hypocrite **is**, and I shall now show what he **is not**. Some have showed the several rounds in Jacob's ladder, that a hypocrite may climb up to; but my business and work in this chapter, is to show you the several rounds in Jacob's ladder that no hypocrite under heaven can climb up to.

**[1.] First, A hypocrite's inside never corresponds with his outside.** A hypocrite's outside is one thing, and his inside another thing. A hypocrite is outwardly clean—but inwardly unclean. He is outwardly glorious—but inwardly inglorious.

"How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! Blind Pharisees! First wash the inside of the cup, and then the outside will become clean, too. "How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. You try to look like upright people outwardly, but inside your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and

lawlessness. Matthew 23:25-28. "You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are still filthy—full of greed and wickedness!" Luke 11:39

Hypocrites are like apothecaries' gally-pots, having without the title of some excellent preservative—but within they are full of some deadly poison. They are like the Egyptian temples, which were beautiful outside—but within there was nothing to be found but serpents and crocodiles, and other venomous creatures. Hypocrites trade more for a good name—rather than for a good heart; for a good report—rather than for a good conscience. They are like fiddlers, more careful in tuning their instruments, than in watching their spirits. Hypocrites are like white silver—but they draw black lines; they have a seeming sanctified outside—but stuffed within with malice, worldliness, pride, envy, etc. They are like window cushions, made up of velvet and richly embroidered—but stuffed within with hay.

A hypocrite may offer sacrifice with *Cain*, and fast with *Jezebel*, and humble himself with *Ahab*, and lament with the tears of *Esau*, and kiss Christ with *Judas*, and follow Christ with *Demas*, and be baptized with *Simon Magus*; and yet for all this his inside is as bad as any of theirs.

A hypocrite is a Jacob on the outside—and an Esau within; a David on the outside—and a Saul within; a John on the outside—and a Judas within; a saint on the outside—and a Satan within; an angel on the outside—and a devil within. A hypocrite is a Jew outwardly—but an atheist, a pagan, a Turk inwardly, Romans 2:28-29.

I have read of certain idols, which on the outside were covered with gold and pearl—but within were nothing but spiders and cobwebs; a fit resemblance of hypocrites. Hypocrisy is but an outside, like cloth of arras, fair and beautiful without; but if you look to the inside, you shall find nothing but rags. That monk hit it, that said, To be a monk in outward show was easy—but to be a monk in inward reality was hard. To be a Christian in outward show is easy—but to be a Christian inwardly and really is very hard. A hypocrite's inside never corresponds to his outside; his inside is wicked, and his outside is religious. But let all such hypocrites know, that pretend sanctity is double iniquity, and accordingly

at last they shall be dealt with. "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" Matthew 23:33.

**[2.] Secondly, No hypocrite is totally divorced from the love and liking of every known sin.** There is still some secret lust or other, which as a sweet morsel he rolls under his tongue, and will not spit it out, Job 20:12-14. Every hypocrite tolerates some evil or other in himself, and takes liberty to transgress. A hypocrite will make hard work to daub up his conscience, and to secure himself from the checks thereof. After once the treasurer's bag was committed to Judas' custody, after once he was chosen into that sweet office, he quickly put conscience out of office, and never left stealing and licking his fingers, while there was any money in his bag to finger.

*Herod* knew much, and heard John Baptist, and had some temporary affections, and did many good things, Mark 6:20. But yet (1.) he kept Herodias his brother's wife, Mark 6:17; (2.) he took away the life of John the Baptist, Mark 6:27; (3.) he sets Jesus Christ at naught, and rejected him, Luke 23:11. As fair as Herod seemed to behave—yet he lived in a known notorious sin, and unjustly murdered the messenger of God, and mocked and rejected Jesus Christ as a vile person.

**Some sin or other always reigns without control in a hypocritical heart.** A hypocrite always reserves one nest-egg or another in his heart or life, for Satan to sit and brood on. *Jehu* did many brave things—but yet he kept up the worship of his golden calves. Naaman promises high—but yet he is for bowing in the house of Rimmon. The pharisees were very devout—but yet they loved the praises of men, and the uppermost seats in the synagogues. There is never a hypocrite in the world—but will do what he can to save the life of his sin—though it be with the loss of his soul. O sirs! Satan can be contented that hypocrites should yield to God in many things—provided they will be but true to him in some one thing; for he very well knows, that **one sin lived in and allowed**, gives him as much advantage against the soul as more. Satan can hold a man fast enough by one sin, as the fowler can hold the bird fast enough by one claw. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will mar all a man's sweetest duties and services; as one dead fly will mar the whole box of precious ointment, Eccles. 10:1, and as one

jarring string will bring the sweetest music out of tune.

It is said of Naaman the Syrian, that he was a valiant man, and a victorious man, and an honorable man, and a great favorite with his prince—but he was a leper, 2 Kings 5:1. Just so, it may be said of many hypocrites, they have such and such excellencies, and they perform such and such glorious duties—but they live and allow themselves in this or that sin—and that mars the beauty of all their services, Mat. 7:21-23. **Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will as certainly damn a man as many; as one disease, one ulcerous part, may as certainly kill a man as many.** Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will render a man as unclean in the eye of God as many.

If the *leper* in the law had the spot of leprosy in any one part of his body, he was accounted a leper, although all the rest of his body was sound and whole, Lev. 14. Just so, he who has the spot of the leprosy of sin allowed in any one part of his soul, he is a spiritual leper in the eye of God; he is unclean, though in other parts he may not be unclean.

If a swine does but wallow in one miry or dirty hole—it is filthy; and certainly, that soul that does but wallow in any one sin, he is filthy in the eye of God. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will as effectually keep Christ and the soul asunder as many—as one stone in the pipe will as effectually keep out the water as many. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will make way for many, as one thief can open the door to let in many more. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will as certainly shut the soul out of heaven as many. One enemy may shut the door upon a man as well as many; and what difference is there between that man who is shut out of heaven for living in many sins, and he who is shut out of heaven for living but in one sin?

One sin lived in and allowed, will arm conscience against a man, as well as many. If there be but one crack in the honey glass, there the wasps will be buzzing. One sin allowed and countenanced, will spoil the music of conscience. One sin lived in and allowed, will make death as terrible and as formidable to the soul as many. One handwriting upon the wall made King Nebuchadnezzar's countenance to change, and his thoughts to be troubled, and the joints of his loins to be loosed, and his knees to be

dashed one against another, Daniel 5:5-6. Now, all this Satan knows, and therefore he labors mightily to engage hypocrites to live in the allowance of some one sin. [It is most true what Seneca, the heathen says, "he who has any one vice reigning—has all others with it."]

O sirs! remember that as one hole in a ship will sink it, and as one stab at the heart will kill a man, and as one glass of poison will poison a man, and as one act of treason will make a man a traitor—just so, one sin lived in and allowed will damn a man forever. One wound strikes Goliath dead, as well as three-and-twenty did Caesar; one Delilah will do Samson as much mischief as all the Philistines; one wheel broken spoils all the whole clock; one vein's bleeding will let out all the vitals as well as more; one bitter herb will spoil all the pottage. By eating one apple, *Adam* lost paradise, Gen. 3; one lick of honey endangered *Jonathan's* life, 1 Sam. 14:33; one *Achan* was a trouble to all Israel, Joshua 7; one *Jonah* was too heavy for a whole ship, Jonah 1; so one sin lived in and allowed, is enough to make a man miserable forever. One millstone will sink a man to the bottom of the sea as well as a hundred; so one sin lived in and indulged will sink a man to the bottom of hell as well as a hundred.

I have read of a great Roman captain, who, as he was riding in his triumphant chariot through Rome, never took his eyes off a harlot who walked along the street; which made one say, Behold how this great captain, who has conquered such and such armies—is himself conquered by one silly woman! There is never a hypocrite in the world—but lies under the conquest of one base lust or another—but lives under the reign and dominion of one sin or another. That soul that can in sincerity of heart appeal to a heart-searching God, that it is otherwise with him, namely, that he does not live nor allow himself in any one sinful way or practice, that soul, I dare assure in the Lord's name, is no hypocrite, Psalm 139:23-24.

**[3.] Thirdly, As a hypocrite's heart is never thoroughly subdued to a willingness to part with every lust—so neither is his heart thoroughly subdued to a willingness to perform all known duties.** Sometimes he is all for public duties—but makes no conscience of closet-duties, or of family-duties. Sometimes he is all for the duties of the *first* table—but makes no conscience of the duties of the *second* table.

And sometimes he is all for the duties of the *second* table—but makes no conscience of the duties of the *first* table. If he obeys one command—he willingly lives in the neglect of another; if he does one duty—he will be sure to cast off another. As he is not willing to fall out with every sin—so he is not willing to fall in with every duty. A hypocrite's obedience is always partial, it is never universal; he still baulks or boggles with those commands which cross his lusts.

The *pharisees* fasted, prayed, gave alms, and paid tithes, Mat. 23:23. Oh but they omitted "the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith," chap 6; and they were unnatural to parents, and under a pretense of praying, they made a prey of widows' houses, Mat. 15:4-6; under a pretense of piety, they exercised the greatest covetousness, unrighteousness, and cruelty—and that upon widows, who are usually the greatest objects of pity and charity. They made no bones of robbing the widow, under a pretense of honoring of God.

Just so, *Judas*, under a pretense of laying up for the poor, robbed the poor; he pretended to lay up for the poor—but he intended only to lay up for himself, and to provide against a rainy day, John 12:6. It is probable that he had no great mind to stay long with his Lord, and therefore he was resolved to make the best market he could for himself. Judas, under a cloak of holiness, practices the greatest unfaithfulness. Though the eagle soars high—yet still her eye is upon her prey; so though Judas did soar high in profession—yet his eye was still upon his prey, upon his bags; and so that he might have it—he cared not who went without it; so that he might be rich—he did not care though his Lord and his retinue grew ever so poor. Judas under all his shows and *sanctity*—had not so much as common *honesty* in him. [After some men have made a long and high profession, some one beloved lust or other, which they would never let go, parts Christ and them forever.]

Counterfeit holiness is often made a stalking-horse to much unrighteousness; but certainly it were better with the philosopher to have honesty without religion, than to have religion without honesty. A hypocrite may exercise himself in some outward, easy, ordinary duties of religion; but when shall you see a hypocrite laying the axe to the root of the tree; or be a-searching and trying his own heart; or severely judging

his bosom sins; or humbly mourning and lamenting over secret corruptions; or doubling his guards about his own soul; or rejoicing in the graces, services, or excellencies of others; or striving or pressing after the highest pitches of grace, holiness, and communion with God; or endeavoring more to cast out the beam out of his own eye, than the mote out of his brother's eye; or to be more severe against his own sins than against the sins of others? Alas! a hypocrite is so far from practicing these duties—that he thinks them either superfluous or impossible.

A hypocrite's obedience is always a *limited* and *stinted* obedience. It is either *limited* to such commands which are most suitable to his ease, safety, honor, profit, pleasure, etc., or else it is limited to the outward part of the command, and never extends itself to the inward and spiritual part of the command; as you may see in the scribes and pharisees. Their obedience was all outward; they had no regard at all to the inward and spiritual part of any command; as is evident in that high charge that Christ gives in against them, Mat. 6. They did not murder, they did not commit adultery; they had an eye to the outward part of the command; but Christ charges them with unjust and adulterous thoughts, unchaste glances, contemplative wickedness, speculative uncleanness, etc., they having no regard at all to the inward and spiritual part of any command.

Common grace looks only to some particular duties—but saving grace looks to all duties. Renewing grace comes off to positives as well as negatives; it teaches us to cease to do evil, and it teaches us also to do good, Isaiah 1:16-17. It teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and also to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Titus 2:11-13. These words contain the sum of a Christian's duty. To live soberly towards ourselves, righteously towards our neighbors, and godly towards God—is true godliness indeed, and the whole duty of man. There is never a hypocrite in the world that can sincerely appeal to God, and say, "Lord! you know that my heart is subdued to a willingness to perform all known duties. I would willingly do the best I can to observe all your royal laws. Lord! I sincerely desire, and really endeavor to have an eye upon every command of yours, and to live up to every command of yours; and it is the real grief of my heart, and the daily burden of my soul, when I violate any of your blessed laws," Psalm 119:6; Luke 1:5-6; Acts

13:22. He who can in uprightness thus appeal to God, shall never miscarry in the eternal world. But,

**[4.] Fourthly, There is never a hypocrite who makes God, or Christ, or holiness; or his doing or receiving good in his station, relation, or generation—his grand end, his highest end, his ultimate end of living in the world.** Pleasures, profits, and honors—are all that the hypocrite aims at in this world; they are his trinity which he adores and serves, and sacrifices himself unto, 1 John 2:16. A hypocrite's ends are corrupt and selfish. SELF is highest end of his work; for he who was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end than himself. A hypocrite is all for his own glory; he acts for himself, and from himself. "Just so that I may have the profit, the credit, the glory, the applause!" this is the language of an unsound heart. [John 6:26; Mat. 6:1, 5, 16; Gal. 4:17; Isaiah 58:3; Mal. 3:14; Zech. 7:5-7; Gen. 24:21-22.] A hypocrite will seem to be very godly when he can make a gain of godliness; he will seem to be very holy when holiness is the way to outward greatness and happiness; but his religious wickedness will double-damn the hypocrite at last.

Selfish ends are the operative ingredients in all a hypocrite does. SELF is the chief engine, self is the great wheel, which sets all a hypocrite's wheels a-going. When hypocrites take up religion, it is only to serve their own turns, to bring about their own carnal ends; they serve not the Lord—but their own bellies, Romans 16:18; Philip. 3:19. They use religion only as a stream to turn about their own mill, and the better to effect their own carnal projects. *Simon Magus* will needs be baptized, and he is very desirous to have power to bestow the Holy Spirit to others; but his aim being only to get a name, and to get money. Peter tells him to his face, that his heart was not right in the sight of God, Acts 8:21.

No man can go higher than his principles, and therefore a hypocrite having no higher principles than himself—all he does must needs be terminated in himself. Look! as all the rivers that come from the sea do return back again to the sea, from whence they come, so all those duties which arise from a man's self, must needs center in a man's self. A hypocrite always makes himself the end of all his service; but let such hypocrites know, that though their profession be ever so glorious, and

their duties ever so abundant—yet their ends being selfish and carnal—all their pretensions and performances are but *beautiful abominations* in the sight of God. A hypocrite has always a squint eye—and squint-eyed *aims* and squint-eyed *ends* in all that he does.

*Balaam* spoke very religiously, and he multiplied altars and sacrifices; but the thing he had in his eye was the wages of unrighteousness, Num. 22-23, 2 Pet. 2:15. *Jehu* destroyed bloody Ahab's house, he executed the vengeance of God upon that wicked family; he readily, resolutely, and effectually destroyed all the worshipers of Baal—but his ends were to secure the kingdom to himself, 2 Kings 10. *Ahab* and the *Ninevites* fasted in sackcloth—but it was merely that they might not feel the heavy judgments that they feared would overtake them, 1 Kings 21, Jonah 3. The *Jews* in Babylon fasted and mourned, and mourned and fasted seventy years—but it was more to get off their chains than their sins, it was more to be rid of their captivity than it was to be rid of their iniquity, Zech. 7:5-6.

Look! as the eagle has an eye upon her prey when she flies highest, so these Jews in all their fasting, praying, mourning—they had only an eye to their own ease, deliverance, freedom, etc. In all their religious duties, they acted from evil principles, and carried on by self-respects; and therefore Daniel denies that in all that seventy years' captivity they had prayed to any purpose. "All this has come upon us—yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand your truth," Dan. 9:13. It is the *end* which dignifies or debases the *action*; which rectifies it or adulterates it; which sets a crown of honor or a crown of shame upon the head of it. He who commonly, habitually, in all his duties and services, proposes to himself no higher ends than the praises of men, or rewards of men, or the stopping the mouth of natural conscience, or only to avoid a smarting rod, or merely to secure himself from wrath to come—he is a hypocrite. The *ends* of a man's actions are always a great discovery either of sincerity or hypocrisy. Look! as great gifts, not sweetened with sincerity, are no ornaments to us; so great infirmities, not soured with hypocrisy, are no great deformities to us. A hypocrite's ends are always below God; they are always below glorifying of God, exalting of God, walking with God, and enjoying

communion with God. A hypocrite, in all he does—still proposes to himself some poor, ignoble, self-end or other.

But now mark, a sincere Christian, if he prays or hears, or gives or fasts, or repents or obeys, etc.—God's glory is the main end of all. The glory of God is his highest end, his ultimate end, Psalm 115:1; 1 Thess. 2:6. A sincere Christian can be content to be trampled upon and vilified, so that God's name is glorified. The bent of such a heart is for God and his glory; nothing but sincerity can carry a soul so high, as in all acts natural, civil and religious, to intend God's glory, Rev. 4:9-11. A sincere Christian ascribes the praise of all to God; he sets the crown on Christ's head alone; he will set God upon the throne, and make all other things his servants, or his footstool, Romans 14:7-8. All must bow the knee to God—or be trodden in the dirt. He will love nothing, he will embrace nothing—but what sets God higher, or brings God nearer to his heart. The glory of God is the mark which the sincere Christian has in his eye. The sincere Christian lives not to himself—but to him who lives forever; he lives not to his own will, or lusts, or greatness, or glory in this world—but he lives to God's glory, whose glory is dearer to him than his own life, 1 Cor. 10:38; Rev. 12:11.

Look! as bright shining golden vessels do not retain the beams of the sun which they receive—but reflect them back again upon the sun; so the sincere Christian returns and reflects back again upon the Sun of righteousness, the praise and glory of all the gifts, graces, and virtues that they have received from him. The daily language of sincere souls is this: "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, Lord—but to your name be all the glory!" 1 Chron. 29:10, 18; Romans 13:7. A sincere Christian makes conscience of giving men their dues; how much more, then, does he make conscience of giving God his due, Psalm 96:7-8. Now glory is God's due. God desires nothing more than that we give him the glory due unto his name, as you may see in Psalm 29:1-2. There are three *gives* in those two verses: "Give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto his name." Glory is God's right, and he stands upon his right; and this the sincere Christian knows, and therefore he gives him his right, he gives him the honor and the glory that is due unto his name.

But please do not mistake me: I do not say that such as are really sincere

do actually eye the glory of Christ in all their actions. Oh no. This is a happiness desirable on earth—but shall never be attained until we come to heaven. Bye and base ends and aims will be still ready to creep into the best hearts—but all sincere hearts sigh and groan under them. They complain to God of them, and they cry out for justice, justice upon them; and it is the earnest desires and daily endeavors of their souls to be rid of them; and therefore they shall not be imputed to them, nor keep good things from them.

Take a sincere Christian in his ordinary, usual, and habitual course—and you shall find that his aims and ends in all his actions and undertakings are to glorify God, to exalt God, and to lift up God in the world. If the hypocrite did in good earnest aim at the glory of God in what he does, then the glory of God would swallow up his bye-aims and carnal ends, as Aaron's rod swallowed up the magicians' rods, Exod. 7:10-12. Look! as the sun puts out the light of the fire—so the glory of God, where it is aimed at, will put out and consume all selfish and base ends. This is most certain—that which is a man's great end, that will work out all other ends. He who sets up the glory of God as his chief end, will find that his chief end will by degrees eat out all selfish and base ends.

Look! as Pharaoh's lean cows ate up the fat ones, Gen. 41:4, so the glory of God will eat up all those fat and worldly ends which crowd in upon the soul in pious work. Where the glory of God is kept up as a man's greatest end, there all selfish and base ends will be kept down. By what has been said, it is most evident that a hypocrite in all his transactions looks at himself, and designs the advance and advantage of himself. A hypocrite is as well able to make a world, and to unmake himself—as he is able to make the glory of God, the exaltation of God—his highest end, his utmost aim, in all that he does. But,

**[5.] Fifthly, No hypocrite can live wholly and only upon the righteousness of Christ, the satisfaction of Christ, the merits of Christ—for justification and salvation.** The hypocritical scribes and pharisees prayed and fasted, and kept the Sabbath, and gave alms, etc., and in this legal righteousness they rested and trusted, Mat. 6, Luke 18:11-12. Ponder upon Rev. 3:16-18. Upon the performance of these and such like duties, they laid the weight of their souls and the stress of their

salvation—and so perished forever. A hypocrite rests upon what he does, and never looks so high as the righteousness of Christ. He looks upon his duties as so much good money laid out for heaven. He weaves a web of righteousness to clothe himself with. He never looks out for a more glorious righteousness to be justified by, than his own; and so puts a slight upon the righteousness of Christ: Romans 10:3, "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

The first step to salvation is to renounce our own righteousness; the next step is to embrace the righteousness of Christ, which is freely offered to sinners in the gospel; but these things the hypocrite minds not, regards not. The righteousness of a hypocrite is not only imperfect—but impure, a rag, a filthy menstrual rag; and therefore he who rests upon such a righteousness must needs miscarry to all eternity, Isaiah 64:6. O sirs! who will say that that man needs a Savior—who can fly to heaven upon the wings of his own duties and services? If a man's duties can pacify an infinite wrath, and satisfy an infinite justice—then farewell Christ, and welcome duties. He who will rest upon his own righteousness for eternal life and justification, must needs sit down on this side salvation; he who rests upon his duties, and who rests upon a gift of knowledge, a gift of utterance, a gift of memory, or a gift of prayer, though he may come near to heaven, and bid fair for heaven—yet he will never be able to get into heaven.

Now, how sad is it for a man to lose himself and his soul in a wilderness of duties, when he is upon the borders, yes, the very brink, of the holy land. He who rests upon anything in himself, or done by himself—as a means to procure the favor of God, or the salvation of his soul—will put such a cheat upon himself as will undo him forever. Non-submission to the righteousness of Christ keeps Christ and the hypocrite asunder. Christ will never love nor like to put the fine, clean, white linen of his own righteousness upon the old garment, the old rags of a hypocrite's duties, Rev. 19:7-8. Neither will Christ ever delight to put his new wine into such old bottles, Mat. 9:16-17. A hypocrite's confidence in his own righteousness turns his righteousness into filthiness, Proverbs 21:27.

But a sincere Christian—he renounces his own righteousness; he renounces all confidence in the flesh, Philip. 3:3; he looks upon his own righteousness as dung, yes, as dogs' meat, as some interpret the word in that Philip. 3:8. He will say no more to his duties, to the works of his hands, "You are my gods," Hosea 14:3. When he looks upon the holiness of God's nature, the righteousness of his government, the severity of his law, the terror of his wrath—he sees an absolute and indispensable necessity of a more glorious righteousness than his own—to appear before God in. A sincere Christian sets the highest price and value upon the righteousness of Christ: Psalm 71:16, "I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours alone." Mark the emphasis doubled, "of your," and "yours alone." A sincere Christian is convinced of the nature, worth, and excellency of the righteousness of Christ, and therefore he cries out, "I will make mention of your righteousness, of yours alone."

The costly cloak of Alcisthenes, which Dionysius sold to the Carthaginians for a hundred talents, was indeed a cheap and beggarly rag in a sincere Christian's eye, compared to that embroidered mantle of righteousness that Christ puts upon his people. A sincere Christian rejoices in the righteousness of Christ above all: Isaiah 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

It is matter of joy, and a sign of great favor from the great Turk, when a rich garment is cast upon any who come into his presence. Oh then, what matter of joy must it be to a sincere Christian to have the rich and royal garment of Christ's righteousness cast upon him! Isaiah 28:16.

A sincere Christian rests on the righteousness of Christ as on a sure foundation: Isaiah 45:24, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." It was a very sweet and golden expression of one, when he thought himself to be at the point of death: "I confess," said he, "I am not worthy; I have no merits of my own to obtain heaven by; but my Lord had a double right thereunto; a hereditary right as a Son, and a meritorious right as a sacrifice; he was contented with the one right himself, the other right he has given unto me, by the virtue of which gift I

do rightly lay claim unto it, and am not confounded."

A sincere Christian looks upon the righteous of Christ as that which renders him most splendid and glorious in the eyes of God: Philip. 3:9, "And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law—but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." A sincere Christian looks upon the righteousness of Christ as his only security against wrath to come, 1 Thes. 1:10. Wrath to come is the *greatest* wrath, wrath to come is the *purest* wrath, wrath to come is *infinite* wrath, wrath to come is *everlasting* wrath. Now the sincere Christian, he knows no way under heaven to secure himself from wrath to come—but by putting on the robe of Christ's righteousness, Romans 13:14.

The story tells us, if we may believe it, that Pilate being called to Rome to give an account unto the emperor for some misgovernment and mal-administration, he put on the seamless coat of Christ, and all the time he had that coat upon his back, Caesar's fury was abated. There is nothing that can abate the wrath and fury of a sin-revenging God—but the seamless coat of God's righteousness.

Well, for a close remember this—there is never a hypocrite in the world, who is more pleased, satisfied, delighted and contented with the righteousness of Christ, than with his own, etc. Though a hypocrite may be much in duties—yet he never lives above his duties; he works for eternal life, and he rests in his work, and this proves his mortal wound. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, A hypocrite never embraces a whole Christ.** He can never take up his full and everlasting rest, satisfaction, and contentment—in the person of Christ, in the merits of Christ, in the enjoyment of Christ alone. No hypocrite did ever long and mourn after the enjoyment of Christ, as the best thing in all the world. No hypocrite did ever prize Christ for a Sanctifier as well as a Savior. No hypocrite did ever look upon Christ, or long for Christ to deliver him from the power of his sins—as much or as well as to deliver him from wrath to come. No hypocrite can really love the person of Christ, or take satisfaction in the person of Christ. The rays and beams of Christ's glory have never warmed his heart;

he never knew what bosom communion with Christ meant, 1 Thes. 1:10. A hypocrite may love to be healed by Christ, and to be pardoned by Christ, and to be saved by Christ, etc.; but he can never take any delight in the person of Christ; his heart never seriously works after union and communion with Christ.

The love of a sincere Christian runs much out to the person of Christ. Heaven itself without Christ, would be to such a soul but a poor thing, a low thing, a little thing, an uncomfortable thing, an empty thing. It is the person of Christ that is the sparkling diamond in the ring of glory, Cant. 5:10; Philip. 1:21, and 3:7-10.

No hypocrite in the world is sincerely willing to receive Christ in all his offices, and to close with him upon gospel terms. The terms upon which God offers Christ in the gospel are these, namely—that we shall accept of a *whole Christ* with a *whole heart*, 1 John 11:13; Mat. 16:24. Now, mark, a whole Christ includes all his offices; and a whole heart includes all our faculties. Christ as mediator is king, priest, and prophet; and so God the Father in the gospel offers him. Salvation was too great and too glorious a work to be perfected and completed by any one office of Christ. Christ as a *prophet* instructs us; and as a *priest* he redeems us and intercedes for us; and as a *king* he sanctifies and saves us.

The apostle hit it when he said, "He is made to us—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. 1:30. Consider Christ as our *prophet*, and so he is made wisdom to us; consider him as our *priest*, and so he is made righteousness and redemption to us; consider him as our *king*, and so he is made sanctification and holiness to us.

A hypocrite may be willing to embrace Christ as a *priest* to save him from wrath, from the curse, from hell, from everlasting burning—but he is never sincerely willing to embrace Christ as a *prophet* to teach and instruct him, and as a *king* to rule and reign over him. Many hypocrites may be willing to receive a *Savior* Jesus, who are not willing to receive a *Lord* Jesus; they may be willing to embrace a *saving* Christ—but they are not willing to embrace a *ruling* Christ, a *commanding* Christ: "This man shall not rule over us," Luke 19:27. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill

the prophets, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings—and you would not!" "And you will not come to me that you might have life." "He came to his own, and his own received him not." [Mat. 23:37; Psalm 2:2-3; John 5:40, 1:11; Isaiah 8:14; 1 Peter 2:7-8.]

A hypocrite is willing to receive Christ in one office—but not in every office; and this is that stumbling-stone at which hypocrites stumble and fall, and are broken in pieces. Certainly Christ is as lovely and as desirable and delightful, as eminent and excellent in one office as he is in another; and therefore it is a just and righteous thing with God, that hypocrites who won't receive him in every office, should have no benefit by any one of his offices. Christ and his offices may be *distinguished*—but Christ and his offices can never be *divided*, 1 Cor. 1:13. While many have been laboring to divide one office of Christ from another, they have wholly stripped themselves of any advantage or benefit by Christ.

Hypocrites love to share with Christ in his *happiness*—but they don't love to share with Christ in his *holiness*. They are willing to be *redeemed* by Christ—but they are not cordially willing to submit to the laws and *government* of Christ. They are willing to be *saved* by his blood—but they are not willing to submit to his *scepter*. Hypocrites love the *privileges* of the gospel—but they don't love the *services* of the gospel; especially those which are most inward and spiritual.

But a sincere Christian, he owns Christ in all his offices, he receives Christ in all his offices, and he closes with Christ in all his offices. He accepts of him, not only as a *Savior* Jesus—but also as a *Lord* Jesus; he embraces him, not only as a *saving* Christ—but also as a *ruling* Christ. [1 John 1:2; Mat. 2:6; Heb. 7:21, 26; Acts 3:22; John 12:46.] The Colossians received him as Christ Jesus the *Lord*, Col. 2:6; they received a *Lord* Christ—as well as a *saving* Christ; they received Christ as a *king* upon his throne—as well as a *sacrifice* upon his cross, 2 Cor. 4:5.

God the Father in the gospel offers a whole Christ. We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and accordingly a sincere Christian receives a whole Christ, he receives Christ Jesus the Lord, Acts 5:31; he says with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," John 20:28; he takes Christ for his wisdom as

well as for his righteousness; and he takes him for his sanctification as well as for his redemption. A hypocrite is all for a saving Christ, for a sin-pardoning Christ, for a soul-glorifying Christ—but has no regard for a ruling Christ, a reigning Christ, a commanding Christ, a sanctifying Christ; and this at last will prove his damning sin, John 3:19-20. But,

**[7.] Seventhly, A hypocrite cannot mourn for sin as sin, nor grieve for sin as sin, nor hate sin as sin, nor make headway against sin as sin.** Mark,

(1.) To hate sin is not merely to *refrain* from sin, for so Balaam did, even when he was tempted to it, Num. 22

(2.) To hate sin is not merely to *confess* sin, for so Pharaoh and Judas did, Exod. 10:16, Mat. 27:4.

(3.) To hate sin is not merely to be *afraid* to sin, for this may be where the hatred of sin is not.

(4.) To hate sin is not merely to *mourn* because of the dreadful effects and fruits that sin may produce, for so Ahab did, and the Ninevites did, etc.

He who fears sin *for* hell, fears not to sin—but fears to burn! He hates sin indeed—who hates sin *as* hell itself. (Augustine.) It was a saying of Anselm, "that if hell and sin were before him, he would rather fall into hell than fall into sin." Here was a true hatred of sin indeed. A hypocrite may be troubled for sin—as it blots his name, and wounds his conscience, and brings a scourge, and destroys his soul, and shuts him out of heaven, and throws him to hell; but he is never troubled for sin, he never mourns for sin, he never hates sin because it is contrary to the nature of God, the being of God, the law of God, the glory of God, the design of God, or because of the evil that is in the nature of sin, or because of the defiling and polluting power of sin.

True hatred of sin is universal; it is of the whole kind. He who hates a toad because it is a toad—hates every toad. And he who hates a man because he is holy—hates every holy man. And so he who hates sin

because it is sin—hates every sin: Psalm 119:128, "I hate every false way." True hatred is ever against the whole kind of a thing. Every sincere Christian has in him a general hatred of every false way, and dares not allow himself in the least sin. "I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate." Romans 7:15. Romans 12:9, "*Abhor* that which is evil." The Greek word is very significant. The word imports extreme detestation. The word signifies to hate evil as hell itself.

Though a hypocrite may hate *some* sins, "You abhor idols," Romans 2:22, —yet that is out of some peculiar and particular indisposition to a particular sin; but this hatred of this or that particular sin, arises not from an inward nature or gracious principle, as it does in him who is a sincere Christian. And the reason is this—because that contrariety to sin which is in a real Christian arising from this inward gracious nature—is to the whole species or kind of sin, and is irreconcilable to any sin whatever. As contrarieties of nature are to the whole kind—as light is contrary to all darkness, and fire to all water; so this contrariety to sin arising from the inward man, is universal to all sin. [Doctor Sibbes, in his "Soul's Conflict," makes the hatred of sin the surest and never failing character of a gracious soul.]

Though a sincere Christian has not a universal victory over all sin—yet there is in him a universal contrariety to all sin. Victory argues strength, contrariety argues nature. Hence it is that a hypocrite may hate one sin and love another, because there is not a gracious nature in him which would be contrary to all. The inward nature of a Christian is to be judged by the universal contrariety of his inward man to all sin. Now this universal *contrariety* to all sin will beget a universal *conflict* with all sin.

O sirs! remember this: universal contrariety to sin can be found in no man but he who is sincere; and this universal contrariety to sin argues an inward nature of grace, and this is that which differences a real Christian from a hypocrite, who may oppose some sins out of other principles and reasons. A hypocrite may be angry with this sin and that sin—which brings the smarting rod, and wounds his conscience, and disturbs his peace, and embitters his mercies, and strangles his comforts, and which lays him open to wrath, and that brings him even to the gates of hell—but he can never hate sin as sin. A hypocrite *hates* some sins but likes others

—he *loathes* some but loves others—he *opposes* some but practices others, like the people of the church of Ephesus, who hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans—but loved lukewarmness. Many men detest theft—who love covetousness. Many abhor whoredom—who like worldliness, etc., Rev. 2:5-6. There is no hypocrite under heaven that can truly say, "I hate every false way." Not a sincere Christian hates all sinful ways—his own first and most. An upright heart leaves no nest-egg for Satan to sit on—but the hypocrite always does. Mark, **in true hatred of sin, there are six things observable:**

**(1.) First, True hatred of sin, includes an extreme DETESTATION.** Every dislike is not hatred—but true hatred is an extreme loathing: "You shall cast them away as a menstruous cloth; you shall say unto it, Get you hence," Isaiah 30:22; "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship—to the moles and to the bats," chapter 2:20. Their detestation should be so great that they would cast their most costly idols of silver and gold to the most dark, nasty, dusty corners. To testify the sincerity of their conversion to God, they would hate and abhor, abandon and abolish—their *gold* and *silver* idols—which they valued above all others.

**(2.) Secondly, True hatred of sin, includes earnest SEPARATION.** He who hates his sin would sincerely be separated from his sin; "For we who are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened," 2 Cor. 5:4. A sincere Christian finds no burden to lie so heavy and weighty upon his spirit as sin, and therefore he groans to be delivered from it. In the law, he who hated his wife did sue out a bill of divorce from her, Deut. 24:3. He who truly hates sin, puts in many a bill into the court of heaven that he may be forever divorced from his sin.

**(3.) Thirdly, True hatred of sin, includes an irreconcilable ALIENATION.** He who hates sin has his heart forever alienated from sin; he who hates sin can never be one with sin. Two angry men may be made friends; but if two men hate each other, all friendship is everlastingly broken between them. A man may be *angry* with sin, and yet made friends with sin again; but if once he comes to *hate* his sin, then all friendship with sin is everlastingly broken. When Christ and the soul

come to be really one—then sin and the soul come to be everlastingly two, etc. [Lawyers often disagree at the bar—but are very well agreed when they meet at the tavern.]

**(4.) Fourthly, True hatred of sin, includes a constant and perpetual CONFLICT.** "The flesh will be still lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Though sin and grace were not born together, and though sin and grace shall never die together—yet while a believer lives in this world, they must live together; and while sin and grace do cohabit together, they will still be opposing and conflicting one with another, Gal. 5:17, Romans 7:22-23. That man who truly hates sin—will everlastingly conflict with sin. He will die fighting against his sins, as one of the dukes of Venice died fighting against his enemies with his weapons in his hand. Well, Christians, remember this, though to be kept from sin brings most peace and comfort to us—yet for us to oppose sin, and for God to pardon sin, that brings most glory to God, 2 Cor. 12:7-9.

**(5.) Fifthly. True hatred of sin, includes a deadly intention and DESTRUCTION, for nothing satisfies hatred but death and ruin.** *Saul* hated *David*, and sought his life; he hunted him up and down as a partridge in the mountains; he left no stone unturned, nor any means unattempted, whereby he might revenge himself upon *David*, 1 Sam. 26:19-20; 1 Sam. 23:22.

*Haman* hated *Mordecai*, and nothing would satisfy him but to bring him to a shameful death, to see him hanged on a gallows fifty cubits high, *Esther*. 5:14, which was designed, says *Lyra*, to put *Mordecai* to the greater shame, for he hanging high, everyone might see him and point to him. Now when there was but one night between *Mordecai* and a shameful death, divine providence opportunely intervened and saved him from *Haman's* malice, and caused the mischief which he had plotted against *Mordecai* suddenly to fall upon his own head; for he who was highly feasted with the king one day, was made a feast for crows the next day.

*Absalom* hated *Amnon* and killed him, 2 Sam. 13:22-33. *Julian* the apostate hated the Christians with a deadly hatred. He put many thousands of them to death, and threatened and vowed that at his return

from fighting against the Persians, he would put all the Christians in his empire to the sword; but God prevented him by cutting him off in that expedition.

A Christian who hates sin can't be satisfied but in the death and destruction of it. In all his duties the language of his soul is, "Lord, let my sins be destroyed; whoever escapes, let not my sins escape the hand of your revenging justice!" And in all ordinances the language of his soul is, "O Lord! when shall my sins be subdued and mortified? when shall my cursed corruptions be brought to an under dominion? yes, when shall they all be drowned in the Red Sea of my Savior's blood?"

**(6.) Sixthly, True hatred of sin, includes a total AVERSENESS; true hatred is of the whole kind.** But of this before.

To wind up all, ask your heart what is it that you abhor as the superlative evil? What is that which you would have separated as far from you as heaven is from hell? What is that your heart will never renew league or friendship with any more? What is that against which your soul does rise, and with which, as Israel with Amalek, you will have war forever? Exodus 17:16. What is that which you will be avenged of—and daily endeavor the mortifying and crucifying of? What is that which you set your heart against in the comprehensive latitude thereof, whether great or little, open or secret? If it is sin, if it is your sins, if it is all your sins—then assuredly here is a true hatred of sin, and assuredly here is a most distinguishing character of a child of God, of a sound conversion, and of a saving change.

It was not always thus with you; nor are these characteristics found in any hypocrite, or in any unconverted person upon the face of the earth. Sin was once to you as Delilah to Samson, Judges 14:3, 7; but now it is to you as Tamar to Amnon, 2 Sam. 13:15. Once it was a sweet morsel which you held fast and would not let it go, Job 20:12-13; but now it is the menstruous cloth, Isaiah 30:22, which you cast away, saying, "Get you hence." Now with Ephraim you cry out, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Hosea 14:8. Oh, if it is indeed thus with you, then you have cause forever to be much in blessing and in admiring of the Lord for his distinguishing grace and favor towards you.

O sirs! the world is full of baits, snares, and temptations; but while the hatred of sin burns in your breasts, you may throw the gauntlet to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Well, remember this forever—there are three things a hypocrite can never do: (1.) He can never mourn for sin as sin. (2.) He can never mourn for the sins of others as well as his own. Moses, Lot, David, Jeremiah, Paul, and those in that Ezek. 9:4, 6, mourned for others' sins as well as their own; but Pharaoh, Ahab, Judas, Demas, Simon Magus never did. (3.) He can never hate sin as sin. But,

**[8.] Eighthly, No hypocrite is habitually low or little in his own eyes.** No hypocrite has ordinarily low thoughts of himself—or a low esteem of himself. No hypocrite loves to lessen himself—to greatness Christ, to debase himself—to exalt Christ, 1 Cor. 8:1-2, John 7:49 and 9:34. No hypocrite loves to be outshined; all hypocrites love to write an **I**, not a *Christ*, upon what they do. The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess," Luke 18:11-12.

"I am *not* as this publican." All hypocrites stand much upon their *negative* righteousness, and their comparative goodness. There is no hypocrite in the world but sets down his penny for a pound, and always prizes himself above the market: 2 Kings 10:16, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." Jehu's words were for the Lord—but his project was for the kingdom. The actor in the comedy said with his mouth, "O heaven"—but with his finger he pointed to the earth. Lapidaries tell us of a stone called the chelydonian stone, that it will retain its virtue no longer than it is enclosed in gold; a fit emblem of a hypocrite, of a Jehu. Jehu made a great blaze—but he was but a comet.

A hypocrite always loves the praise of men more than the praise of God, John 12:43. He loves more to be honored by men than to be honored by God: "How can you believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which comes from God alone?" John 5:44. Nothing below that power which raised Christ from the grave can make a hypocrite purely nothing in his own eyes. A hypocrite is always a great thing in his own eyes; and when he is nothing, a great nothing in others' eyes; he cannot bear it. A hypocrite cannot endure to be outshined in gifts, in

graces, in experiences, in duties, in communion with God, in spiritual enjoyments. **A hypocrite's heart is full of pride—when his deportment is most humble.** He always thinks best of himself, and worst of others; he looks upon his own vices as graces, and he looks upon other men's graces as vices, or at least as no true coin. [Attius the poet, though he was a dwarf—yet would be pictured tall of stature. The application to the hypocrite is easy.]

A proud spirit will cast disgrace upon that excellency which he himself lacks; as Licinius, who was joined with Galerius in the empire, he was so ignorant that he was not able to write his own name; he was a bitter enemy to learning, and as Eusebius reports of him, he called the liberal arts a public poison and pestilence. The emptiest barrels make the loudest sound, the worst metal the greatest noise, and the lightest ears of corn hold their heads highest. A hypocrite may well lay his hand upon his heart, and say, "Is it not so with me, is it not just so with me?"

But now sincere Christians, they are men of another spirit, of another temper, of another metal, of another mind; their hearts lie low when their gifts, and graces, and spiritual enjoyments are high. *Abraham* is but dust and ashes in his own eyes, Gen. 18:27. The higher any man is in his communion with God, the more low that man will be in his own eyes. Dust and ashes are poor, base, vile, worthless things; and such a thing as these was Abraham in his own eyes.

Just so, *Jacob* was a plain man, an upright man, and lo! what a low esteem had he of himself: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which you have showed unto your servant," Gen. 32:10. In the Hebrew it is, "I am little before your mercies." [Gen. 31 from verse 38 to 41: the least mercy, says Jacob, is more worth than I, and more weighty than I.] When Jacob had to do with Laban, he pleads his merits; but when he has to do with God, he pleads nothing but grace, setting a very low esteem upon himself. He looks upon himself as less than the least of mercies, and as worse than the worst of creatures. The least of my mercies are greater than I deserve, and the greatest of my troubles are less than I deserve, says Jacob.

The language of a plain-hearted Jacob is this: "O Lord, I might with Job

have been stripped of all my comforts and enjoyments at a clap, and set upon a ash-heap; I might with Lazarus have been begging my bread from door to door; or I might have been getting my bread with the peril of my life, because of the sword of the wilderness, Lam. 5:9; or I might have been with Dives in hell a-crying out for a drop of water to cool my tongue!" Luke 16:24.

A sincere Christian cannot tell how to speak good enough of God—nor poor enough of himself. Agur was one of the wisest and holiest men on earth, and see how greatly he debases himself: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man," Proverbs 30:1-2. Agur had seen *Ithiel*, God with me, and *Ucal*, God almighty—and this made him so vile and base in his own eyes; this made him vilify, yes, nullify himself to the utmost.

You know no man ever received a fairer or a more valuable certificate under the hand of God or the broad seal of heaven, for his being a soul famous in uprightness and holiness, than *Job*, as you may see, Job 1:8, "And the Lord said unto Satan, Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one who fears God and eschews evil." [Job was a paragon in regard of those perfections and degrees of grace, of integrity, of sanctity—which he had attained to, beyond any other saints in the world in his time and day.] Job was high in worth and humble in heart: Job 42:5-6, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear—but now my eye sees you, *I abhor myself in dust and ashes!*" This expression is the deepest act of abhorrency. Abhorrency strictly taken is hatred wound up to the height: "I abhor myself." The Hebrew word that is rendered abhor signifies to reject, to disdain, to despise, to cast off. Ah! says Job, I abhor myself, I reject myself, I disdain myself, I cast off myself, I have a very vile and base esteem of myself.

Just so, *David* was a man of great integrity, a man after God's own heart, and yet he looks upon himself as a flea; and what is more contemptible than a flea? 1 Kings 15:5, 1 Sam. 26:20. And as he looks upon himself as a flea, so he looks upon himself as a worm: "I am a worm, and no man," Psalm 22:6. The Hebrew word that is here rendered a worm, signifies a very little worm which breeds in scarlet—a worm that is so little that a

man can hardly perceive it. A worm is the most despicable creature in the world, trampled under foot by man and beasts. He who was in God's eye a man after his own heart, is in his own eye but a despicable worm. A sincere Christian is *a little nothing* in his own eyes.

Just so, *Paul*, who had been caught up into the third heaven, and learned his divinity among the angels, as one speaks, and had such glorious revelations as could not be uttered—yet he accounts himself less than the least of all saints: Eph. 3:8, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints." Less than the least of all saints is a double diminutive, and signifies lesser than the least, if lesser might be; not that anything can be less than the least. Paul's rhetoric and meaning is, that he was as little as could be; therefore he put himself down so little as could be—less than the least. Here you have the greatest apostle descending down to the lowest step of humility: great Paul is least of saints—last of the apostles—and greatest of sinners, 1 Tim. 1:15.

Just so, *Peter*, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," Luke 5:8, or as the Greek runs, "*a man, a sinner*,"—a mixture and compound of dirt and sin; a mere bundle of vice and vanity, of folly and iniquity.

Likewise, *Luther*, "I have no other name than sinner, sinner is my name, sinner is my surname; this is the name by which I shall be always known. I have sinned, I do sin, I shall sin in infinitum," says Luther, speaking vilely and basely of itself. "Lord, I am hell and you are heaven," said blessed Hooper. "I am a most hypocritical wretch, not worthy that the earth should bear me," said blessed Bradford.

Thus you see by these several instances, that sincere Christians do as it were take a holy pleasure and delight to debase, humble, and vilify themselves. But this is a work hypocrites are mere strangers to. There is not a hypocrite under heaven who loves to debase himself, or who makes it his duty conscientiously to vilify and lessen himself—that Christ may be set up above all. Humility is a grace rarely attained unto. "Many," says Augustine, "can more easily give all they have to the poor, than themselves become poor in spirit." But,

**[9.] Ninthly, No hypocrite will long hold out in the work and**

**ways of the Lord—in the lack of outward encouragements, and in the face of outward discouragements.** A hypocrite is a veiled apostate; and an apostate is an unveiled hypocrite. Job 27:8, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained—when God shall take away his soul?" Verse 10, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Or, as the Hebrew runs, "Will he in every time call upon God?" It may be he may formally call on God in time of prosperity; but can he seriously do it in time of adversity? Sometimes when the rod is upon them, then they will pour out a prayer to God: "In their *affliction* they will seek me early," Isaiah 26:16, Hosea 5:15. "When he *slew* them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired after God," Psalm 78:34. But this was not the standing frame of their hearts: Verse 36, "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues." Verse 37, "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant."

When *Pharaoh* was upon the rack, he could roar a confession, and earnestly cry out for a prayer, Exod. 10:16-17, 19-20; but when the judgment was removed, Pharaoh was as proud, and hard-hearted, and blind as ever. When *Adonijah* was in danger of death, then he could hang on the horns of the altar, 1 Kings 1:50-51. When *Ahab* was threatened with utter desolation, then he could fast and lie in sackcloth; and so did the *Ninevites*. But all this was but like Ephraim and Judah's goodness, which as a morning cloud and as the early dew, passes away.

Will the hypocrite always, or in every time, call upon God? Will the hypocrite call upon God as often as providence calls him to call upon God? Will he call upon God as often as judgments call him to call upon God? Will he call upon God as often as conscience calls him to call upon God? Will he call upon God as often as it his duty to call upon God? Will he call upon God as often as others call upon him to call upon God? Oh no! The hypocrite will not always call upon God; he will not persevere in prayer; he will not hold on, nor hold out, in prayer. He is short-spirited; he cannot always pray and not faint. He shrinks back as sluggards do in work, or cowards in war, as the original word in Luke imports, Luke 18:1.

A hypocrite, for lack of an inward principle, can neither delight in God, nor always call upon God. If God comes not at his call, if he opens not as

soon as he knocks—he is out of patience, and ready to say with that proud profane prince, "Behold, this evil is of the Lord, and why should I wait for him any longer?" 2 Kings 6:33. If a hypocrite obtains the mercy he desires, then he will throw off prayer, as he said, "Take away the net, the fish is caught." If he obtains not the mercy, then he will grow weary of his duty. "You have been weary of me," Mal. 1:13, Isaiah 43:22.

Prayer is too hard and too high a work for an unsound heart to hold on in. Prayer is heart-work, and that proves heavy work to him. The soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of the soul before God, and this is a work which a hypocrite has no skill in, 1 Sam. 1:15. It was a profane and blasphemous speech of that atheistic wretch, who told God he was no common beggar, he never troubled him before with prayer; and if he would but hear him that time, he would never trouble him again. Even such a spirit and such principles lie lurking in every hypocrite's bosom.

Doubtless he hit it who said, "How can you expect that God should hear you, when you will not hear yourself? or that God should give you a return in prayer, when you are not mindful what you ask in prayer?" But now a sincere Christian—he will go on in prayer, speed or not speed. If he prevails—he will love prayer the better all his days; if he does not for the present prevail—he will be so much the more importunate with God in prayer. It is as natural for a bird to live without air, and for a fish to live without water, and for a man to live without food—as it is for a sincere heart to live without prayer. "Oh," says Chrysostom, "it is more bitter than death to be robbed of prayer." And hereupon, as he observes, Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life, than to lose or give over his private prayers, Dan. 6.

Prayer is the *key of heaven*, and a sincere Christian loves much to be a-handling of that key, though he should die for it. Prayer is the gate of heaven—a key to let us into paradise. As that emperor said, "It behooves an emperor to die standing;" so may I say, it behooves a Christian to die praying. A hypocrite will never hold out to the end. Let but outward encouragements fail him, and his heart will quickly fail him in a way of duty. Hypocrites are like blazing stars, which, so long as they are fed with vapors, shine as if they were fixed stars; but let the vapors dry up, and presently they vanish and disappear. Let but the eye, the ear, the

applause of men, fail the hypocrite, and he will be ready to throw all away. If a hypocrite cannot make some gain of his godliness, some profit of his profession, some advantage of his religion, he will be ready with Demas to turn his back upon all religious duties and services, 2 Peter 2:20-22, 2 Tim. 4:10.

Look! as a lame horse, when he is heated, will go well enough—but when he cools, will halt downright; even so a hypocrite, though for a time he may go on fairly in his way—yet in the end he will halt downright, and bid farewell, if not defiance, to all religious duties and services. *Profit and applause are usually the baits which hypocrites bite at*—and if they miss these baits, then farewell profession, farewell religion, farewell all! John 6:66. "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Many hypocrites who had given up their names to Christ, and who for a time had been followers of Christ—at last deserted him and turned their backs forever upon him.

Matthew 13:5-6, "Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil" (not much care to receive, not much understanding to apprehend, not much faith to believe, not much will to obey, or not much love to retain it), "It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root." This second ground goes beyond the former, for (1.) it receives the seed; (2.) immediately; (3.) with joy; (4.) it brings up the seed sown. It sprung up to sundry degrees: [1.] to external obedience and reformation in many things; [2.] to an outward profession; [3.] to a kind of faith; but when the sun of persecution beat hot upon them they withered and fell away; not all at once—but by little by little, as a leaf loses his greenness and withers by degrees.

In the Palatinate, when the sun of persecution began to scorch them, scarcely one professor of twenty stood out—but fell to popery as fast as leaves in autumn. The crystal looks like pearl—until it comes to the hammering; so a hypocrite looks like a Christian, and in many things acts like a Christian—until he comes to be hammered by sufferings, by persecutions, and then he discovers himself in his true colors; and with Hymeneus and Alexander, he makes shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, 1 Tim. 1:19-20, Hosea 5:2. In suffering times, hypocrites labor

mightily to put out that light which shines in their bosoms, and when they have quenched that light, then farewell faith, farewell profession, farewell a good conscience, farewell all.

The wolf, though he often disguises and closely hides his nature—yet he cannot always do so; for at one time or other he will show himself to be a wolf; so though a hypocrite may disguise himself closely for a time—yet he will one time or other reveal himself to be a hypocrite. It is reported of the waters of Nilus, that having run many hundred of miles a pure and clear water, when it comes near the Mediterranean Sea, it begins to grow brackish and salty, and at last it falls into the sea and loses its name. Sooner or later this will be the case of all hypocrites; they won't retain their spiritual fairness, clearness, and sweetness long—but by degrees will grow brackish and salty, and lose their names, and all that seeming goodness and sweetness which once seemed to be in them.

But now a sincere Christian, he will hold on and hold out in the ways of the Lord, in the lack of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all multiplied discouragements. When the eye of men, the favor of men, the bounty of men, and all other encouragement from men fails—yet then a sincere Christian will hold up, and hold on in his work and way. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger," Job 17:9. The righteous man shall go on in a way of righteousness to the end; no multiplied calamities or miseries shall ever cause him to decline the way of righteousness. From this way, a sincere Christian will never be withdrawn, either by any hopes or advantages on the one hand, or by any fears or dangers on the other. Sincere Christians have not taken up true religion on such slight grounds—as to be either flattered or frighted out of it. Sincere Christians reckon upon afflictions, temptations, crosses, losses, reproaches on the one hand; and they reckon upon a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory on the other hand—and hereupon they set up their staff, fully resolving never to depart from the good old way wherein they have found rest to their souls, John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 4:8.

Sincere Christians take Christ and his ways for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in prosperity or adversity; they resolve to stand or fall, to suffer and reign, to live and die with him, Jer. 6:16. When all

outward encouragements from God shall fail—yet a sincere Christian will keep close to his God, and close to his duty. "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation." Hab. 3:17-18. When all necessary and delightful mercies fail—yet he will not fail in his duty. Though God withholds his blessings—yet he will not withhold his service. In the lack of a livelihood, he will be lively in his duty; when he has nothing to exist by—yet then he will live upon his God, and joy in his God, and keep close to his God. Though war and poverty come—yet he will not be lacking in his duty.

Mark, there are three things in a sincere Christian which will strongly incline him to keep close to the Lord, and close to his ways in the lack of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all outward discouragements.

And the first is *a forcible principle*—divine love;

the second is *a mighty aid*—the Spirit of God;

and the third is *a high aim*—the glory of God, 2 Cor. 5:14; Philip. 4:12-13; Romans 14:7-8.

Look! as Ruth kept close to her mother in the lack of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all outward discouragements, "And Ruth said, Where you go I will go; and where you lodge I will lodge, and nothing but death shall part you and me," Ruth 1:16-17—so says a sincere Christian, "I will take my lot with Christ wherever it falls; I will keep close to the Lord, and close to my duty, in the lack of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all outward discouragements." Though outward encouragements be sometimes as a side wind, or as oil, or as chariot wheels—means to move a Christian to go on more sweetly, easily, and comfortably in the ways of God—yet when this wind shall fail, and these chariot wheels shall be knocked off—a sincere Christian will keep close to the Lord and his ways.

"All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten you, neither have we dealt falsely in your covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from your ways," Psalm 44:17-18. But what do they mean by saying, "All this is come upon us"? Why, that you may see in the foregoing part of the psalm: "But now you have tossed us aside in dishonor. You no longer lead our armies to battle. You make us retreat from our enemies and allow them to plunder our land. You have treated us like sheep waiting to be slaughtered; you have scattered us among the nations. You sold us—your precious people—for a pittance. You valued us at nothing at all. You have caused all our neighbors to mock us. We are an object of scorn and derision to the nations around us. You have made us the butt of their jokes; we are scorned by the whole world." verses 9-14.

Antiochus Epiphanes looked upon the Jews' religion as superstition; his wrath and rage was exceeding great, both against the Jews and against their religion; he practiced all manner of cruelty upon the miserable Jews—but yet there "was a remnant among them who were faithful to the Lord, and to his covenant, and to his laws, and to his ways, even to the death." Though in the time of the Maccabees many revolted to paganism—yet some maintained their constancy and integrity to the last.

That is a great word of the prophet Micah: "Even though the nations around us worship idols—we will follow the Lord our God forever and ever," Micah 4:5. This absolute and peremptory resolution to be really the Lord's, and forever the Lord's, is of the essence of true conversion. It is not the world's *flatteries* which can bribe off a sincere Christian from the ways of God; nor it is not the world's *frowns* which can beat off a sincere Christian from the ways of God; but a hypocrite *will* never, a hypocrite *can* never hold it out to the end. His anchor will never hold when the storm beats strong upon him. A hypocrite is hot at first—but soon tires and gives in. But,

**[10.] Tenthly, No hypocrite ever makes it his business, his work—to bring his heart into pious duties and services.** Mat. 15:8, Mark 7:6. He never makes conscience of bringing his heart into his work. A hypocrite is heartless in all he does: Psalm 78:34, "When he *slew* them—*then* they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God." Verse 36, "Nevertheless they did but flatter him with their mouth, and

they lied unto him with their tongues." Verse 37, "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." All lip-labor is but lost labor. When men's hearts are not in their devotion, their devotion is mere pretend. These hypocrites sought God, and inquired early after God—but it was still with old carnal hearts—which are no hearts in the account of God. They made *lip* work of it, and *head* work of it—but their *hearts* not being in their work—all was lost: their seeking lost, their inquiring lost, their God lost, their souls lost, and eternity lost!

Hosea 7:14, "And they have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds." [The fox when caught in a trap, howls pitifully—but it is only to get out. They worshiped the Lord as the Indians do the devil, that he may do them no hurt.] When men's hearts are not in their prayers, all their praying is but as an hideous howling in the account of God. [As dogs and brute beasts do, when they are starving.] The cry of the heart is the only cry that God likes, loves, and looks for. He accepts of no cry, he delights in no cry, he rewards no cry—but the cry of the heart. Hypocrites are heartless in their cries—and therefore they cry and howl, and howl and cry—and all to no purpose. They cry and murmur, and they howl and repine; they cry and blaspheme, and they howl and rebel; and therefore they meet with nothing from heaven but frowns, and blows, and disappointments.

Isaiah 29:13, "The Lord says—These people come near to me with their *mouth* and honor me with their *lips*—but their *hearts* are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men." Ezek. 33:31, "So they come pretending to be sincere and sit before you listening. But they have no intention of doing what I tell them. They express love with their mouths, but their hearts seek only after money." Though this people flocked to the prophet in troops, as men and women do to places of pleasure; and though they behaved before the prophet as if they were saints, as if they were the people of God, as if they were affected with what they heard, as if they were resolved to live out what the prophet should make out to them—yet their hearts ran after their covetousness. Though these hypocrites professed much love and kindness to the prophet, and paid him with smooth words, and seemed to be much affected, delighted, ravished, and pleased with his person, voice, and

doctrine—yet they made no conscience of bringing their hearts into their duties.

A hypocrite may look at some outward, easy, ordinary duties of religion—but he never makes conscience of bringing his *heart* into any duties of religion. When did you ever see a hypocrite a-searching of his heart, or sitting in judgment upon the corruptions of his soul, or lamenting and mourning over the vileness and wickedness of his spirit? It is only the sincere Christian who is affected, afflicted, and wounded with the corruptions of his heart.

When one told blessed Bradford that he did all out of hypocrisy, because he would have the people applaud him, he answered, "It is true, the seeds of hypocrisy and vain-glory are in you and me too—and will be in us as long as we live in this world; but I thank God that I mourn under and strive against it." How seriously and deeply did good Hezekiah humble himself for the pride of his heart! "Out of the eater came meat," out of his pride he got humility, 2 Chron. 32:25.

O sirs! a sincere Christian makes it his great business to get his heart into all his religious duties and services, to get his heart into every way and work of God, Cant. 3:1-6. Jehoshaphat's heart was in the ways of the Lord, 2 Chron. 17:6. Likewise, David, "I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart," Psalm 36:12. And so Psalm 119:7, "I will praise you with uprightness of heart." Verse 10, "With my whole heart have I sought you." Likewise, Jehoshaphat sought the Lord with all his heart, 2 Chron. 22:9. Isaiah 26:8, "The desire of our soul is to your name, and to the remembrance of you." Verse 9, "With my soul have I desired you in the night; yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early." Lam. 3:41, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens."

Romans 1:9, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my *spirit* in the gospel of his Son." Paul's very spirit, his very soul, was in his service. Philip. 3:3, "For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Romans 7:22, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Verse 25, "With the mind I myself serve the law of God."

A sincere Christian is always best when his heart is in his work, and when he cannot get his heart into his duties, oh! how does he sigh, and groan, and complain, and mourn at the foot of God! "Lord, my *tongue* has been at work, and my *head* has been at work, and my *feet* have been at work, and my *eyes* and hands have been at work—but where has my *heart* been this day? Oh! it is and must be for a sore and sad lamentation that I have had so little of my heart in that service that I have offered to you!" This is the daily language of an upright heart. [It is reported that when the tyrant Trajan commanded Ignatius to be ripped open—they found *Jesus Christ* written upon his heart in characters of gold. Here was a heart worth gold. That is the golden Christian indeed, whose heart is written upon all his duties and services.]

But now all the work of a hypocrite is to get his golden parts into his duties, and his silver tongue into his duties, and his nimble head into his duties; but he never makes conscience of getting his heart into his duties. If any beasts sacrificed by heathens—who looked closely into the entrails, was found without a heart—this was held ominous, and construed as very dreadful to the person for whom it was offered. Hypocrites are always heartless in all the sacrifices they offer to God, and this will one day prove ominous and dreadful to them. But,

**[11.] Eleventhly, A hypocrite never performs religious duties from spiritual principles, nor in a spiritual manner.** A hypocrite is never inclined, moved, and carried to God, to Christ, to holy duties—by the power of a new and inward principle of grace working a suitableness between his heart and the things of God. A hypocrite rests himself satisfied in the mere external acts of religion, though he never feels anything of the power of religion in his own soul. A hypocrite looks to his *words* in prayer, and to his *voice* in prayer, and to his *gestures* in prayer—but he never looks to the frame of his *heart* in prayer. A hypocrite's *heart* is never touched with the words his tongue utters. A hypocrite's *soul* is never divinely affected, delighted, or graciously warmed, with any duty he performs. A hypocrite's spiritual performances never flow from spiritual principles, nor from a heart universally sanctified. Though his works may be proper—yet his heart remains carnal; his practices always spring from selfish principles; and this will prove the hypocrite's bane, as

you may see in that Isaiah 1:15, "When you spread forth your hands to heaven, I will hide my eyes; and when you make many prayers, when you abound in duty," adding prayer to prayer, as the Hebrew runs, "I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood." These were unsanctified ones; their practices were good—but their hearts were carnal still, Isaiah 1:10-16.

The same you may see in the scribes and pharisees, who fasted, prayed, and gave alms—but their hearts were not changed, renewed, sanctified, nor principled from above; and this proved their eternal bane, Mat. 6, 23; Luke 18. Nicodemus was a man of great note, name, and fame among the pharisees; and he fasted, and prayed, and gave alms, and paid tithes, etc.—and yet was a total stranger to the new birth; regeneration was a paradox to him. "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" [No man can understand spiritual mysteries by carnal reason.] John 3:4. This great doctor was so great a dunce, that he understood no more of the doctrine of regeneration, than a mere child does the darkest precepts of astronomy.

Look! as water can rise no higher than the spring from whence it came, so the natural man can rise no higher than nature, 1 Cor. 2:14. A hypocrite may *know* much, and *pray* much, and *hear* much, and *fast* much, and *give* much, and *obey* much—and all to no purpose, because he never manages anything he does in a right manner; he never carries on his work from inward principles of faith, fervency, life, love, delight, etc. **Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty?** Answer. No! He cannot delight himself in the Almighty.

**(1.)** To delight in God is one of the highest acts of grace; and how can a hypocrite put forth one of the highest acts of grace, who has no grace? A hypocrite may *know* much of God, and *talk* much of God, and make a great *profession* of God, and be verbally *thankful* to God; but he can never love God, nor trust in God, nor delight in God, nor take up his rest in God, etc. [Job 27:10, Job speaks of the hypocrite, as is evident, verse 8.]

**(2.)** A hypocrite knows not God; and how then can he delight in that God

whom he does not know? A hypocrite has no inward, saving, transforming, experimental, affectionate, practical knowledge of God; and therefore he can never take any pleasure or delight in God.

**(3.)** There is no suitableness between a hypocrite and God; and how then can a hypocrite delight himself in God? There is the greatest contrariety imaginable between God and a hypocrite. God is light—and the hypocrite is darkness; God is holiness—and he filthiness; God is righteousness—and he unrighteousness; God is fullness—and he emptiness, 2 Cor. 6:15-16. Now what delight can there be where there is such an utter contrariety?

**(4.)** Every hypocrite's heart is full of enmity against God; and how then can he delight himself in God? "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Romans 8:7. The best part of a hypocrite is not only averse—but utterly adverse to God and all goodness. "The eagle," says the philosopher, "has a continual enmity with the serpent." And just so, a hypocrite's heart is still full of enmity against the Lord; and therefore he can never delight himself in the Lord.

**(5.)** The stream, cream, and strength of a hypocrite's delight runs out to himself, and to this lust or that, or this relation or that, to this creature-comfort or that, to this worldly enjoyment or that, or else to his gifts and privileges, etc., and therefore how can he delight himself in the Almighty? A hypocrite always terminates his delight in something on this side God, Christ, and heaven. Look! as the apricot tree, though it leans against the wall—yet it is fast rooted in the earth; so though a hypocrite may lean towards God, and towards Christ, and towards heaven—yet his delight is still rooted fast in one creature-comfort or another, etc. God nor Christ is never the real object of a hypocrite's delight.

A hypocrite has no inward principle to delight himself in a holy God; neither can he sincerely, divinely, habitually delight himself in holy duties. A hypocrite may reform many evil things, and he may do many good duties, and yet all this while it is only his *practices*—but not his *heart* or *principles*—which are changed and altered. Mark, though a hypocrite has nothing in him which is essential to a Christian as a

Christian—yet he may be the complete resemblance of a Christian in all those things which are not essential to him. A hypocrite, in all the *externals* of religion, may be the complete picture of a sincere Christian; but then if you look to his *principles*, and the *manner* of his doing of holy duties, there you will find him lame and defective, and as much unlike a sincere Christian, as ever Michal's image was unlike to David, 1 Sam. 19:13-16; and this will prove the great undoing, the great break-neck of hypocrites at last.

O sirs! it is considerable, that *outward* motives and *natural* principles have carried many heathen to do many great and glorious things in the world. Did not Sisera do as great things as Gideon? The difference did only lie here—that the great things which Gideon did, he did from more spiritual principles and raised considerations, than any Sisera was acted by. And did not Diogenes trample under his feet the great and glorious things of this world, as well as Moses? Heb. 11:24. The difference did only lie in this—that Moses trampled under his feet the mirthful and gallant things of this world, from inward gracious principles, namely—faith, love, etc., and from high and glorious considerations, namely—heaven, the glory of God, etc., whereas Diogenes did only trample upon them from selfish, low principles, and from mere outward, carnal, external considerations.

The favor of men, the eye of men, the commendations of men, the applause of men, and a great name among men—were *golden apples*, great things among the philosophers. The application is easy.

Mark, A sincere Christian, he looks to the *manner* as well as to the *matter* of his duties; he acts and performs duties, not only from strength of parts and acquired qualifications—but from *strength of grace* and *infused habits*. He acts from God and for God; he acts from a new heart; he acts from the law written in his heart; he acts from the love of God shed abroad in his heart; he acts from the divine nature communicated to him; he acts from the Spirit's indwelling in his heart; he acts from the fear of God established in his heart. [Romans 11:24; Ezek. 36:25; Jer. 31:33; Romans 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:19; 2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 3:17; 2 Cor. 13:5.] These be the springs and principles of a sincere Christian's spiritual life and actions; and where they act and bear rule, it is no wonder if there are such

motions and performances as the world may admire but not imitate.

Paul's life, after his conversion, was a kind of constant miracle. So much he did, and so much he suffered, and so much he denied himself, that if he lived in these days his life would be a miracle; but yet if we consider the principles that he was actuated by, the great wonder will be, not that he did so much—but that he did no more! "For," says he, "Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," Gal. 2:20.

It was a great saying of blessed Bradford, that he could not leave a duty until he had found communion with Christ in the duty, until he had brought his heart into a duty-frame. He could not leave *confession* until he had found his heart touched, broken, and humbled for sin; nor *petition* until he had found his heart pleased with the beauties of the things desired, and carried out after them; nor could he leave *thanksgiving* until he had found his spirit enlarged and his soul quickened in the return of praises. And it was a great saying of another, "that he could never be quiet until he found God in every duty, and enjoyed communion with God in every prayer." "O Lord," said he, "I never come to you but by you, I never go from you without you!"

A sincere Christian who is pleased with Christ above all—cannot be satisfied nor contented with duties or ordinances, without enjoying Christ in them—who is the life, soul, and substance of them. But now hypocrites do duties—but all they do is from common principles, from natural principles, and from an unsanctified heart—and that mars all.

Remigius, a judge, tells this story, that the devil in those parts used to give money to witches, which did appear to be good coin—but being laid up a while, it then appeared to be nothing but leaves. Hypocrites make a great profession, and are much in the outward actions of religion; they make a very fair show—they hear, they read, they pray, they fast, they sing psalms, and they give alms; but these duties being not performed from a principle of divine love, nor from a principle of spiritual life, nor from a sanctified frame of heart—turn all into leaves! They are all lost, and the authors of them cast and undone forever and ever. But,

**[12.] Twelfthly, No hypocrite in the world loves the word, or delights in the word, or prizes the word—as it is a holy word, a spiritual word, a beautiful word, a pure word, a clean word.** Psalm 119:140, "Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it." There are no hearts, but men after God's own heart, who can love the word, and delight in the word, and embrace the word—for its holiness, purity, and spirituality. [Luther said he would not live in paradise if he might without the word—but with the word he could live in hell itself.]

Witness Paul: Romans 7:12, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Well—and what then? Why, says he, verse 22, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." But is this all? No! says he, verse 25, "With the mind I myself serve the law of God." Holy Paul delights in the law as holy, and serves the law as holy, just, and good. A sincere heart is the only heart that is delights in the word—for its spirituality, purity, and heavenly beauty. None can any rejoice in the word as it is a holy word; nor can any taste the sweetness in the word as it is a pure word—but sincere Christians. Psalm 19:8-10, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean" (that is, the doctrine of the word that teaches the true fear of God), "enduring

forever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether: more to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb; or, as the Hebrew has it, sweeter than the droppings of honeycombs." [These several titles, law, statutes, testimony, commandments, judgments, are used interchangeably for the whole word of God, commonly distinguished into law and gospel.]

The word of God, as it is a pure word, a spiritual word, a clean word, a holy word—so it rejoices a sincere heart—and so it is sweeter than the very droppings of honeycombs. The word, as it is a pure word, a holy word, is more sweet to a sincere Christian than those drops which drop immediately and naturally without any force—which is counted the purest and sweetest honey. There is no profit, nor pleasure, nor joy—compared to that which the purity of the word yields to a sincere heart!

Psalm 119:48, "My hands will I lift up to your commandments which I have loved." Sometimes the lifting up of hands betokens admiration. When men are astonished and ravished, they lift up their hands. I will lift up my hands to your commandments; that is, I will admire the goodness, spiritualness, holiness, righteousness, purity, and excellency of your commandments. Luther took such sweet pleasure and excellent delight in the word—that would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible. Rabbi Chiia, in the Jerusalem Talmud, says, "That in his account all the world is not of equal value with one word out of the law." The martyrs would have given a load of hay for a few chapters of the Bible in English. Some of them gave their treasures for a Bible; they were so delighted and enraptured with the word, as it was a holy word, a pure word, a spiritual word.

Dolphins, they say, love music; and so do sincere Christians love the music of the word. It is upon record, that Mary spent a third of her time in reading the word, she was so affected and delighted with the holiness and purity of it. King Edward the Sixth being about to lay hold on something which was above the reach of his short arm, one who stood by espying an embossed Bible lying on the table, offered to lay that under his feet to heighten him; but the good young king disliked the notion, and instead of treading it under his feet, he laid it to his heart, to express the joy and delight that he took in the holy word.

But now never did any hypocrite, since there was one in the world—ever love God as a holy God—or love his people as a holy people—or love his ways as holy ways—or love his word as a holy word. There is no hypocrite in the world who can truly say with David, "Your word is very pure; therefore your servant loves it." Saul could never say so, nor could Ahab ever say so, nor could Herod ever say so, nor could Judas ever say so, nor could Demas ever say so, nor could Simon Magus ever say so, nor could the scribes and pharisees ever say so, nor could the stony ground hearer ever say so, nor could Isaiah's hypocrites ever say so, Isaiah 58. It is true, some of these did rejoice in the word, and delight in the word—but not as it was a *holy* word, a *pure* word; for then they would have rejoiced and delighted themselves in the whole word of God, every part of God's word being pure and holy.

Hypocrites are sometimes affected and delighted with the word, as it is dressed up with fine high notions, which are but *mysterious nothings*; they are pleased with the word, as it is clothed with arts and elegance of phrase; they are pleased with the word, as it is appareled with a spruce wit, or with silken expressions, or with some delicate elocution: Ezek. 33:32, "So you are to them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument;" or as the Hebrew may be read, "You are as one that gives jests." These hypocrites looked upon the solemnity and majesty of the word but as a dry jest. The prophet being eloquent, and having a pleasing delivery, they were much pleased with it, and it was as sweet and delightful to them as a tune of fine music; but they were not at all pleased or delighted with the spirituality, purity, and holiness of the word, as is evident in verse 31, "So they come pretending to be sincere and sit before you listening. But they have no intention of doing what I tell them. They express love with their *mouths*, but their *hearts* seek only after money."

It was a very smart reproof of Chrysostom to his hearers: "This is that," says he, "which is likely to undo your souls; you hear your ministers as so many minstrels, to please the ear, not to pierce the conscience." Augustine confesses, that the delight which he took before his conversion in Ambrose's sermons was more for the *eloquence of the words* than the *substance of the matter*. Hypocrites are more pleased with the wit,

eloquence of speech, action, quickness of thought, smoothness of style, neatness of expression, and rareness of notion—than they are with the spirituality, purity, and holiness of the word—which they either hear or read.

These hypocrites are like those children who are more pleased with the fine flowers which are strewed about the dish, than they are with the meat that is on the dish; and who are more pleased with the red weeds and blue flowers which grow in the field, than they are with the good corn that grows there. But now look, as the prudent farmer is more pleased with a few handfuls of sound corn than he is with all the mirthful weeds that are in the field, so a sincere Christian is more pleased with a few sound truths in a sermon than he is pleased with all the strong lines, and high strains, and flourishes of wit; or than he is pleased with some new-coined phrases, or some quaint expressions, or some seraphical notions—with which a sermon may be decked or dressed up.

Some are pleased with the word as the profession of it brings in customers into their shops, and keeps up their credit in the world; others are pleased with the word as it seems to tickle their ears and please their fancies; some are affected with sermons because of the elegance of the style, delicacy of the words, smoothness of the language, and gracefulness of the delivery. And these deal by sermons as many do by their bouquets, which are made up of many picked sweet flowers, who, after they have smelt to them awhile, cast them into a corner, and never mind them more; so these, after they have commended a sermon, after they have highly applauded a sermon, they smell to the sermon, if I may so speak, and say, "It is sweet, it is sweet"—and shortly they throw it away, as a bouquet that is withered, and of no further use. But now a sincere heart savors the word, and relishes the word, and is affected and pleased with the word—as it is a holy word, a spiritual word, a pure word—which the most refined hypocrite under heaven never was affected or pleased with, nor can be, while hypocrisy keeps the throne in his soul. But,

**[13.] Thirteenthly, and lastly, A hypocrite cannot endure to be tried, and searched, and laid open.** A hypocrite hates the light, and had rather go to hell in the dark—than come to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, John 20. A soul-searching ministry is to a hypocrite a

tormenting ministry. He knows he is like a velvet saddle, velvet without and straw within; he knows he is like a whited sepulcher, glorious without and dead bones within, Mat. 23:27-28; and therefore his heart rises and swells against such a man and such a ministry, that is all for the anatomizing and laying of him open to himself and to the world. But now look—as pure gold fears neither fire nor furnace, neither test nor touchstone, neither one balance nor another—so a sincere heart dares venture itself upon trial, yes, upon the very trial of God himself: Psalm 139:23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts."

A sincere Christian prays his friends to search him, and he prays soul-searching ministers to search him; but above all, he begs hard of God to search him: "Search me, O God." The Hebrew word is, he *commands* God to search him. The original word signifies a strict, minute, diligent search: see Job 31:5-6. A sincere Christian is very willing and desirous that God should thoroughly search him, that God should search into every corner and cranny of his heart.

Psalm 26:2, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my thoughts and my heart." Every word here has its weight: "Examine me, O Lord." The Hebrew word signifies to melt, and so to test by that which makes the most intrinsic and exact discovery. O Lord, let my heart and thoughts be melted, that it may be known what metal they are made of, whether gold or tin. "Prove me." The Hebrew word signifies to view, as when a man gets upon some high tower or hill to see all from thence. "Mount aloft, O Lord, take the high tower, take the hill—that you may see what is in me!" "Try me, and know my thoughts." The Hebrew word properly signifies to take away, and is applied to Abraham's taking away of his son, Gen. 22:1. "Lord," says the prophet, "if, upon searching and examining of me, you shall find any sin, any creature, any comfort, any enjoyment that lies in your place, take it away, that you may be all in all to me."

A sincere Christian knows that God never brings a pair of *scales* to weigh the *amount* of his graces—but only a *touchstone* to try the *truth* of his graces; he knows if his gold, his grace, are true, though it be ever so little, it will pass for current with God, and therefore he is free to venture upon the closest search of God, Mat. 12:20.

Now look, as bankrupts do not care for casting up their accounts, because they know all is bad, very bad, yes, stark bad with them; so hypocrites, they care not to come to the trial, to the test, because they know all is bad, yes, worse than bad with them. They have no mind to cast up their spiritual estates, because at the bottom of the account they must be put to read their doom, "Undone, undone." And therefore, as old deformed women cannot endure to look into the mirror, lest their wrinkles and deformity should be discovered, so hypocrites cannot endure to look into the mirror of the gospel, lest their deformities, impieties, and wickednesses should be discovered and detected.

I have read of the elephant, how unwilling he is to go into the water—but when he is forced into it, he muddies it, lest by the clearness of the stream he should discern his own deformity. Just so, hypocrites are very unwilling to look into their own hearts, or into the clear streams of scriptures, lest their soul's deformity and ugliness should appear, to their own terror and bewilderment.

O sirs! look, as it is a hopeful evidence that the client's cause is good when he is ready and willing to enter upon a trial; and as it is a hopeful sign that a man's gold is true gold when he is willing to bring it to the touchstone; and that a man prospers when he is willing to cast up his books—so it is a hopeful evidence that a Christian is sincere with God when he is ready and willing to venture upon the trial of God, when he is willing to cast up his books, his accounts, that he may see what he is worth for another world, Gal. 6:4-5.

Augustine speaks of a holy writer, who prized that little time which he constantly set apart every day for the examination of his conscience, far more than all the other part of the day, which he spent in his voluminous controversies. Of all the duties of religion, a hypocrite dreads most that of self-examination, and that of venturing himself upon the search and trial of God.

Well, for a close, though a hypocrite may deceive all the world, like that counterfeit Alexander in Josephus' story—yet Augustus will not be deceived—the great God will not be deceived; for his eyes are quick and

piercing into all things, people, and places. [Job 34:21-22; 2 Chron. 16:9; Proverbs 5:21, and 15:3.]

Look! as the eyes of a well drawn picture are fastened on you whichever way you turn—so are the eyes of the Lord fastened on you, O hypocrite, whichever way you turn. It was a worthy saying of one, "If you can not hide yourself from the sun, which is God's minister of light, how impossible will it be to hide yourself from him whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun?" The eye of God many times is very dreadful to a hypocrite, which makes him very shy of venturing upon the trial of God. No hypocrite since the world stood, did ever love or delight to be searched and tried by God.

And thus I have showed you the several rounds or steps in Jacob's ladder, which no hypocrite under heaven can, while he remains a hypocrite, climb up to. And so much for this chapter.

Now in this fifth and last chapter, I shall lay down some **propositions** and **directions**, that so you may see what a sober use and **improvement** Christians ought to make of their evidences for heaven; and how, in the use of gracious evidences, they ought to live above their gracious evidences, and how to exalt and lift up Christ above all their graces, evidences, and performances.

**[1.] First proposition. It is the wisdom, and ought to be the work of every Christian—to own the least measure of grace that is in him, though it be mixed and mingled with many weaknesses and infirmities.** Sin is Satan's work, and grace is Christ's work; and therefore Christ's work ought to be eyed and owned, though it be mingled with much of Satan's work. [Though our graces, like Gideon's army, are but a handful in comparison of our sins, which, like the Midianites, are innumerable—yet a handful of grace is to be owned in the midst of a multitude of sins.] That Christian is much clouded and benighted who has two eyes to behold his sins—but never an eye to see

his graces. Christ gets no glory, nor the soul gets no good, when a Christian is still a-poring upon his sins. How can that Christian prize a little grace, and bless God for a little grace, and improve a little grace—who won't own a little grace because it is mingled with many weaknesses? Shall the farmer own a little wheat when mingled with a great deal of chaff? Shall the goldsmith own the little filings of gold when mingled with a great deal of dust; and shall not a Christian own a little grace when mingled with a great many failings?

*David* had a great many infirmities, 1 Sam. 21:13-14—yet he owns his uprightness: Psalm 18:23, "I was upright before him." And *Job* had a great many weaknesses, Job 3—yet he owns his integrity: Job 27:5, "Until I die I will not remove my integrity from me." Verse 6, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." The *spouse* was sensible of her blackness—yet owns her loveliness, Cant. 1:5, "I am black—but lovely." Likewise, Cant. 5:2, "I sleep—but my heart wakes." *Jeremiah* was a man of many failings—yet he owns his hope in God, Jer. 17:17: "You are my hope in the day of evil," Jer. 20:14, seq. The *poor man* in the Gospel was very sensible of the sad relics and remains of unbelief that were in him, and yet with a holy boldness and confidence he pleads his faith: Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." *Peter* miscarried sadly, Mat 26:69, seq., and yet he owns his love to Christ: John 21:15, "Lord, you know that I love you." Verse 16, "Lord, you know that I love you." Verse 17, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you." *Paul* had his infirmities and weaknesses hanging upon him: witness that seventh of the Romans: and yet how frequently and boldly does he own the grace of God that was in him throughout his epistles. Nothing keeps grace more cast down, than men's not owning of a little grace because it is mingled with many infirmities. The best way to be greatly good, is to own a little, little grace—though in the midst of much evil. But,

**[2.] The second proposition is this—It is your wisdom, and should be your work—to look upon all your graces and gracious evidences as favors given you from above—as gifts dropped out of heaven into your hearts—as flowers of paradise stuck in your bosoms by a divine hand. A man should never look**

upon his graces or his gracious evidences—but should be ready to say, "These are the jewels of glory with which God has bespangled my soul!" 1 Cor. 4:7, "What do you have—that you have not received?" What gift, what grace, what experience, what evidence do you have—that you have not received? [Of your own, says David, have we given you. 1 Chron, 29:4.] All the light, and all the life, and all the love, and all the joy, and all the fear, and all the faith, and all the hope, and all the patience, and all the humility, etc., that you have, with all the evidences that arise from the discovery of those graces, are all grace gifts, they are all from above. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights," James 1:17.

Look! as all light flows from the sun, and all water from the sea, so all temporal, spiritual, and eternal good flows from heaven. All your graces, and the greatest excellencies which are in you, do as much depend upon God and Christ, as the light does upon the sun, or as the rivers do upon the sea, or as the branches do upon the root, John 15:1-5. 'All my springs are in you,' Psalm 87:7; all the springs of comfort that I have communicated to my soul, and all the springs of grace that I have to quicken me, and to evidence the goodness and happiness of my spiritual estate and condition to me—they are all from God. When a Christian looks upon his wisdom and knowledge, it concerns him to say, "Here is wisdom and knowledge, ay—but it is from above; here is some weak love working towards Christ—but it is from above; here is joy, and comfort, and peace, etc.—but these are all such flowers of paradise as never grew in nature's garden." Now, when a Christian looks thus upon all those costly diamonds of grace, of glory, with which his soul is bedecked, he keeps humble, though his graces and gracious evidences are high. Where this rule is neglected, the soul will be endangered of being swelled and puffed.

It was a great saying of a very worthy man who is now with God, namely, "That as he often got much good by his sins, so he often got much hurt by his graces." Dear hearts, when you look upon the stream, remember the fountain; when you look upon the flower, remember the root; when you look upon the stars, remember the sun; and whenever you look upon your graces, then be sure to remember Christ the fountain of grace, else Satan

will certainly be too hard for you. Satan is so insidious, so artful, and so deceitful, that he can make your very graces to serve him against your graces, conquering joy by joy, sorrow by sorrow, humility by humility, fear by fear, and love by love—if you don't look upon all your graces as streams flowing from the fountain above, and as fruits growing upon the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Therefore, when one of your eyes is fixed upon your graces, let the other be always fixed upon Christ the fountain of grace. "Indeed, we have all received grace after grace from His fullness." John 1:16. Here they eye their graces and the fountain of grace together. Likewise, Paul: "I live; yet not I—but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," Gal. 2:20. Paul eyes Christ and his graces together; so Peter eyes Christ and his graces together: John 21:15, "Lord, you know that I love you." Likewise, those worthies of whom this world was not worthy; they eye Christ and their graces together: Heb. 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

Though grace be a new creature, 2 Cor. 5:17, a noble creature, a beautiful creature, an excellent creature—yet grace is but a creature, and such a creature that is strengthened, maintained, nourished, and upheld in your souls, Philip. 4:12, 13; Cant. 4, in life and power, in beauty and glory, by nothing below the spiritual, internal, and glorious operations of Christ. "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience." Colossians 1:10-11

Now, whenever you look upon grace as a lovely, beautiful creature, oh then remember that might and glorious power of Christ by which this creature is preserved and strengthened. Christians, your graces are holy and heavenly plants of Christ's own planting and watering, and will you mind the plants more than that noble hand that set them? It is Christ alone who can cause the desires of his people to bud, and their graces to blossom, and their souls to be like a watered garden, green and flourishing, Isaiah 58:11, and 35:6-7; and therefore let the eye of your

souls be firstly, mostly, and chiefly fixed upon Christ. But,

**[3.] The third proposition is this—When you look upon your graces in the light of the Spirit, it highly concerns you to look narrowly to it, that you do not renounce and reject your graces as weak and worthless evidences of your interest in Christ, and of that eternal happiness and blessedness which comes by Christ.** The works of grace which consists in those divine qualities of holiness and righteousness, etc., Gal. 5:22-23, is a sure mark, a blessed character, whereby men may know whose children they are, even as the Spartans or Lacedaemonians of old are said to know what stock and lineage they were of by a mark which was made upon their bodies by a lance.

I readily grant that you must not trust in your graces, nor make a Savior of your graces—but yet you ought to look upon your graces as so many signs and testimonies of the love and favor of God to your souls. What certainty can there be of election, remission of sin, justification, or glorification—if there is not a certainty of your sanctification and renovation? If that persuasion that is in you about your grace or sanctification is false—then that persuasion that is in you concerning remission of sin, predestination, justification, and eternal salvation is false. This highly concerns all to consider, who would not be miserable in both worlds.

I know many cry up revelations, impressions, visions, yes, the fabricated visions of their own hearts, and speak lightly and slightly of the graces of the Spirit, of sanctification, of holiness—as evidences of the goodness and happiness of a Christian's condition. There were some in James' time who cried up faith, and union and communion with Christ—but were destitute of good works, James 2:18. Well, what says the apostle? "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works; for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead," verse 26. Look! as the body without the *spirit*, or without *breath*—as the Greek word primarily signifies—is dead; so that faith which is without works, which are, as it were, the breathings of a living faith—is a dead faith. Though it be faith which justifies the man—yet it is works which justifies a man's faith to be right and real, saving and justifying.

Just so, there were some in John's time, namely, the Gnostics, who talked high of fellowship and communion with Christ, and yet walked in darkness; lived in all impurity, and yet would make the world believe that they were the only people who knew God, and had fellowship with God. But John tells us they were liars: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. What fellowship has light with darkness?" 2 Cor. 6:14. Such walk in darkness, who promise to themselves the future vision of God's face, while they go on in the willful breach of God's royal law. Such who say they know him—and yet in the course of their lives walk contrary to him—such are liars: "He who says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar," 1 John 2:4.

Sanctification and justification are both benefits of the covenant of grace, and therefore to evidence the one by the other can be no turning aside to the covenant of works, Jer. 33:8-9; Heb. 8:10, 12. You may run and read in the covenant of grace, that he who is justified is also sanctified, and that he who is sanctified is also justified. Therefore, why may not he who knows himself to be really sanctified, upon that very ground, safely and boldly conclude that he is certainly justified? O sirs! the same Spirit who witnesses to a Christian his justification, can shine upon his graces—and witness to him his sanctification as well as his justification; and without all controversy, it is as much the office of the Spirit to witness to a man his sanctification, as it is to witness to him his justification, 1 Cor. 2:12, 1 John 4:13-14.

But you will say, Sir, what should be the reasons why many men have, and why some do still cry down marks and signs, and deny sanctification to be an evidence of men's justification, etc., and speak disgracefully of this practice that is now under consideration? I conjecture the reasons may be such as follow:

**First**, Many professors take up in a great name, and in a great profession, and in great parts and gifts—though they have never found a thorough change, though they have never passed the pangs of the new birth, though they have never experienced what it is to be a new creature, a thorough Christian. [1 Thes. 5:23; John 3:3, 5; 2 Cor. 5:17; Acts 26:28.]

And hence it comes to pass that they oppose this way of evidencing the goodness and happiness of a man's condition by inward gracious qualifications. Of all men these are most apt to outrun the truth, and to run from one extreme to another, and to be only constant in inconstancy. But,

**Secondly**, Many professors are given up to spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all judgments, namely, lukewarmness, dead-heartedness, formality, indifference, apostasy, blindness, hardness, and to "strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," 2 Thes. 2:10-12. Now, is it any wonder to see such men quarrel, and wrangle, and rail against the way and method of evidencing the goodness and happiness of a man's spiritual condition, by inherent gracious qualifications? But,

**Thirdly**, In some this arises from their lusts, which they indulge and connive at, and which they have a mind to live quietly in. They are desirous to keep their peace, and yet unwilling to forsake their lusts; and hence they exclude this witness of sanctification to testify in the court of conscience, whether they are beloved of God, or whether they are sincere-hearted or not, or whether they have the root of the matter in them or not. For the lack of this witness, sanctification, is a clear and full witness against them—that they are yet in their sins, under wrath, and in the way to eternal ruin; and that they have nothing to do with peace, or comfort, or the promises, or Christ, or heaven, or to take God's name into their lips—seeing they secretly hate to be reformed, Isaiah 57:20, Psalm 50:16.

There are many fair professors who are foul sinners—who have much of God, and Christ, and heaven, and holiness in their lips—when they have nothing but sin and hell in their hearts and lives. These men's lives shame their profession; and therefore they cry out against sanctification as a sure and blessed evidence of a man's justification. Such sinners as live in a course of sin, who make a trade of sin, who indulge their sins, who take up arms in defense of sin, who make provision for sin, who make a sport of sin, who take pleasure in sin, and who have set their hearts upon their sin, 1 Thes. 11; such sinners cannot but look upon the witness of sanctification as the handwriting upon the wall, Daniel 5:5-6. But,

**Fourthly**, There are many who are great strangers to their own hearts and the blessed Scriptures—and are ignorant of what may be said from the blessed word to evidence the lawfulness of this practice which is under our present consideration. [It is sad to be a stranger at home, and to be least acquainted with one's own heart.—Aristotle.] And hence it comes to pass that they cry down marks and signs, and deny sanctification to be a sure and blessed evidence of men's justification.

Ignorance is the source of all sin, the very well-spring from which all wickedness does issue. Ignorance enslaves a soul to Satan; lets in sin by troops; locks them up in the heart; shuts out the means of recovery; and so plasters up a man's eyes that he cannot see the things which belong to his own internal or eternal peace. The Scripture sets ignorant people below the ox and the donkey. Did men either see the deformity of sin, or the beauty and excellency of holiness, they would never delight in the—one nor cry down the other, "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's feeding-trough, but Israel does not know; My people do not understand." Isaiah 1:3.

Peter tells you of some that speak evil of the things that they understood not; they did reprehend that which they could not comprehend, 2 Peter 2:12. Ignorance is a breeding sin, a mother sin; all sins are seminally in ignorance. Ignorance is the mother of all the mistakes, and of all the misrule in the world. Christ told the Sadducees "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God," Mat 22:29. And so I may say, many error in crying down such signs and evidences of grace which are founded upon Scripture, because they are ignorant of what the Scripture says in the case. But,

**Fifthly**, The generality of Christians are but lambs, babes, and children in grace. The springs of grace runs low in them; their fears frequently overtop their faith; and their strong passions and corruptions do often raise such a dust and smoke in their souls, that if they might have all the world, yes, if their salvation depended upon it—they were not able to discern the least measure of grace in their own souls, Isaiah 40:11; 2 Peter 2:2-3; 1 John 2:1. A little grace is next to none. Small things are hardly discerned. He had need to have a clear light and good eyes—who is to discern a hair, a mote, or an atom. A little grace is not discoverable, but

by a shining light from above. There are none so full of fears, and doubts, and questions, and disputes, about the truth of their faith in Christ, and the sincerity of their love to Christ—as those who least believe and least love.

The kingdom of God in most Christians is but as a grain of mustard-seed, which is the tiniest of all seeds; and therefore it is no wonder that they see it not, Mark 4:30-32. The root of the matter in most Christians is but small, and that small root is often covered over with many sinful infirmities and weaknesses; and therefore we are not to wonder if we see such Christians not sensible of the root of the matter that is in them.

Weak habits put forth such faint actions, and with so much interruption, that it is not an easy thing to discern whether they are the products of *special* or of *common* grace. Now, most Christians having but small measures of grace, holiness, and sanctification in them—and these small measures being much obscured and buried under the prevalence of fears, doubts, and unmortified lusts—can speak but weakly and darkly for them; and upon this ground they are not fond of bringing in this witness of sanctification to speak for them. In civil courts, men are not ambitious to bring such witnesses to the bar as can witness but weakly and faintly in their case. It is so here.

**Sixthly**, Satan is a grand enemy to the peace, joy, comfort, assurance, settlement, and satisfaction of every poor Christian; and therefore he will leave no stone unturned, nor any means unattempted, whereby he may keep them in a low, dark, unsettled, and uncomfortable condition, Psalm 77, 88. When once a poor soul is brought over to Christ—how does the devil bestir himself to keep such a soul so under fears, doubts, and bondage—so that it may not in the least have anything which may have a proper tendency to its comfort, joy, assurance, peace, or quiet. The devil will do all he can to furnish such as are "begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead" with all sorts of deadly weapons out of his armory, to fight against those arguments and evidences which make for the peace and comfort of their own souls. He who shall look seriously and impartially upon the subtle, studious, strong, and rhetorical arguings of many distressed Christians—against the peace, rest, comfort, and settlement of their own souls—may safely conclude that a hand of

Joab, a hand of Satan, yes, a strong hand of Satan, has been with them, 2 Sam. 14:19.

He who shall please to read the life of Francis Spira, though he be no great philosopher—yet he may easily discern with what subtlety and wonderful sophistry Satan helped him to argue against the pardonableness of his sins, and the possibility of his salvation. Satan knows how to transform himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11:14. Satan does not always appear in one and the same fashion—but he appears in as many several shapes, fashions, and changes, as Proteus did among the poets. To deceive some, he has assumed a lightsome body, as if he were an angel of heaven, as if he had been a holy one clothed with the brightness of celestial glory; to deceive others, he has appeared as an angel of light, suggesting such things to them, and injecting such things into them, under fair and specious shows and pretenses of religion, piety, zeal, and holiness—which have had a direct tendency to the dishonor of God, the wounding of Christ, the grieving of the Spirit, the clouding or denying their evidences for heaven, the strangling of their hopes, and the death of all their comforts and joy. But,

**Seventhly** and lastly, Some Christians live under high enjoyments and singular manifestations of God's love to them; they have God every day a-shedding abroad of his love into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, Romans 5:5. God is every day a-filling their souls with life, light, love, glory, and liberty, Psalm 63:2-4. Christ every day takes them up into the mount, Mat. 17:4, and makes such discoveries of himself and his glory to them, that they are ready frequently to cry out, "It is good to be here!" Christ often whispers in their ear, "O man, O woman, greatly beloved," Dan. 9:22-23. Christ's "left hand is every day under their heads, and his right hand does embrace them," Cant. 2:6. "They sit down every day under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto their taste." He makes out every day such sweet and clear manifestations of his admirable favor to their hearts, that their souls are daily satisfied as with marrow and fatness, Psalm 63:2-5. There are some precious Christians—I say not *all*, I say not *most*—who live daily under singular glances of divine glory, and who are daily under the sensible embracements of God, and who daily lie in the bosom of the Father, and who every night have Christ as a

bundle of myrrh lying between their breasts, Cant. 1:13.

Now these choice souls who live daily in the glorious manifestations of the Spirit, and enjoy a little heaven on this side heaven, these many times are so taken up with their high communion with God, with their spiritual enjoyments, and with their tastes of the glory of the eternal world—that they do not much mind such evidences as we have had under our consideration.

And thus much for the reasons why some cry down Scripture marks, signs, and evidences of grace, of holiness, of sanctification, and why others don't much mind them, or take any great notice of them. But,

**[4.] The fourth proposition is this—If this way of trying our spiritual estates by holy and gracious qualifications, were not both lawful and useful, then certainly the Holy Spirit would never have prescribed it, nor ever have pressed men so earnestly upon it, as we find he has done in the blessed Scripture.** Take a taste: 2 Cor. 13:5, "Examine *yourselves*, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves." The precept is doubled, to teach us to redouble our diligence in this most needful but much neglected duty of self-examination. The final trial of our eternal estates does immediately and solely belong to the court of heaven—but the *investigative* part belongs to us. Here are two emphatical words in the Greek: first, "**examine** yourselves." The word in the general signifies to take an experimental knowledge of anything which is either uncertain, unknown, or hidden. Most men are great strangers to God, to Christ, to Scripture, and to themselves; and therefore says the apostle, "Examine *yourselves*." Now, if there were not sure marks and infallible signs whereby men may certainly know what their present estate is, and how it is likely to go with them in another world, the redoubled command of the apostle would be in vain.

The second Greek word is "**prove** yourselves." The original word signifies a severe and diligent inquisition into ourselves, so as to have a full experience of what is in us. Doubtless the apostle would never call again and again upon us, to try and examine ourselves whether we are in the faith—if it were not lawful to come to the knowledge of our faith, or of our

being in the state of faithful Christians—in a discursive way, arguing from the effect to the cause.

Likewise, in 2 Peter 10, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." The Greek word translated "give diligence," is very emphatic. It signifies to do a thing, not in an slovenly, lazy, careless way—but to do a thing with industry, vigilance, and unweariedness of spirit. Now, it is granted on all hands, that election cannot be made more sure in respect of *God* or itself—but only in respect of *us*—that we may be more persuaded of it. Election cannot be made more sure than it is already, for those whom God has elected shall be certainly glorified; but we must make it sure on *our* parts; that is, we must labor to have a real and grounded assurance that we are elected by God in his eternal decree, to obtain life and glory by Jesus Christ, Romans 8:29-30. There is a double certainty: (1.) There is a certainty of the object; so our election is sure with God, for with him both it and all things are unchangeable. (2.) There is the certainty of the subject; and so we must make our election sure to ourselves in our own hearts and consciences. Now, the means whereby we are to come to this assurance, is by adding grace to grace, and by causing those several graces to abound in us. This is the way of ways to make all sure to us.

Now, by these scriptures it is most evident that we stand engaged to make our election sure by holy signs and marks. But,

**[5.] The fifth proposition is this—That other precious saints who are now triumphing in glory, have pleaded their interest in God's love, and their hopes of eternal life—from graces inherent.** [Grace, in the working of it, is often compared to life. Now, look as natural life is discerned by the actions thereof, as by so many signs—so also is supernatural life.] I will only point at some of those scriptures among many others, that clearly speak out this truth: the first epistle of John; James 2:17, seq.; Job 23:10-12; and the whole 31st chapter of Job; Psalm 119:6; Isaiah 38:2-3; Neh. 1:1, seq., and 13:14, etc. Now, all these scriptures do evidently prove, that the precious servants of the Lord took their graces for precious signs and testimonies of God's love, of their interest in Christ—and thereby received much comfort, peace, and satisfaction.

To deny the *fruit* growing upon the tree to be an evidence that the tree is alive, is to me as unreasonable as it is absurd. Certainly, it is one thing to *judge* by our graces, and another thing to *trust* in our graces, to make a *savior* of our graces. They may doubtless look to their graces as *evidences* of their part in Christ and salvation—and the clearer and stronger they are, the greater will be their comfort and assurance—but not as *causes*.

No man advanced free grace like Paul; no man debased his own righteousness like Paul—he counted it but dung and dross, Philip. 3:6-9; and no man exalted the righteousness of Christ like Paul, and yet by this way of signs he gathered much comfort and assurance: 2 Tim. 4:7-8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: *henceforth* is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." How plainly, how fully does he here conclude his right to the crown of life, from his fighting a good fight, his finishing his course, in a way of grace and holiness, and his keeping the faith. By this great instance you may clearly see, that a Christian may greatly exalt Christ, lift up free grace, tread upon his own righteousness, as to justification—and at the very same time take comfort in his graces, and in his gracious actings.

Likewise, in 2 Cor. 1:12, "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." [They boasted in the testimony of their consciences. Oh the quiet and tranquility that arises from the testimony of a man's sincerity, both in heart and life.] His joy was founded on the testimony of his conscience; but from what did his conscience testify? from his sincere conduct in the world.

Again, take that memorable instance of Job; God hid his face from him; the arrows of the almighty stuck fast in him; Satan was let loose upon him; the wife of his bosom proved a tempter to him, a tormentor of him; his most trusted acquaintances deserted him, reproached him, and condemned him as a hypocrite; God wrote bitter things against him, and made him "to possess the iniquities of his youth." All was clouded above him, and he stripped of all the outward comforts that once surrounded

him, Job. 1:8, and 2:3, so that he had nothing left to stay him, to refresh him, to support him, and to be a comfort and joy to him—but the sense of his integrity, and the evidence he had of his own uprightness, his own righteousness: Job 27:6, "I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live." Job was under great afflictions, sore temptations, and deep desertions. Now that which was his cordial, his bulwark, in those sad times—was the sense and feeling of his own uprightness, his own righteousness. The sense and feeling of the grace of God *in him*—kept him from fainting and sinking under all his troubles.

Likewise, in 1 John 2:3, "Hereby we know that we know him—if we keep his commandments," etc. In these words two things are observable: First, that where there is a true knowledge of Christ; there is an observation of his commandments. Secondly, that by this observation of his royal law—we may know that our knowledge is sound and sincere. He speaks not of a *legal* obedience—but of an *evangelical* keeping of his commandments. A conscientious and serious endeavor to walk in a holy course of life, according to God's will revealed in his word—is a most certain mark or evidence that we have a saving knowledge of God, and that we are his children, and heirs of glory. Such who sincerely desire, and sincerely purpose, and firmly resolve, and faithfully endeavor—to keep the commandments of God—these do keep the commandments of God *evangelically* and acceptably in the eye of God—in the account of God.

Likewise, verse 6, "He who says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." Here you may observe two things: First, that by faith we are implanted into Christ; secondly, that **we discover our implantation into Christ by our imitation of Christ**. Such as plead for sanctification as an evidence of justification, do not make their graces *causes* of their implantation into Christ, or of their justification before the throne of Christ—but they make them *evidences* and *witnesses* to declare the truth of their real implantation into Christ, and of their being justified before the throne of Christ.

Likewise, 1 John 3:14, "We know we are translated from death to life—because we love the brethren." The apostle makes this a great sign of godliness—to love another godly man for godliness's sake, and the more

godly he is, the more to love him, and to delight in him. Now mark, this love of our brethren is not a *cause* of our translation from death to life, for the very word translated supposes such a grace, such a favor of God as is without us—but a *sign* of our translation from death to life. But,

**[6.] The sixth proposition is this—There are many scores of precious promises made over to those who believe, to those who trust in the Lord, to those who set him up as the great object of their fear, to those who love him, to those who delight in him, to those who obey him, to those who walk with him, to those who thirst after him, to those who suffer for him, to those who follow after him, etc.** [The most ordinary and safe way of coming to assurance is the reasoning way in which a believer, from the fruits and *effects* of grace, infers he has the *habit* of grace; and from the habit concludes his justification and adoption. And as this is a way least subject to delusion, so it is also most suited to a rational creature, whose way of acting is by reasoning and argumentation.]

Now all these scores of promises are made for the support, comfort, and encouragement of all such Christians whose souls are bespangled with grace. But now if we may not lawfully come to the knowledge of our faith, love, fear, delight, obedience, etc., in a reasoning way, arguing from the effect to the cause—what support, what comfort, what advantage shall a sincere Christian have by all those scores of promissory verses of Scripture? Doubtless all those scores of promises would be as so many suns without light, as so many springs without water, as so many breasts without milk, and as so many bodies without souls, to all gracious Christians—were it not lawful for them to form up such a practical reasoning as this is—namely, the Scripture does plainly and fully declare that he who believes, fears, loves, obeys, etc., is blessed, and shall be happy forever; I am such a one who does believe, fear, love, obey, etc.; Therefore I am blessed, and shall be happy forever.

Now, although it must be granted that the foundation of this proposition is Scripture—yet the assumption is from *experience*; and therefore a godly man, being assisted therein by the Holy Spirit, may safely draw the conclusion as undeniable. Oh that you would seriously consider how little would be the difference between a man and a beast, should you shut out

this *reasoning* way of coming to conclusions. But,

**[7.] The seventh proposition is this—That the Scripture gives many signs and symptoms of grace; so that if a man cannot find all—yet if he discover some, yes—but one, he may safely conclude that all the rest are there.** He who truly has but one of the fore-mentioned characters in this book, has seminally all; he who has one link of the golden chain, has the whole chain. Look! as he who truly has one grace—has every grace, though he does not see every grace shining in his soul; so he who truly has any one evidence of grace in his soul, he has virtually all. And oh, that all weak, dark, doubting Christians would seriously and frequently ponder upon this proposition; for it may be a staff to uphold them, and a cordial to comfort them, under all their fears and faintings. But,

**[8.] The eighth proposition is this—Without the light of the Holy Spirit, our graces are not manifest.** Our graces are only the means by which our condition is known to us, Romans 9:2. The efficient cause of this knowledge is the Spirit illustrating our graces and making them visible, and so helping us to conclude from them, etc. 1 Cor. 2:12, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world—but the Spirit who is of God—that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God." Our graces, our sanctification, as well as our election, effectual calling, justification, and glorification, are freely given to us by God; and the Spirit of God is given to reveal these blessings to us. Mark, the things freely given us may be received by us, and yet the receipt of them not known to us; therefore the Spirit for our further consolation does, as it were, put his hand and seal to our receipts, whence he is said to "seal us up unto the day of redemption," Eph. 4:30.

The graces of the Spirit are a real "pledge" of the Spirit—yet they are not always an evidential pledge; therefore a pledge is often superadded to our graces. Forever remember these few hints:

(1.) that it is the work of the Spirit to plant grace in the soul;

(2.) that it is the work of the Spirit to act and exercise the graces that he has planted there;

(3.) that it is the work of the Spirit to shine upon those graces that he has planted in the soul, and to cause the soul to see and feel what he has planted;

(4.) that it is the work of the Spirit to raise springs of comfort and joy in the soul, upon the discovery of that grace which he has wrought in the soul.

O Christians! until the Spirit of the Lord shines upon your graces—you will still be in the dark! It is only God's own interpreter, who must show a man his righteousness, Job 33:23. When the Holy Spirit shines upon a Christian's graces, then a Christian finds the springs of comfort to rise in his soul, and then he finds the greatest serenity and calmness in his spirit. O sirs! no man can, by any natural light or evidence in him, come to be assured of the grace wrought in his soul. Look! as no man can see the sun but in the light of the sun, so no man can see the graces of the Spirit but in the light of the Spirit, 1 John 5:13.

A man may have grace and not see it; he may be in a state of grace and not know it; as the child lives in the womb but doesn't perceive that he is heir to a crown. Oh! until the Spirit shines upon his own work, a child of light may walk in darkness and see no light, Isaiah 50:10. Look! as no man can subdue his sins, but by the power of the Holy Spirit; so no man can see his graces but in the light of the Spirit, Romans 8:13. The confidence that a believer has of the truth of grace wrought in him—springs more from the Spirit's removing his slavish fears, and answering his doubts, and shining upon his graces, and supporting his soul—than it does from that excellency and beauty of grace which shines in him. A man may read the *promises* over and over a thousand times—and yet never be affected, delighted, or pleased with them, until the Spirit of the Lord sets them home upon his soul. And a man may read the *threatenings* over and over a thousand times—and yet never startle nor tremble, though he knows himself guilty of those very sins against which the threatenings are denounced, until the Spirit of the Lord sets home the threatenings in power upon his conscience; and then every threatening will be like the hand-writing upon the wall, which will cause his countenance to be changed, and his thoughts to be troubled, and his joints to be loosed, and his knees to be dashed one against another, Dan. 5:6-7.

It is just so in the matter of our graces and gracious evidences; until the Holy Spirit shines upon them, until in the light of the Spirit we come to see them—they won't be witnessing, comforting, and refreshing to us. Therefore let not the pious reader think that, by the strength of his natural light, he shall ever attain to know the certainty of that grace which is in his soul; but let him rather beg hard of God, that the Holy Spirit may shine upon that good work which he has begun in him—that so he may be persuaded, assured, and comforted. Without the *light* of the Spirit, the *work* of the Spirit cannot be seen—any more than a book written in the clearest print can be seen without light to see it or read it by. But,

**[9.] The ninth proposition is this—Sincere Christians may safely and groundedly rejoice, delight, and take comfort in those graces, or in those divine qualities, which in the light of the Spirit, they see and know are wrought in their souls.** [Most Christians by experience find that their assurance and joy rises and falls—as grace and holiness—and as the evidences of grace and holiness rise and fall in their souls.] I do not say that a Christian should build the comfort of his justification upon his graces, or that he should *rest* on his graces, or *trust* to his graces, or make a *savior* of his graces; for this would be such a piece of pharisaical popery, as is justly to be detested and abhorred by all who love Christ, or are looking towards heaven.

But this I say—a Christian may make several *uses* of his graces. He may safely look upon his graces as so many evidences of Christ's dwelling in him, and he may look upon his graces as so many heavenly bracelets, or as so many love-tokens from God—in which he may safely rejoice. The gracious evidences that I have laid down in this treatise are blessed *signs* of salvation; and therefore to rejoice in them can be no transgression of any royal law of heaven. He who can experimentally subscribe to any of the gracious evidences which are laid down in this book, has such a fair certificate to show for heaven, which no wicked man or hypocrite under heaven has the like to show; and why such a man should not rejoice in such a certificate, I cannot at present see.

I may and ought to rejoice in the works of *creation*. Oh how much more then ought I to rejoice in the work of *renovation*, in the work of

*sanctification*, which does so infinitely transcend the work of creation? I may and ought to rejoice in my natural life, health, strength, beauty; and why then should I not rejoice in grace and holiness, which is the life, health, strength, and beauty of my soul?

Christ delights in the graces of his people. "You have ravished my heart" (or you have behearted me, as the Hebrew runs), "my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes" (or with one glance of your eyes, as some read it), "with one chain of your neck," Cant. 4:9. The eye of faith, say some; the eye of love, say others; the chain of obedience, say some; the chain of spiritual graces, say others, ravished Christ's heart. The one eye of faith, the one chain of obedience, unhearted Christ, wounded Christ; this one eye, this one chain, robbed Christ of his heart, and laid the spouse in the place of it. Now, shall Christ's heart be ravished with his children's graces, and shall not their hearts be ravished and delighted with those very graces that ravish Christ's own heart?

I may, yes, I ought to rejoice in the graces of others, and why then not in my own? I may, yes I ought to rejoice in others' outward mercies, and in my own outward mercies, 1 Thes. 1:2-5, 2 Thes. 1:3-4. Oh how much more then ought I to rejoice in the saving and distinguishing graces of the Spirit, especially when I consider, that the least grain of grace is more worth than ten thousand thousand worlds, as every awakened conscience will tell you when they come to die, Hab. 3:18, Gal. 6:14, Philip. 3:3.

Mark, firstly, mostly, and chiefly—a Christian is to rejoice in God and Christ; but secondarily and subordinately—he may rejoice in those graces, and in those gracious evidences which God has given into his soul. Firstly, mostly, and chiefly, a wife is to rejoice in the person of her husband; but secondarily, subordinately she may rejoice in the bracelets, in the earrings, in the jewels, in the gold chains which are given her by her husband. But,

**[10.] The tenth proposition is this—That that assurance which the people of God may rise to, by a sight of their graces, and upon the sight of their gracious evidences in the light of the Spirit—is not so clear, and bright, and high, and full—as that it utterly excludes all fears, doubtings, conflicts, or spiritual**

**agonies.** 1 Cor. 13:12; Philip. 3:12-14. Our knowledge of God, of Christ, of ourselves, and of the blessed Scripture, which is the rule of trial—is *imperfect* in this life. And how then can our assurance be perfect?

*David*, a man eminent in grace and holiness, had his up-hills and his down-hills, his summer days and his winter nights. Now you see him upon the mountain singing and saying, "The Lord is my portion!" Psalm 73:25. And shortly you see him in the valleys, sighing and saying, "Why are you cast down, O my soul; why are you disquieted within me?" Psalm 42:5, 11. The same is evident in Job, Heman, and Asaph, Job 3; Psalm 77; Psalm 88.

Such an assurance as shall exclude all fears, doubts, conflicts, agonies, is very desirable on earth—but shall never be obtained until we come to heaven. The grievous assaults of Satan, the power of unbelief, and the prevalency of other corruptions in a Christian's heart, may be such as may *shake*, I do not say *overturn*, that assurance which a Christian may gather from the sight and evidence of his graces in the light of the Spirit. "The flesh lusts as well against the Spirit," Gal. 5:17, as it is a Spirit of *consolation*, as it lusts against the Spirit as it is a Spirit of *sanctification*; and therefore such an assurance as shall exclude all sorts and degrees of fears and doubts, is not attainable in this life. [Doubting is not a virtue, as the papists would make us believe—but it is a fruit of the flesh, and a thing most contrary and opposite to the nature of faith, James 1:5; Mat. 21:21, and 13:31. And therefore Christians should pray hard to be rid of their doubts.]

While we are in this old world, we shall have—water with our wine, gall with our honey, and some clouds with our brightest sunshiny days, etc. Most Christians think, that as long as they have any doubtings they have no assurance; but they consider not, that there are many *degrees* of infallible certainty, which are below a perfect or an undoubting certainty. Doubtless some darkness, more or less, will overspread the face of every Christian's soul, and *unbelief* in one degree or another will be making headway against their faith; and *hypocrisy* in one degree or another will be making headway against sincerity; and *pride* in one degree or another will be making headway against humility; and *passion* in one degree or another will be making head against meekness; and *earthly-mindedness*

in one degree or another will be making head against heavenly-mindedness, etc. Yet as long as a Christian has the sight of his graces or his gracious evidences, he may and ought to walk in much peace, comfort, and joy.

Such Christians as are resolved to lie down in sorrow, until they have attained to a perfect assurance—must resolve to lie down in sorrow until they come to lay down their heads in the dust. Our graces are imperfect, and therefore that assurance that arises from the sight and evidence of them must needs be imperfect. Perfect signs of grace can never spring from imperfect grace, 1 Thes. 3:10. Now, if this were seriously apprehended, studied, and minded by many weak Christians, they would not at every turn call their spiritual estates into question, as they do, because they find some seeds and stirrings of pride, hypocrisy, vain-glory, and other sinful humours and passions working in them. But,

**[11.] The eleventh proposition is this—When all your signs and evidences of the happiness and blessedness of your condition fail you; and are so clouded, obscured, darkened and blotted that you cannot read them, that you cannot take any comfort from them—then it highly concerns you to keep high, and precious, and honorable thoughts of God, of Christ, of his word, and of his ways in your souls.** Psalm 97:2, "Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne."

When Christ was withdrawn from his spouse, Cant. 5:6-7, and when the watchmen that went about the city had smote her and wounded her, and when the keepers of the walls had took away her veil from her—yet then she keeps up in heart very high, precious, and honorable thoughts of Christ. Verse 10, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand." Verse 16, "His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend." That is, his mouth is sweetnesses, and he is altogether desirablenesses, or all of him is desires, or he is wholly desirable. Here she breaks off her praises in a general eulogy, which no words can express enough. Alas! says the spouse, I lack words to express how sweet, how lovely, how adorable, how desirable, how eminent, and how excellent Christ is in my eye, and to my soul!

Christ is the desire of all nations, Hag. 2:8, and all that is perfect in heaven or earth is but a dim shadow of his excellency and glory. Where Christ is—there is heaven. Heaven itself, in the spouse's eyes, without Christ, would be but a poor little thing. The spouse looks upon Christ as the sparkling diamond in the ring of glory"

Just so, David, when he was woefully clouded and benighted, when all was dark within him, and dark about him, and dark over him, Psalm 73:13, "Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence." Verse 21, "My heart was grieved and my spirit embittered." Verse 22, "I was as a beast before you;" or I was as a great beast, or as many beasts in one, as the Hebrew word Behemoth imports. Verse 26, "My flesh and my heart fails;" that is, my outward man and my inward man fails me. And yet mark, at this very time, when the psalmist was thus overcast, he keeps up in him very high, precious, and honorable thoughts of God. Verse 1, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." Verse 23, "Nevertheless, I am continually with you, you have held me by my right hand." Verse 24, "You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Verse 25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you." Verse 26, "God is the strength," or rock, "of my heart, and my portion forever." Verse 28, "It is good for me to draw near to God."

Just so, the church in that Micah 7, when God had hidden his face from her; verse 7, when she sat in darkness; verse 8, when she was under the indignation of the Lord; verse 9, when the righteous man was perished, and there was none upright among men; verse 2, and when her enemies rejoiced, insulted and triumphed over her; vers. 8 and 10—yet now, even now, she keeps up in her soul very high, precious, and honorable thoughts of the Lord. Verse 7, "My God will hear me." Verse 8, "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Verse 9, "He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

I might give you twenty more instances—but enough is as good as a feast. Dear Christians, when your graces are not transparent, when your evidences for heaven are blotted, and when the face of God is clouded—oh then, keep up in your hearts high, precious, and honorable thoughts of

God and Christ, and of his word and ways, etc. When your sun of righteousness is set in a cloud, when great darkness is upon your spirits, when all moonlight and starlight of your graces and gracious evidences fail you, Acts 27:20—yet then say with David, "You are holy, O you who inhabits the praises of Israel," Psalm 22:3; and with Ezra, "You have punished me less than my iniquities deserve," Ezra 9:13; and with Nehemiah, "Howbeit, you are just in all that is brought upon us, for you have done right—but we have done wickedly;" and with the church, "The Lord is righteous," Neh. 9:33.

In the darkest night, and under your deepest soul-distresses, say, "Well, if I perish, if I should miscarry forever—yet I will maintain and keep up in my heart, high, and precious, and honorable thoughts of God and Christ, Lam. 1:18. Say, Well, though my graces are obscured, and my evidences for heaven are blurred and soiled—yet I shall to my last breath say the Lord is good, and his word is good, and his ways are good; yes, though he should slay me—yet I will trust in him, and entertain noble and glorious thoughts of him," Job 13:15. This is the way of ways to have your graces cleared and strengthened, your evidences brightened, your comforts restored, and your assurance confirmed. But,

**[12.] The twelfth proposition is this—That it is the great duty and concernment of Christians to keep the evidences of their gracious condition, always bright and shining.** Christians should be scrupulous of not blurring and disfiguring the golden characters of grace in their souls. The least character of grace in the soul, is more worth than all the gold of Ophir, yes, more worth than ten thousand thousand worlds; and therefore every gracious Christian should be scrupulously careful, that he does not by willful omissions or sinful commissions—cloud, dim, or darken the least character of grace, Eph. 4:30, Psalm 51:11-12. Such as blot or lose their evidences for heaven, they lose the comfort of their lives in this world.

Satan's masterpiece is first to work Christians to blot and blur their evidences for glory, by committing this or that heinous sin; and then his next work is to rob them of their evidences for glory, that so though at the long run they may get safely to heaven, that yet Jacob-like they may go halting and mourning to their graves. Satan knows, that while a

Christian's evidences are bright and shining, a Christian is *temptation-proof*. Satan may tempt him—but he cannot conquer him; he may assault him—but he cannot vanquish him. Satan knows, that while a Christian's evidences for heaven are bright and shining, no *afflictions* can sink him, nor any *opposition* shake him, nor any persecution discourage him, nor any outward needs perplex him; and therefore he will use all his power and policy, all his arts, crafts, and parts—to draw poor Christians to blot and blur their evidences for glory.

Satan knows, that a man may lose one friend—and easily get another; lose his trade in one place—and soon get a trade in another place; lose his health—and afterwards regain it; lose an estate—and afterwards get an estate, etc. But if he loses his evidences for heaven, he knows it will cost him many a prayer, and many a sigh, and many a groan, and many a tear, and many a sad complaint, before he recovers his lost evidences; and therefore his grand design is to plunder a Christian of his evidences for heaven.

O sirs! keep but your evidences for heaven always bright and shining, and then *heavy* afflictions will be light, and *long* afflictions will be short, and *bitter* afflictions will be sweet, 2 Cor. 4:16-18; and then every evidence fairly written in your hearts will be a living comfort to you in a dying hour. When the tokens of death are upon your bodies, and you shall see the lively characters of grace shining in your souls, you will then cry out with old *Simeon*, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace," Luke 2:29; and with the *spouse*, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like to a roe, or to a young deer upon the mountains of spices," Cant. 8:14; and with the *bride*, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev. 22:20; and with *Paul*, "I desire to depart and to be with Christ," Philip. 1:23.

When a man's evidences for heaven are either lost or blotted and blurred, then he will be ready to cry out with David, "Oh spare me yet a little, that I may recover strength before I go hence and be seen no more," Psalm 39:13; and with Hezekiah, to turn his face to the wall and weep, Isaiah 38:3. There are four things that above all others a Christian should labor to keep—

(1) Christ;

(2) his own heart;

(3) the word;

(4) his evidences for heaven, bright and shining.

**[13.] The thirteenth proposition is this—It is the high concernment of every Christian, either when he is in the dark, or when his graces shine brightest, and when his evidences for heaven are clearest, and his springs of comfort rise highest—then to have his heart and the eye of his faith most firmly fixed upon these three royal forts, or these three cities of refuge.** It must be granted, that though our graces are our best jewels—yet they are imperfect, and do not give out their full luster; they are like the moon, which when it shines brightest—has her dark spots; and therefore a Christian had need have his eye, his heart fixed upon the three following royal forts. You know in time of war there are the outworks, and there are the royal forts. Now, when the soldiers are beaten out of their outworks, they retire to the royal forts, and there they are safe; and then they cast up their caps and bid defiance to their proudest enemies. Now, our graces and our gracious evidences, they are our outworks; and from these we may be beaten in a day of desertion and temptation, etc. Now if we make our retreat to the three following royal forts, we may in a holy sense cast up our caps, and bid defiance to an army of devils, yes, to all the powers of darkness. But,

**Question**—But, sir, please let us know what are these royal forts.

**Answer**—They are these three that follow.

1. The first is **the free, rich, infinite, sovereign, and glorious grace of God.** [Gen. 6:8; Exod. 19:5; Eph. 1:5-7; 1 Tim. 1:13-16. "The grace of our Lord was *exceedingly abundant*." The original word is overfull, redundant, more than enough, more than might serve the turn for him who was the greatest of sinners.] By free grace you are to understand the gracious good will or favor of God, whereby he is pleased, of his own free love—to choose and accept of some in Christ for his own. This we call first grace, because it is the fountain of all other grace, and the spring

from whence they flow; and it is therefore called grace, because it makes a man gracious with God.

Now mark, there have been many Christians who have had no assurance of the love of God, no sight of their interest in Christ, no sealing of the Spirit, nor any one clear evidence of grace, that they dared rest the weight of their souls upon; nor no one promise in the whole book of God that they dared apply or rest upon—who yet daily casting or rolling themselves, their souls, and their everlasting concernments, upon the infinite, free, rich, and sovereign grace of God in Christ—have found some tolerable peace, comfort, and refreshment in such a practice all their days. A Christian may lose the sight of his graces, and the evidences of his gracious estate; he may be so much in the dark, he may be so much benighted and bewildered in his spirit, that there may be no way under heaven left to him to enjoy peace, comfort, rest, quiet, settlement, or contentment—but by casting or rolling of his soul upon the free, rich, infinite, and sovereign grace of God in Christ. And here casting anchor, the poor bewildered, deserted, tempted, tossed soul may be safe and at rest, Isaiah 50:10.

The free love and favor of God will be a lamp to the soul in the darkest night; it will be a sweet lump of sugar which will sweeten the bitterest cup; it will be a refreshing cordial against all faintings; it will be armor against all temptations; it will be an everlasting arm to you under all afflictions; it will be a sun and a shield to you in every condition, Psalm 4:6; Psalm 80:3. "Cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved." Divine favor is that pearl of great price which is most desirable [Socrates prized the king's countenance above his coin. What is then the countenance of God to a gracious soul?]

Dan. 9:17, "The Lord make his face to shine upon his sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake." Num. 6:24, "The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you." Psalm 67:1, "God be merciful to you, and bless you, and cause his face to shine upon you." Life is a very desirable thing; "skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life," Job 2:4; and yet the loving-kindness of God is better than life: Psalm 63:3, "Your loving-kindness is better than *life*." The Hebrew word is *lives*; to note that the loving-kindness of God is better than many lives, yes,

than all lives. Put many lives together, put all lives together; and yet there is more excellency in the least discovery of divine love—than in them all. Many a man has been weary of his life—but who have ever been weary of divine love?

Dear Christians, are your graces or gracious evidences shining or sparkling? Oh then solace yourselves mostly in the free love and favor of God; for in his free favor lies the life of your souls, the life of your graces, the life of your comforts, yes, in his free favor your all is bound up. If your graces or evidences are so clouded and darkened, that you are in a stormy day beat out of your outworks, oh now run to the free grace and favor of God, as to your royal fort, as to your strong tower, as to your city of refuge—where you may be safe and happy forever.

In such a day ponder much upon these scriptures, Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." God's love is a free love, having no motive or foundation but within itself. All the links of the golden chain of salvation are made up of free grace. The people of God are freely loved, Deut. 7:6-8; and freely chosen, John 15:16-19, Eph. 1:4; and freely accepted, Eph. 1:6; and freely adopted, Eph. 1:5, Gal. 4:5-6; and freely reconciled, 2 Cor. 5:18-20; and freely justified, Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace;" and freely saved, Eph. 2:5; "By grace you are saved," verse 8, "For by grace you are saved;" Tit. 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done—but according to his mercy he saved us." Thus you see that all the golden rounds in Jacob's ladder—which reaches from heaven to earth, are all made up of free grace. Free grace is the foundation of all spiritual and eternal mercies; free grace is the solid bottom and foundation of all a Christian's comfort in this world. Were we to measure the love of God to us by our fruitfulness, our holiness, our humbleness, our spiritualness, our heavenly-mindedness, or our gracious behavior towards him—how would our hope, our confidence every hour, yes, every moment in every hour, be staggered, if not vanquished! Romans 4:16. But all is of grace, of free grace, that the promise might be sure, and that our salvation might be safe. O sirs! it is free grace which will strengthen you in all your duties, and which will sweeten all your mercies, Romans 8:33-36, and which will support you under all your changes, and which will arm you against all temptations, and answer all

objections, and take off all Satan's accusations, that may be cast in to disturb the peace and quiet of your soul. Therefore, whether your graces or gracious evidences do shine or are clouded—yet still have your recourse to the free grace of God, as to your first royal fort, your first city of refuge; and still cry out, Grace, grace! When your gracious evidences are clearest and fullest, then it concerns you to look upon free grace as your choicest and safest city of refuge. But,

2. The second royal fort that Christians should have their eyes, their hearts fixed upon, whether their graces or gracious evidences sparkle and shine, or are clouded and obscured—is **the mediatorial righteousness of Christ**. [Imputed righteousness seems to be prefigured by the skins with which the Lord after the fall clothed our first parents. The *bodies* of the beasts were for sacrifice; and the *skins* put them in mind that their own righteousness was, like the fig-leaves, imperfect, and that therefore they must be justified another way.]

Beloved, there is a twofold righteousness in Christ. First, there is his **essential** and personal righteousness as God. Now, this essential personal righteousness cannot be imputed to us. But then there is, secondly, his **mediatorial** righteousness, that is, that righteousness which he wrought for us as mediator, whereby he did subject himself to the precepts, to the penalties, commands, and curses, answering both God's vindictive and rewarding justice. This is communicated to us and made ours—by virtue of which, we stand justified in God's sight. The mediatorial righteousness of Christ is the matter of our justification.

Now, this mediatorial righteousness of Christ includes, first, the habitual holiness of his *person* in the absence of all sin, and in the rich and plentiful presence of all holy and requisite qualities; secondly, the actual holiness of his life and death by obedience. By his *active* obedience he perfectly fulfilled the commands of the law, and by his *passive* obedience, his voluntary sufferings, he satisfied the penalty of the law for transgressions.

Mark, that perfect satisfaction to divine justice in whatever it requires, either in way of punishing for sin, or obedience to the law, made by the Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, the mediator of the new covenant, as a

common head representing all those whom the Father has given to him, and made over unto those who believe in him: this is that righteousness which is imputed to us in justification. No other righteousness can justify us before the throne of God. Look! as Christ was made sin for us only by imputation, so we are made righteous only by the imputation of his righteousness to us, as the Scripture clearly evidences: 2 Cor. 5:21, "He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Jer. 23:6, "The Lord our righteousness." A soul truly sensible of his own unrighteousness, would not have this sentence, "The Lord our righteousness," blotted out of the Bible for ten thousand thousand worlds. 1 Cor. 1:30, "Christ Jesus is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness," etc.

How is Christ made righteousness to the believer? Not by way of infusion—but imputation; not by putting righteousness into him—but by putting a righteousness upon him, even his own righteousness; by the imputing his merit, his satisfaction, his obedience unto them, through which they are accepted as righteous unto eternal life: Romans 5:19, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Christ's righteousness is his in respect of inherence—but it is ours in respect of imputation; his righteousness is his personally—but ours meritoriously. Look! as there is a true and real union between us and Christ, so there is a real imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. And a gracious soul triumphs more in the righteousness of Christ imputed—than he would have done if he could have stood in the righteousness in which he was created. This is the crowning comfort to a sensible and understanding soul—that he stands righteous before a judgment-seat in that full, exact, perfect, complete, matchless, spotless, peerless, and most acceptable righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to him.

The righteousness of Christ is therefore called "the righteousness of God," Romans 3:21-22; 10:3; Philip. 3:9, because it is that which God has designed, and which God does accept for us in our justification, and for and in which he does acquit and pronounce us righteous before his seat of justice. That we are freely justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, is the very basis and foundation of the Christian religion, whereby it

is distinguished from all other religions whatever. Jews, Turks, pagans, and papists explode this imputed righteousness; yes, papists jeer it, calling it a *putative* righteousness. [Luther's great fear was, that when he was dead this glorious doctrine of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, would be sent packing out of the world.]

Well, sirs, remember this once for all, namely, that the mediatorial righteousness of Christ is the life of your souls, and will afford you these most admirable comforts—

[1.] First, In this mediatorial righteousness, **there is enough to satisfy the justice of God to the utmost farthing.** The mediatorial righteousness of Christ is so perfect, so full, so exact, so complete, and so fully satisfactory to the justice of God—that divine justice cries out, "I have enough, and I require no more; I have found a ransom, and I am fully pacified towards you!" Ezek. 16:62-63. But,

[2.] Secondly, This mediatorial righteousness of Christ **takes away all our unrighteousness; it cancels every bond, it takes away all iniquity, and answers for all our sins,** Isaiah 53; Col. 2:12-15. Lord, here are my sins of *omission*, and here are my sins of *commission*; but the righteousness of Christ has answered for them all. Here are my sins against the *law*, and here are my sins against the gospel, and here are my sins against the offers of grace, the strivings of grace, the affections of grace; but the righteousness of Christ has answered for them all. When a cordial was offered to one who was sick, "Oh," said he, "the cordial of cordials which I daily take is this: 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all our sins!'" 1 John 1:7.

O sirs! it would be high blasphemy for any to imagine that there should be more *demerit in sin*, in any sin, in all sin, to condemn a believer—than there is *merit in Christ's righteousness* to absolve him, to justify him, Romans 8:1, 33-35. But,

[3.] Thirdly, This mediatorial righteousness of Christ **presents us perfectly righteous in the sight of God.** It is that pure, fine, white linen garment whereby our nakedness is covered before the face of God: "And to her was granted" (that is, to the Lamb's wife) "that she should be

arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints," Rev. 19:8; or the righteousnesses or justifications of saints, for the Greek is plural. Some by righteousnesses understand the righteousness of Christ imputed, and the righteousness of Christ imparted; but I rather agree with those who say it is an Hebraism; the plural righteousnesses noting that most perfect, complete, absolute righteousness which Christ is pleased to put upon his people, Eph. 5:27. Upon the account of this righteousness of Christ, the church is said to be without spot or wrinkle, and to be *all lovely*: "You are all beautiful, my love; there is no spot in you," Cant. 4:7; and to be *complete*: "And you are complete in him," Col. 2:10; and to be *without fault*: "They are without fault before the throne of God," Rev. 14:5. And so Col. 1:21, "And to present us holy, and unblamably, and unreprouceable, in the sight of God." But,

[4.] Fourthly, This mediatorial righteousness of Christ **will answer to all the fears, doubts, and objections of your souls**. How shall I look up to God? The answer is—In the righteousness of Christ. How shall I have any communion with a holy God in this world? The answer is—In the righteousness of Christ. How shall I find acceptance with God? The answer is—In the righteousness of Christ. How shall I die? The answer is—In the righteousness of Christ. How shall I stand before the judgment seat? The answer is—"In the righteousness of Christ." Your sure and only way under all temptations, fears, conflicts, doubts, and disputes, is by faith to remember Christ, and the sufferings of Christ, as your mediator and surety, and say, "O Christ! you are my sin—in being made sin for me; and you are my curse—in being made a curse for me. Or rather, I am your sin—and you are my righteousness; I am your curse—and you are my blessing; I am your death—and you are my life; I am the wrath of God to you—and you are the love of God to me; I am your hell—and you are my heaven."

O sirs! if you think of your sins—and of God's wrath; if you think of your guiltiness—and of God's justice, your hearts will fail you, and sink into despair, if you don't think of Christ, if you don't rest and stay your souls upon the mediatorial righteousness of Christ. [That was a rare speech of Luther: Let him see to it where my soul shall rest, who took so much care

for it as that he laid down his life for it.] But,

[5.] Fifthly and lastly, The mediatorial righteousness of Christ is **the best title that you have to show** for that kingdom which cannot be destroyed, for those incorruptable riches, for that everlasting inheritance, and for that eternal house not made with hands. [Heb. 12:28; 1 Peter 1:3-6; 2 Cor. 5:1-4.] The righteousness of Christ is your life, your joy, your comfort, your crown, your confidence, your heaven—your all. And therefore whether your graces or gracious evidences do sparkle and shine, or are clouded or blotted—yet still keep a fixed eye and an awakened heart upon the mediatorial righteousness of Jesus Christ; for that is the righteousness by which you may happily live, comfortably die, and boldly appear before the judgment-seat. But,

3. The third royal fort, that Christians should have their eyes, their hearts fixed upon, whether their graces or gracious evidences sparkle and shine, or are obscured and clouded, is **the covenant of grace**. [Deut. 4:25; Isaiah 55:3, and 54:7-10; Jer. 31:31; Psalm 50:5, etc.; Hosea 14:4; Tit. 3:6; Eph. 1:5-7, chapter 2:6-8; Romans 9:18, 23; Jer. 32:38-41; Ezek. 36:25-27.] The covenant of grace is a new compact or agreement which God has made with sinful man out of his own free mercy and grace, wherein he undertakes both for himself and for fallen man, and wherein he engages himself to make fallen man everlastingly happy.

All mankind would have been eternally lost, and God had lost all the glory of his mercy forever—had he not of his own free grace and mercy made such an agreement with sinful man. This covenant is called a covenant of grace, because it flows from the mere grace and mercy of God. There was nothing outside of God, nor anything in God—but his free mercy and grace—which moved him to enter into covenant with poor sinners.

In the covenant of grace there are two things considerable:

**First, The covenant which God makes for himself to us**, which consists of these branches:

(1.) that he will be our God;

- (2.) that he will give us a new heart, a new spirit;
- (3.) that he will not turn away his face from us from doing of us good;
- (4.) that he will put his fear into our hearts;
- (5.) that he will cleanse us from all our filthiness, and from all our idols;
- (6.) that he will rejoice over us to do us good.

Secondly, Here is **the covenant which God does make for us to himself**, which consists in these things:

- (1.) that we shall be his people;
- (2.) that we shall fear him forever;
- (3.) that we shall walk in his statutes, keep his judgments and do them;
- (4.) that we shall not depart from him.

Upon many accounts I may not enlarge on these things; but by these short hints it is evident that the covenant of grace is an entire covenant made by God, both for himself and for us. O sirs! in the covenant of grace, God stands engaged to give whatever he requires.

[1.] First, He requires us to **know** him—and he has engaged himself that we shall know him: 1 Chron. 28:9, Jer. 24:7, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord;" and Jer. 31:34, *They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,*" Heb. 8:11. But,

[2.] Secondly, The Lord frequently requires his people to **trust** in him, Psalm 62:8; Isaiah 26:4; 2 Chron. 20:20. And he has engaged himself that his people shall trust in him: Zeph. 3:12, "I will leave in the midst of you an afflicted and poor people, and *they shall trust* in the name of the Lord." But,

[3.] Thirdly, The Lord frequently commands his people to **fear** him, Deut. 6:13, chapter 8:6. And he has engaged himself that they shall fear

him: Jer. 32:40, "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Hosea 3:5, "*They shall fear* the Lord and his goodness." But,

[4.] Fourthly, The Lord frequently commands his people to **love** him: Deut. 11:1, Psalm 31:23, "O love the Lord, all you his saints!" And he has promised and engaged himself that his people shall love him: Deut. 30:6, "The Lord your God will cleanse your heart and the hearts of all your descendants so that *you will love him* with all your heart and soul, and so you may live!." But,

[5.] Fifthly, The Lord frequently commands his people to **call** upon him, and to **pray** unto him, Psalm 50:15, 1 Thes. 5:17, etc.; and he has promised and engaged himself to pour upon them a spirit of prayer: Zech. 12:10, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications." But,

[6.] Sixthly, The Lord frequently commands his people to **repent** and to turn from their evil ways, Hosea 14:1, Ezek. 14:6, 18:30, Acts 17:30, 26:20; and he has promised and engaged himself that they shall repent and turn from their evil ways, Acts 5:30, 11:18, 2 Tim. 2:25, Isaiah 30:22, Jer. 24:7. But,

[7.] Seventhly, The Lord has commanded his people to **obey** him, and to walk in his statutes, Jer. 24:7; and he has promised and engaged himself that his people shall obey him and walk in his statutes: Ezek. 36:27, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause you to walk in my statutes*, and *you shall keep* my commandments and do them." Likewise, Ezek. 11:19-20; 37:23-24. But,

[8.] Eighthly, The Lord commands his people to **mourn for their sins**, Isaiah 22:12, Joel 2:12, James 4:10; and he has promised and engaged himself to give them a mourning frame: Zech. 12:10, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and *they shall mourn* for him as one that mourns for an only son;" Ezek. 7:16, "The few who survive and escape to the mountains will moan like doves, weeping for their sins." But,

[9.] Ninthly, The Lord commands his people to **grow in grace**, 2 Peter 3:18, etc.; and he has promised and engaged himself that they shall grow in grace: Psalm 92:12-14, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree" (which is always green and flourishing); "he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." The cedar of all trees is most durable, and shoots up highest. "Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." See Hosea 14:5-7; Mal. 4:2, etc. But,

[10.] Tenthly, The Lord commands his people **not to allow sin to reign in them**: Romans 6:12, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body;" and he has promised and engaged himself that sin shall not reign in them: Romans 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you;" Jer. 33:8, "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity;" Ezek. 36:25, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you;" Micah 7:19, "He will subdue our iniquities." But,

[11.] Eleventhly, He has commanded his people to **loathe their sins**, and to loathe themselves for their sins: Psalm 97:10, "You who love the Lord hate evil; Romans 12:9, "Abhor that which is evil." And the Lord has promised and engaged himself to give them such a frame of spirit: Ezek. 36:13, "Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and *shall loathe yourselves* in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations." Ezek. 6:9, "They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices." Ezek. 20:43, "And there shall you remember your ways and all your doings wherein you have been defiled, and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that you have committed." But,

[12.] Twelfthly and lastly, for enough is as good as a feast, God has commanded us to hold out, to **persevere** to the end, 1 Cor. 15:58, Rev. 2:10, Luke 18:1; and the Lord has promised and engaged himself that they shall persevere: Job 17:9, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger;" Isaiah 40:31, "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they

shall walk and not faint."

Thus you see by an induction of twelve particulars that **whatever God requires of his people, he stands engaged by the covenant of grace to give to his people, to do for his people.**

Now mark, the covenant of grace is confirmed to us in the surest and most glorious way that can be imagined, Gen. 17:7; Heb. 13:20; Psalm 89:28; 2 Sam. 23:5. The covenant of grace is so strongly ratified that there can be no nulling of it. For,

[1.] First, It is confirmed to us by **his word**. "I will be your God, and you shall be my people," Jer. 33:38. "Now, all the promises of God in Christ are yes, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us," 2 Cor. 1:20; that is, they are stable and firm, as the Hebrew word signifies. They will eat their way over all Alps of opposition. In the new covenant God neither makes nor fulfils any promises of salvation—but in Christ and by Christ.

[2.] Secondly, God has ratified the covenant of grace by **his oath**, Gen. 22:16, Heb. 6:19. His promise is enough—but surely his oath must put all out of question. There is no room for unbelief now that God has sworn to it. Had there been a greater God, he would have sworn by him. But,

[3.] Thirdly, God has ratified it by **the death of his Son**, Gal. 3:15, Heb. 9:15-16. A man's last will and testament, as soon as he is dead, is in force, and cannot then be disannulled. The covenant of grace is a testamentary covenant, which, by the death of the testator, is so settled that there is no altering of it. But,

[4.] Fourthly and lastly, The covenant of grace is ratified by the **seals** which God has annexed to it. What was sealed by the king's ring could not be altered, Esther 8. God has set his seals to the covenant of grace, his broad seal in the sacraments, and his secret seal in the witness of his Spirit, and therefore it is sure, and cannot be reversed, etc.

Now, whenever you look upon your graces or gracious evidences with one eye—be sure you look upon the covenant of grace, your last royal fort, with the other eye. The whole hinge of a man's eternal comfort and

happiness hangs upon the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is the saint's original title to heaven; it is a saint's best and brightest evidence for life and salvation. There was an eternal design, an eternal plot, if I may so speak, between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; a bargain, a covenant made between the Father and the Son, for the salvation of his chosen ones; and by covenant of grace all saints have title to heaven, etc.

Dear Christians, many times your gracious evidences are so blotted and blurred that you cannot read them. Oh then, turn to the covenant of grace! When other evidences fail you, the covenant of grace will be a glorious standing evidence to you. It is upon the score of the covenant, that you must challenge an interest in all the glory of the heavenly world. The covenant of grace is the great charter, the magna charta, of all your spiritual privileges and blessings. Luke 1:5-6.

In this great charter the Lord has declared that he judges his people by their *sincerity* and the *general bent and frame of their hearts*—and not by what they are under some pangs of passion, or in an hour of temptation, Acts 13:22. In this great charter the Lord declares that his eye is more upon his people's *inward disposition*, than it is upon their outward actions, 2 Chron. 30:18-20; and that his eye is more upon their *will* than it is upon their work, 2 Cor. 8:12, Philip. 2:13. In this great charter, the covenant of grace, the Lord has declared that he will not forsake his people, nor cast off his people, because of those failings and weaknesses that may, and do, attend them: 1 Sam. 12:22, "For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people." Ponder much upon Jer. 31:31-38. He chose you for his love, and he still loves you for his choice. God will rather *pity* his people under their weakness, than he will *reject* them for their weakness.

The covenant of grace that God has made with his people is as the covenant that a man makes with his wife. "I will take you to be My wife forever. I will take you to be My wife in righteousness, justice, love, and compassion. I will take you to be My wife in faithfulness, and you will know the Lord." Hosea 2:19-20. Jer. 3:13. Now, a man will never reject his wife; he will never cast off his wife for those common weaknesses and

infirmities that daily attends her; no more will the Lord cast off his people because of the infirmities that daily hang upon them. In this great charter—the covenant of grace—the Lord declares that he will require no more than he gives, and that he will give what he requires, and that he will accept what he gives; and what can a God say more? and what can a gracious soul desire more?

O sirs! when all is cloudy overhead, and all dark within the heart; when a Christian's graces are not transparent, when his evidences for heaven are soiled and blotted, and when neither heart nor life are as they should be—it is good then to turn to the covenant of grace, and to dwell upon the covenant of grace. Thus David did: 2 Sam. 23:5, "Although my house is not right with God; yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Let me give a little light into the words.

"Although my house is not right with God." Though David in the main had a good heart—yet he had but a wicked house. Absalom had slain his brother, rebelled against his father, and lay with his father's concubines; and Amnon had deflowered his sister, etc. Now David, under a deep sense of all this wickedness, and of his own personal unworthiness, sadly sighs it out, "Although my house is not right with God," etc.; though I have not walked so exactly and perfectly as I should have done, though neither I nor my house have walked answerable to those great mercies and singular kindnesses of God that have been extended to us—"Yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant."

The word everlasting has two acceptations. It does denote, (1.) Sometimes *a long duration*, in which respect the old covenant, clothed with figures and ceremonies, is called everlasting, because it was to endure, and did endure a long time. (2.) Sometimes it denotes *a perpetual duration*, a duration which shall last forever. In this respect the covenant of grace is everlasting. It shall never cease, never be broken, nor never be altered. [Isaiah 55:3; Gen. 17:7; Psalm 105:9-10; Isaiah 61:8; Heb. 3:20.] Now, the covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant in a twofold respect:

First, In respect of God, who will never break covenant with his people;

but is their God, and will be their God forever and ever: Psalm 48:14, "For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Ay, and after death too; for this is not to be taken exclusive. He will never leave his people, nor forsake his people, Heb. 13:5-6. "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Secondly, In respect of the people of God, who are brought into covenant, and shall continue in covenant forever and ever. You have both these expressed in that excellent scripture, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jeremiah 32:40. Seriously dwell upon this. It shows that the covenant is everlasting on God's part, and also on our part. On God's part, "I will never stop doing good to them;" and on our part, "they shall never depart from me." How so? "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (even that fear spoken of in verse 39, "that they may fear me forever").

"Ordered in all things." Oh what head can conceive, or what tongue can express that infinite counsel, wisdom, love, care and tenderness, that the blessed God has expressed in ordering the covenant of grace, so as it may most and best suit to all the needs, and straits, and necessities, and miseries, and desires, and longings of poor sinners' souls. The covenant of grace is so well ordered by the unsearchable wisdom of God, that you may find in it remedies to cure all your diseases, and cordials to comfort you against all your faintings, and a spiritual armory to arm you against all your enemies, namely, the world, the flesh, and the devil, Isaiah 40:28, and Psalm 147:5. Do you, O distressed sinner, need a loving **God**, a compassionate God, a reconciled God, a sin-pardoning God? Here you may find him, in the covenant of grace. Do you need a **Christ** to counsel you by his wisdom, and to clothe you with his righteousness, and to adorn you with his grace? Here you may find him in a covenant of grace. Do you need the **Spirit** to enlighten you, to teach you, to convince you, to awaken you, to lead you, to cleanse you, to cheer you, and to seal you up to the day of redemption? Eph. 1:13. Here you may find him in a covenant of grace. Do you need grace, or peace, or rest, or quiet, or contentment, or comfort, or satisfaction? Here you may find it in a covenant of grace. God

has laid into the covenant of grace, as into a common store, all those things that sinners or saints can either beg or need.

Look! as that is a well-ordered commonwealth where there are no wholesome laws lacking to govern a people, and where there are no wholesome remedies lacking to relieve a people; so that must needs be a well-ordered covenant, where there is nothing lacking to govern poor souls, or to relieve poor souls, or to save poor souls—and such a covenant is the covenant of grace.

And surely the covenant of grace is a sure covenant: Deut. 7:9, "The Lord your God he is God, the faithful God—who keeps covenant with those who love him." Psalm 89:33-34, "But I will not withdraw My faithful love from him or betray My faithfulness. I will not violate My covenant or change what My lips have said." [Jer. 31:31, 33, 35-37; Psalm 19:7; Rev. 3:14; Isaiah 54:10.] All God's precepts, all God's predictions, all God's menaces, and all God's promises, are the issue of a most just, faithful, and righteous will. God can neither die nor lie: Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." There are three things that God cannot do:

- (1.) He cannot die;
- (2.) he cannot lie;
- (3.) he cannot deny himself.

Joshua 23:14, "And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth; and you know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing has failed thereof." O sirs! the covenant of grace is founded upon God's *everlasting* love, upon God's *unchangeable* love, upon God's *free* love. John 13:1, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." Whom God loves once—he loves forever: "I have loved you with an everlasting love," Jer. 31:3. God can as well cease to be, as he can cease to love those whom he has taken into covenant with himself.

And as the covenant of grace is founded upon God's *everlasting love*, so it is founded upon God's *immutable counsel*: "God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath," Heb. 6:17. And as the covenant of grace is founded upon the immutable counsel of God, so it is founded upon the *free purpose* of God: 2 Tim. 2:19, "The foundation of God stands sure;" that is, the decree and purpose of God's election stands firm and sure. Now the purpose of God's election is compared to a foundation, because it is that upon which all our happiness and blessedness is built and founded, and because, as a foundation, it abides firm and sure.

And as the covenant of grace is founded upon the free purpose of God, so it is founded upon the *glorious power* of God, Isaiah 33:11, 41:2; Mal. 4:1; 1 Cor. 1:25. The power of God is an infinite power, it is a supreme power, a power which overtops the power of all mortals. What is the stubble compared to the flames, the chaff compared to the whirlwind? No more is all created power to the power of God. The weakness of God is stronger than men; and did not Pharaoh find it so? and Haman find it so? and Sennacherib find it so? and Nebuchadnezzar find it so? and Belshazzar find it so? and Herod find it so? In all the ages of the world the power of God has trampled down all before it. The power of God is an independent power, a matchless power, an incomparable power, an enduring power, an eternal power.

And as the covenant of grace is founded upon the power of God, so it is founded upon the *oath of God*: Luke 1:72, "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant." Verse 73, "The oath which he swore to our father Abraham." Heb. 6:17-18; Psalm 89:34-35. To think that God will break his oath, or be perjured, is an intolerable blasphemy.

Once more give me permission to say, the covenant of grace is founded not only upon the oath of God—but also upon *the precious blood of Christ*. The blood of Christ is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. 13:20, Mat. 26:28. "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," Heb. 9:15. "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has

died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." Verse 17, "A testament is valid only when people die, since it is never in force while the testator is living." It is called a covenant and a testament. (1.) A covenant in respect of God, and a testament in respect of Christ. (2.) A covenant in respect of the manner of agreement, and a testament in respect of the manner of confirming. Jesus Christ died as a testator, and by his death confirmed the testamentary gift before made of life and salvation. Now, the covenant of grace being thus gloriously founded as you see, it must roundly and undeniably follow, that the covenant of grace is a sure covenant.

"For this is all my salvation and all my desire;" that is this is the great ground of all my hope concerning my salvation, and of all the happiness and blessedness which I look for in another world. This everlasting covenant, this sure covenant, is the great charter of charters that I have to show for eternal bliss. David was drawing near to his eternal home, and whether his graces and gracious evidences for heaven's happiness were bright and shining, or blotted and clouded, I shall not at this time stand to inquire. It is enough that he stays his soul upon the covenant of grace, and that he comforts and solaces his soul in the covenant of grace. And oh that all Christians, when their graces and gracious evidences are either clouded or blotted, or else sparkling and shining, that they would frequently eye these three royal forts, namely,

- (1.) the free grace and favor of God;
- (2.) the mediatorial righteousness of Christ;
- (3.) the covenant of grace.

Now, that I may the more effectually prevail with you to *look* upon these royal forts, and to *delight* in these royal forts, and to *prize* these royal forts, and to *improve* these royal forts—give me permission to offer these three things briefly to your consideration:

First, Our best graces and performances are not commensurate and square payment in the eyes of pure justice. All of them as inherent in us, and acted by us—are but imperfect excellencies. No man has so much

grace and holiness as is required, nor does he do so much as he is obliged to do. Every particular grace, though it be of a heavenly and divine original—yet it is like the stars twinkling, though placed in the heavens; so that if God should enter into judgment with the most righteous person, even the righteousness that is in him would not be safety and defense unto him, Psalm 143:2, Job 14:3-4, Romans 3:20.

There is pride mixed with all our humility! There is passion mixed with all our meekness! There is hypocrisy mixed with all our sincerity! There is earthly-mindedness mixed with all our heavenly-mindedness! There is unbelief mixed with all our faith!

O sirs! in the great business of your access to God, and of your acceptance with God, and of your reconciliation to God, and of your justification before God—it is infinitely best, safest, and noblest to found your faith, hope, and expectation rather upon Christ's imputed righteousness, than your inherent righteousness; upon what Christ has done for you—than upon what he has done in you, Romans 3:20-27, Philip. 3:8-10. Our inherent righteousness is stained, imperfect, impure; but Christ's imputed righteousness is pure and perfect. If there were any stain or any imperfection in that, it could not justify us, it could not save us, it could not secure us from wrath to come.

Such evidences as are not fetched from anything *in* us, nor from any things done *by* us—but are fetched by faith from our free justification, and from Christ's full satisfaction which he has wrought for us—will be found the most full, the most sweet, the most refreshing, the most comforting, and the most satisfying evidences. Christ is all lovely, all perfect, all pure; therefore let him be most in your eye and most upon your hearts.

But here take heed that you do not look upon your graces, or your gracious evidences—as poor, low, weak, contemptible things, as too many do; for the least of them is more worth than heaven and earth, and they may yield you much comfort, much support, much refreshing, and much satisfaction; though they cannot yield you that full comfort nor that full satisfaction as Christ himself can yield, as Christ's satisfaction can yield, as free justification can yield. Though children and friends cannot yield to

a wife that full comfort, contentment, delight, and satisfaction as her husband does—yet they may yield her much comfort, much contentment, much delight, much satisfaction. The application is easy. But,

**Secondly**, Consider, that Christian who has free grace, who has free justification, who has the mediatorial righteousness of Christ, who has the satisfaction of Christ, who has the covenant of grace most constantly in his sight, and most frequently warm upon his heart—that Christian, of all Christians in the world, is most free from a world of fears, and doubts, and scruples—which do sadden, sink, perplex, and press down a world of other Christians, who daily eye more what Christ is a-doing *in* them, and what they are a-doing for Christ—than they do eye either his active or passive obedience. Christ has done great things for his people, and he has suffered great things for his people, and he has purchased great things for his people, and he has prepared great things for his people; yet many of his own dear people are so taken up with their own hearts, and with their own duties and graces, that Christ is little eyed by them or minded by them! What is this, but to be more pleased with the *streams*—than with the *fountain*? with the leaves—than with the tree itself? with the bracelets, ear-rings, and gold chains—than with the husband himself? with the nobles who wait—than with the king who is waited on? And this is the great reason why so many Christians, who will certainly go to heaven—do walk in darkness, and lie down in sorrow. But,

**Thirdly**, Trusting in our own duties, and resting on our own righteousness, and not on Christ's solely—is a close, secret, spiritual, dangerous, and unperceivable sin, which the nature of man is exceedingly prone unto, Isaiah 7:3; Zech. 7:5-6. The pharisees were greatly given up to trust in their own righteousness, to rest on their own righteousness, and to boast and glory in their own righteousness, Mat. 23, Luke 18; and this proved their mortal disease, their damning sin. Trusting in their own righteousness had so besotted and benumbed them, that they had no mind, no heart to open the gates of their souls, that the King of glory might enter in. And this was that which undid the Jews, Romans 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."

Look! as there is nothing more pleasing to Christ than the renouncing of all confidence in our own duties and righteousness; so there is nothing more provoking to Christ, than the setting up of our own duties and righteousness. This is a sin which kills thousands. It was the saying of a precious saint, that "he was more afraid of his duties than of his sins, for his duties often made him proud--but his sins always made him humble." It was good counsel Luther gave, "We must take heed not only of our sins--but of our good works." Duties can never have too much diligence used about them--nor too little confidence placed in them. They are good helps--but bad saviors. It is necessary we do them--but it is dangerous to rely upon them. If the devil cannot dissuade us from performing pious duties, then his next work will be to persuade us to rely upon them, to make saviors of them, because this will as certainly ruin our souls, as if we had wholly neglected them.

O man! your own righteousness rested in, will as certainly and eternally undo you—as the greatest and foulest atrocities! This soul-sickness is that spiritual idolatry that will undo you, for you make yourself a Savior, and your duties a Savior, and say of your duties as they did of the golden calf, "These are the gods that brought you out of the land of Egypt." Open wickedness, open idolatry, slays her thousands—but secret idolatry, a secret resting upon duties, slays her ten thousands! Multitudes bleed inward by this disease, and die forever. Open profaneness is the broad dirty way that leads to hell; but trusting in pious duties is as sure a way, though a cleaner way to hell. Ungodly people and formal professors shall meet at last in the same hell.

Ah, Christians! don't make religious duties your money, lest you and your money perish together. The phoenix gathers sweet odoriferous sticks in Arabia together, and then blows them with her wings and burns with them; so do many shining professors burn themselves with their own duties and services. You know in Noah's flood, all that were not in the ark, though they climbed up the tallest trees, and the highest mountains and hills—yet were drowned: so let men climb up to the highest duties—yet if they be not housed in Christ, and in his righteousness, they will be as certainly damned, as the men in the old world were certainly drowned.

Adam and all his posterity were to be saved by doing; "Do this and live."

And hence it is natural to all the sons and daughters of Adam to rest on duties, and to look for life and happiness in a way of doing; but if salvation were to be had by doing, what need of a Savior? Well, remember this once for all, such as rest on duties, such as rest on their own righteousness, or on anything on this side Christ—such shall find them to be useless. They cannot heal them, they cannot cure them of their wounds. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb—yet could they not heal him, nor cure him of his wound, Hosea 5:13. Duties are to Satan as the ark of God was to the Philistines; he trembles to see a soul diligent in the use of them, and yet not daring to rely on them but on Christ; but when he can draw poor souls to confide in their duties, and to rest on their duties, then he has his design, then he claps his hands for joy, then he cries out, "Ah! ah! so would I have it!"

There is no sin that does so formally and immediately oppose Christ, and reject Christ, and provoke Christ, as this of resting upon self-righteousness; and therefore above all, pray against this, and watch against this, and weep over this. There is no Christian in his wits, who will dare to adventure the everlasting safety of his soul upon the leaking vessels of his own holiness or services. O sirs! your duties cannot satisfy the justice of God; they cannot satisfy the law of God; your present duties cannot satisfy for your former sins. A man who pays his rent honestly every year, does not thereby satisfy for the old rent not paid in ten or twenty years before. Your new obedience, O Christian, is too weak to satisfy for old debts, and therefore roll yourself on Christ, and Christ alone, for life and for salvation. Bellarmine could say, after all his works, "The safest way is to rely on Jesus Christ."

Now, let all these things work you to renounce your own righteousness, and to take sanctuary alone in the pure, perfect, and most glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ, and in the free grace of God. Paul is called by Augustine, "the best child of grace in the world; for whatever he was, or had, or did, he ascribes all to free grace," Eph. 3:8. He was the chief of the apostles—and yet less than the least of all saints; he was very eminent in grace—and yet what he was, he was by grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am," 1 Cor. 15:10. He lived, "yet not he—but Christ lived in him,"

Gal. 2:20. He "labored more abundantly than they all—yet not he—but the grace of God which was with him," 1 Cor. 15:10. He was able to do all things—but still "through Christ who strengthened him," Philip. 4:13. Oh that these three last things might work you to be more in love with free grace than ever, and to be more in love with the righteousness of Christ than ever, and to be more in love with the covenant of grace than ever. But,

**[14.] The fourteenth proposition is this—The more grace, the more holiness, the more any man has of the Spirit of sanctification—the more clear, the more fair, the more full, the more sweet will his evidences be for heaven, for salvation; and the more comfort, and the more assurance, and the more settlement, and the more of the witness of the spirit of adoption, such a person will certainly attain unto.** That Spirit who is the pledge of our inheritance, and which seals us up to a holy assurance, is a *Holy Spirit*, Eph. 1:13-14; he is frequently called the Holy Spirit. "Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your Holy Spirit from me," Psalm 51:11. "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit," Isaiah 63:10. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption," Eph. 4:30. "He therefore who despises, despises not man—but God, who has also given unto us his Holy Spirit," 1 Thes. 4:8. To make a man holy, is more than to create a world; it is a work too high and too hard for angels or men; it can be done by none, but by the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification is the Spirit's personal operation; it is the great work of the Spirit to shape, form, and fashion the new-creature holiness in all the vessels of glory, 2 Thes. 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2. The Spirit is the root of all holiness; and therefore the several parts of holiness are called the fruits of the Spirit. Holiness is the very picture of God; and certainly no hand can carve that excellent picture but the Spirit of God. Holiness is the divine nature, and none can impart that to man but the Spirit; the Spirit is the great principle of holiness. Now, the more grace, the more holiness any man has, the more he is the delight of the Spirit; and the more the Spirit will delight to witness his sonship, his saintship, and his heirship unto him.

Scripture and experience will tell you—that commonly men of greatest holiness have been men of greatest assurance. This is certain—the more holiness the more assurance; for so the precious promises runs, Isaiah 32:17. "The work of righteousness shall be peace," that is—peace of conscience, Romans 5:1; "and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." Inherent righteousness, for of that he speaks, as is evident by the 15th and 16th verses of the same chapter, is the highway to assurance and peace.

Likewise, Psalm 50:23, "To him who orders his life aright, will I show the salvation of God;" that is, "declare myself to be his Savior," say some. Say others, "I will give him a prospect of heaven here, and a full fruition of heaven hereafter," Say others, "I will cause him to see and know that he shall be saved."

Likewise, John 14:21, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him." Verse 23, "If any man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Holy Christians shall have most of the spiritual presence of Christ, and of the singular manifestations of the love of Christ to their souls. The great reason of reasons, why the springs of comfort, of joy, of inward peace, and of assurance, rise no higher in many Christians' souls—is because the springs of grace and holiness rise no higher in their souls. Had Christians more grace, and more holiness in their hearts and lives—God would quickly bring down more of heaven and assurance into their souls.

There is a blessed assurance, which arises from the discovery of grace in the soul. Now, the more ample, large and full our graces are—the more ample, large and full must our assurance be. The connection of these four verses in Titus 2:11-14, shows this; when "grace that appears to us, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," etc. See what follows; then we are most likely to "look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And that prayer of the apostle for his Ephesians speaks as loudly in the case, Eph. 16-18, that God would grant them to be strengthened by the Spirit, etc., to be rooted and grounded in love. And what then? That "you may comprehend with

all saints, the length and breadth of the love of God."

Suppose in health or sickness, living or dying—a man should labor to support, comfort and cheer up his spirit—in the thoughts or meditations of his eternal election and free justification; and suppose that at that very time the Spirit of God, his own conscience, a faithful minister, or an experienced Christian should tell him, that if he is really justified, he will be really sanctified, 2 Thes. 2:13-14. Now, if this man should say, "What do you tell me of sanctification? I don't know whether I am sanctified or not. I look not to sanctification, I mind not holiness, I regard not the fruits of the Spirit." Will not the Holy Spirit, will not an enlightened conscience, will not a faithful minister, will not an experienced Christian reply, "Then certainly you are not elected, you are not justified, for it is a truth as clear as the sun, a truth which will admit of no dispute, namely—that none are eternally elected and freely justified—but those who are sanctified, Romans 8:1, 13, 19, 30. And that those who are not sanctified—are not justified."

Mark, there is a close connection of sanctification with justification in the promises of the covenant. **Sanctification and justification go hand in hand; they come forth like twins out of the womb of free grace**, as you may see in these remarkable Scriptures: Jer. 33:8, "I will *cleanse* them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me, and I will *pardon* all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me." Here you see them both expressed together in the same deed, "I will *cleanse* them from all their iniquity;" there is our *sanctification* promised. "And I will *pardon* all their iniquities;" there is *justification* promised.

Likewise, Micah 7:19, "He will subdue our iniquities, and will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Here you find justification and sanctification again in the promise. "He will *subdue* our iniquities;" this is *sanctification*. "He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;" this is *justification*.

Hebrews 8:10, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts;" there is the promise of sanctification. Verse 12. "And I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins, and their iniquities

will I remember no more;" there is the promise of justification.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" there is our justification promised; "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" there is the promise of sanctification.

Ezekiel 36:25, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you;" there is the promise of sanctification. Verse 29, "I will also save you from all your uncleannesses;" there is the promise of justification.

1 Cor. 6:11, "But you are washed—but you are sanctified—but you are justified." Justification and sanctification are inseparable companions. Distinguished they must be—but divided they can never be. Wherever sin is pardoned—the gift of sanctity is still conferred. It is weakness, it is wickedness, for a man to conclude that he is in an elected and justified estate—when he has nothing, when he has not the least thing to evidence himself to be in a sanctified estate!

Both justification and sanctification have a necessary respect to the salvation of all those who shall go to heaven. He who will go to heaven must be justified; and he who will go to heaven must be sanctified. No man can go to heaven without both. No man can go to heaven unless he is justified: Romans 8:30, "Whom he called, them also he justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." None are justified but such as are called, and none are glorified but such as are justified. And as no man can go to heaven but he who is justified—so no man can go to heaven but he who is sanctified: John 3:5, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Truly, truly, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Verse 5, "Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" Heb. 12:14, "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

By these scriptures, it is evident that there is an absolute necessity both of sanctification and justification in reference to salvation. Now as sanctification and justification are linked together; so the more clear, the more full, the more evident, and the more eminent a man's sanctification

is—the more clear, the more full, the more evident, and the more eminent —will the evidences of his justification be. The greatest evidences of our sanctification carries with them the greatest assurance of our justification and of our salvation. But,

**[15.] The fifteenth proposition is this—When your graces are strongest, and your evidences for heaven are clearest, and your comforts rise highest upon the sight of your graces or gracious evidences—then in a special manner it concerns you to make it your great business and work to act faith afresh, to act faith with a greater strength, upon the free, rich, and glorious grace of God, and upon the Lord Jesus Christ.** It is reported of the crystal, that it has such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a luster and beauty upon them. This is most true of faith. Faith is a grace which gives strength and efficacy to all other graces; it is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearl; it has an influence upon all other graces which are in the soul. Faith is as the spring in the watch—which moves the wheels; not a grace stirs until faith sets it at work. What is said of Solomon's virtuous woman, namely, that she sets all her maidens to work, Proverbs 31:15, 27, is most true of faith: faith sets all the graces in the soul at work. We *love* as we believe, and we *obey* as we believe, and we *hope* as we believe, and we *joy* as we believe, and we *mourn* as we believe, and we *repent* as we believe. All graces keep time and pace with faith, [Heb. 11; Romans 4:3, and 8:24; Zech. 12:10.] etc.

Now when your graces are most shining, and your evidences for heaven are most sparkling, oh then give faith elbow-room, give faith full scope to exercise itself upon the Lord Jesus. Adam's obedience in innocency was not more pleasing and delightful to God, than the exercise of your faith on the Lord Jesus will be at such a time pleasing and delightful to him. You are to look upon all your graces and gracious evidences as your highest encouragement to a lively, cheerful, and resolute acting of faith upon the person of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, 1 John 5:13; Romans 1:17, etc. All a Christian's graces, and all his gracious evidences, should be but as a golden bridge, or as Joseph's waggons, Gen. 45:19, 21, 27, a means to pass his soul over to Christ afresh by a renewed exercise of

faith. When your graces and gracious evidences are most splendid, then be sure that Christ be found lying as a bundle of myrrh between your breasts—and all is well, and will be well, Cant. 1:12.

Dear Christians, when your eyes are fixed upon inherent righteousness, and upon your gracious evidences—then let your hearts be firmly fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his imputed righteousness.

Plutarch tells us of a certain noble woman of Ionia, who showed another woman all the rich jewels and precious stones she had. She answered her back, "All *my* riches and jewels are my husband." This is more applicable to Christ, etc. The precious stone *opalum* is said to have the virtue of all stones—the brightness of the diamond, the purple color of the amethyst, the lovely greenness of the emerald; but what are all these to Christ?

Paul's *eye* was fixed upon his grace, upon his better part: Romans 7:22, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man;" verse 25, "And with my mind I serve the law of God." And yet at the very same time his *heart* was set upon Christ, and taken up with Christ. Verse 26, "I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Though Paul had an eye to his noble part, his better part, his regenerate part—yet at the same time his heart was taken up with the Lord Jesus Christ, as freeing of him from the curse of the law, the dominion of sin, the damnatory power of sin, and as translating of him into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Likewise, in Col. 2:2-3, you have their eyes fixed upon grace, and at the same time their hearts fixed upon Christ. "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Their eyes were upon grace—but their hearts were taken up with Christ.

Likewise, in Philip. 3:8, the apostle had his eye upon the excellent knowledge of Christ. But, verse 9, his heart is taken up with the righteousness of Christ. "That I might be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law—but that which is through faith in

Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Though Paul had his eye upon grace, upon inherent righteousness; yet in the very presence of his grace—his heart was taken up with Christ, and with his imputed righteousness, as is evident in the text. This is your glory, Christians, in the presence and sight of all your graces and gracious evidences—to see the free grace of Christ, and his infinite, spotless, matchless, and glorious righteousness to be your surest, sweetest, highest, and choicest comfort and refuge.

Look! as Rebekah was more pleased with the person of Isaac than she was with his ear-rings, bracelets, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, Gen. 24:30, 52, 64-67: so it befits a Christian, in the presence of his graces and gracious evidences, which are Christ's ear-rings, bracelets, and jewels—to be more taken up with Christ than with them. Christ, and his mediatorial righteousness, should be more in a Christian's eye, and always lie nearer to a Christian's heart, than inherent righteousness. **Grace is a ring of gold—and Christ is the sparkling diamond in that ring.** Now, what is the ring, compared to the sparkling diamond? It is not safe to pore more upon inherent righteousness than upon imputed righteousness. [He who holds not wholly with Christ, does very shamefully neglect Christ.—Gregory Nazian.]

It is not wisdom to have our thoughts and hearts more taken up with our gracious dispositions and gracious actings—than with the *person* of Christ, the *righteousness* of Christ, the *life* of Christ, the *death* of Christ, the *satisfaction* of Christ, etc. Dear Christians—was it Christ—or was it your graces, or your gracious evidences, or your gracious dispositions, or your gracious actings—that trod the wine-press of your Father's wrath, that satisfied divine justice, that pacified divine anger, that bore the curse, that fulfilled the law, that brought in an everlasting righteousness, that discharged your debts, that procured your pardon, that made your peace, and that brought you into a state of favor and friendship with God? If you answer, as you must, "None but Christ! None but Christ!" oh then, let your thoughts and hearts be firstly, mostly, chiefly, and lastly—taken up with the Lord Jesus!

Though inherent grace be a glorious creature—yet it is but a creature. Now, when your thoughts and hearts are more taken up with inherent

grace, than they are with Christ, the spring and fountain of all grace; you make an idol of inherent grace, and reflect dishonor upon the Lord Jesus, John 1:16; Col. 2:2-3. A Christian may lawfully look upon his graces and his gracious evidences—and a Christian ought to be much in blessing and praising of God for his graces and gracious evidences; and a Christian may safely take comfort in his graces and gracious evidences, as they are the fruits of God's eternal and unchangeable love—but still his work should be to live upon Christ, and to lift up Christ above all, Isaiah 38:3, 2 Cor. 1:12. It is Christ, it is his mediatorial righteousness, it is free grace—which a Christian ought to make the chief and only ground and bottom of his hope and comforts.

Though good old Jacob did really rejoice in the chariots and wagons which Joseph had sent to bring him down to Egypt—yet he did more abundantly rejoice in this—that Joseph was alive, and that shortly he would see and enjoy Joseph himself, Gen. 45:26-28. Though a Christian may really rejoice in his graces and gracious evidences—yet above all he ought to rejoice in Christ Jesus, to triumph in Christ Jesus, and to take up in Christ Jesus as in his great all, Gal. 6:14, Philip. 3:3, 2 Cor. 2:14, Col. 3:11.

There is a great aptness and proneness in many (may I not say in most?) gracious Christians, to gaze so much and so long upon their graces, upon their gracious dispositions, upon their gracious evidences, and upon their gracious actings—that too often they neglect the exercise of faith upon Christ, upon the promises. They gaze so much and so long upon what is wrought in them, and done by them—that they forget their grand work, which is immediate closing with Christ, immediate embracing of Christ, immediate relying upon Christ, immediate staying, rolling, and resting upon Christ, for justification and salvation.

Now, from these frequent miscarriages of Christians, some have taken the liberty and boldness very hotly and insistentlly to cry down the total use of all evidences, signs, and marks—the evil of which I have formerly pointed at, and therefore let this touch suffice here.

Grace is excellent, yes, very excellent—but Christ is infinitely more excellent than all your graces, and therefore above all let Christ still have

the pre-eminence, Col. 1:8. Now, though it must be granted that a Christian may lawfully make use of his graces and gracious evidences—in order to his support, comfort, and encouragement—yet it cannot be denied but that the noblest, purest, highest, and most excellent acts and exercises of faith—are when a Christian closes with Christ, embraces Christ, hangs upon Christ, and stays himself upon Christ, and upon free and precious promises—when sense and feeling fails, when joy and comfort fails, and when his gracious evidences for heaven fail. [Cant. 8:5; Job 13:15; Psalm 42:5, 11; Isaiah 50:10; Micah 7:7-10; John 20:27-29.] Oh now—to turn to Christ, and to turn to the breasts of a promise, and to live upon Christ, and to hang upon a promise—is the way of ways to exalt Christ, and to glorify Christ.

There is nothing which pleases Christ, or which delights Christ, or which is such an honor to Christ—as these pure actings of faith are. Signs and evidences are most sweet, comfortable, and pleasing to us; but the pure actings of faith are most eyed and valued by Christ; and therefore many times Christ draws a curtain between him and the soul, and causes a Christian's sun to set at noon, and damps his joy, and mars his peace, and clouds his evidences for heaven—on purpose to train up his children in the pure actings of faith, Cant. 3:1-5, and 5:3-6. It is sad when Christians make such immoderate use of their signs, marks, evidences—as damps and hinders those direct and immediate acts of faith, whereby they should receive Christ, and apply Christ, and rest upon Christ alone for pardon, peace, reconciliation, justification, and salvation. He who pores so long and so much upon his graces or gracious evidences as shall hinder him from the fresh and frequent actings of faith upon Christ—he casts contempt upon Christ. [Christ is an incomparable cordial, he is worthily called the consolation of Israel, Luke 2:25.] Though the sight of a Christian's graces and gracious evidences are very comfortable and delightful to him—yet the sight of Christ should be ten thousand times more comfortable and delightful to him.

O sirs! what are the favorites—compared to the king himself? What are the servants—compared to the Lord they wait on? What are the friends of the bridegroom—compared to the bridegroom himself? What are all the bracelets and jewels—compared to the husband who gives them? No

more are all a Christian's graces or gracious evidences—compared to the Lord Jesus himself. A Christian should say to all his gifts, graces, evidences, and services, "Stand aside—make room for Christ, make room for Christ! Oh, none but Christ! Oh, none to Christ!"

Living by signs is most natural, pleasing and comfortable to us—but living by faith is most honorable to Christ. It is said, "the just shall live by his faith," not by his evidences, Hab. 2:4, Heb. 10:38. When men pride themselves in their evidences; and when men secretly lean upon their evidences instead of leaning upon Christ; and when men found their hopes and comforts upon their signs and evidences—when they should be founding of all their hopes and comforts upon Christ; suddenly Christ withdraws, and the soul is immediately filled with clouds, fears, doubts, darkness; and all a man's graces and gracious evidences are eclipsed, and he can see nothing, nor feel nothing—but deadness, hardness, barrenness, hypocrisy, unbelief, self-love, guilt, etc., which makes him a terror to himself.

Now the design of Christ in all this is to train up his people in a life of faith, and to teach them, in the *lack* of their signs and evidences—how to live *above* their signs and evidences, upon himself, who is their life, their hope, their heaven, their happiness, their all, Col. 3:3-4, 1:27. Now, Christians, the best way to prevent these sore soul distresses, is in the moderate use of your signs and evidences, to live much in the fresh and frequent actings of faith upon the Lord Jesus, and in so doing, you will neither grieve Christ, nor provoke Christ—nor wrong your own precious and immortal souls. But,

**[16.] The sixteenth and last proposition that I shall lay down is this—Whenever any fresh doubts or fears rise in your hearts upon the stirrings of corruptions, or debility of graces, or failing in duties, etc.—then keep close to these two rules:**

**First**, have recourse to any of the former evidences which are laid down in this book; and while you find any of them shining in your souls, nay, though it were but one, never pass any judgment against the happiness and blessedness of your spiritual or eternal estates.

**Secondly**, turn yourselves to such particular promises, and plead such particular promises, and rest and stay your trembling souls upon such particular promises, and cling fast to such particular promises—which have been comforts, cordials, and supports to many weak, doubting, trembling Christians, who have been always afraid to say they had grace, or to say that God was their Father, or Christ their Redeemer, or the Spirit their sanctifier, or heaven their inheritance, etc.

I have read of a woman who was much disquieted in conscience, even to despair, endeavoring to be her own executioner—but was comforted by that blessed promise, Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And I have read of another man, who being ready to die, "Lord," says he, "I challenge you by that promise—Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and so was comforted. And I have read of some others who were comforted with that promise, John 10:29, "None shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." And I have read of another who, having deeply wounded his conscience by subscribing to popish errors, was much comforted by that blessed scripture: 1 Tim. 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." And I have read of Bilney the martyr, who was much comforted under sore distresses by that promise: Isaiah 26:3, "You will keep him in perfect peace" (or as the Hebrew runs, shalom, shalom, peace, peace) whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."

"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." This promise was a cordial to Bernard on his dying bed; he died with this promise in his mouth. And Austin found so much sweetness in the same promise, that he caused it to be written on the wall over against his bed where he lay sick and died. And many have gone to heaven triumphantly by the refreshing and comfort that they have found in these following scriptures: John 6:37, "All who the Father gives me shall come to me; and him who comes to me I will never cast out;" Isaiah 55:1, "Ho everyone who thirsts—come to the waters; and he who has no money—come, buy

and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price;" verse 3, "Incline your ear and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." And so Rev. 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him who hears say, Come; and let him who is athirst come; and whoever wills, let him take the water of life freely."

Likewise, Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backslidings—and love them freely." Likewise, Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." Isaiah 57:18, "I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and comfort him and his mourners."

Oh, these have been comforting promises, and upholding promises, and refreshing promises to many, doubting, drooping souls. [The promises are the *food* of faith, and the *soul* of faith.] It is impossible that such a soul should ever drop into hell—who can cling fast to any of these promises—who can hang upon any of these promises—who can rest and lay the weight of their souls upon Christ in any of these promises. Reliance upon Christ in these precious promises—has ferried many poor, doubting, trembling souls to heaven! **The promise is the golden cabinet—and Christ is the costly jewel which is laid up in it.** The promise is the field—and Christ is the treasure which is hidden in it. All the promises point to Christ—lead to Christ—hang upon Christ. All the promises of God are yes, and amen in Christ," 2 Cor. 1:20. In the new covenant God neither makes any promises, nor fulfils any promises of salvation—but in Christ and through Christ.

Now, when any fears, or darkness, or doubts, or disputes, arise in your souls about your spiritual estates, oh, then—run to Christ in the promise, and plead the promise, and hang upon the breasts of the promise, and let your souls cleave close to the promise; for this is the way of ways to have your evidences cleared, your comforts restored, your peace maintained, your graces strengthened, and your assurance raised and confirmed.

# **The Best Wine Reserved Until Last**

**by Thomas Brooks**

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore I will hope in Him."  
Lamentations 3:24

## **Introduction**

## **A Matchless Portion**

## **What a Portion God is**

## **Grounds of Title Unto God as a Portion**

## **Practical Application**

## **How shall We Know Whether God is Our Portion?**

## **Incitements to See that God is Our Portion**

## **Objections**

## **Concluding Principles**

"I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man who would know me, refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul, I cried unto you, O Lord, I said you are my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living"

Psalm 142:4-5.

## EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To all the merchants and tradesmen of England, especially these of the city of London, with all other sorts and ranks of people that either have or would have God for their portion; may grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied.

Gentlemen—The wisest prince that ever sat upon a throne has told us, that "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," that is, rightly ordered, placed, and circumstanced. Such a word is, of all words, the most excellent, the most prevalent, most precious, most sweet, most desirable, and most delectable, and the most pleasant word that can be spoken. O sirs! to time a word, to speak a word to purpose, is the project of this book. Though all truths are glorious, yet there is a double glory upon *seasonable truths*; and, therefore, I have made it my great business in this treatise to hold forth as seasonable a truth, and as weighty a truth, and as comfortable and encouraging a truth, as any I know in all the book of God. The mother of King Cyrus willed, that the words of those who spoke unto her son should be in silk, but certainly seasonable words are always better than silken words.

Every prudent farmer observes his fittest season to sow his seeds, and therefore some he sows in the autumn and fall of the leaf; and some in the spring and renewing of the year; some he sows in a dry season, and some he sows in a wet; some he sows in a moist clay, and some he sows in a sandy dry ground. And so all spiritual farmers must wisely observe their fittest seasons for the sowing of that immortal seed that God has put into their hands; and such a thing as this is I have had in my eye—but whether I have hit the mark or missed it, let the Christian reader judge.

Augustine, speaking of the glory of heaven says, "That the good things of eternal life are so many that they exceed number, so great that they exceed measure, and so precious that they are above all estimation," etc. The same may I say concerning the saint's present portion, for certainly the good things that are in their portion—in their God—are so many, that they exceed number, so great that they exceed measure, and so precious

that they are above all estimation.

The same author in one of his epistles has this remarkable relation, namely, that the same day wherein Jerome died, he was in his study, and had got pen, ink, and paper to write something of the glory of heaven to Jerome, and suddenly Augustine saw a light breaking into his study, and smelled also a very sweet smell, and this voice he thought he heard—"O Augustine, what are you doing? do think to put the sea into a little vessel? When the heavens shall cease from their continual motion—only then shall you be able to understand what the glory of heaven is, and not before!" Certainly, the glory of heaven is beyond all conception and all expression, and so is that portion that is a little hinted at in the following discourse. And, indeed, a full description of that God, who is the believer's portion, is a work too high for an Aaron when standing upon mount Hor; or for a Moses, when standing on the top of Nebo after a Pisgah prospect. Yes, it is a work too high and too hard for all those blessed seraphim that are still a-crying before the throne of God, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty." [Num 20:28; Deut 32:49; Deut 34:1; Isa 6:3] No finite being, though ever so glorious, can ever be able fully to comprehend an infinite being.

In Isaiah 6:2, we read that each seraphim had six wings, and that with two he covered the face of God, with two his feet, and with two he flew; intimating, as one well observes upon the place, that with two they covered *his* face, the face of God, not their own face; and with two they covered *his* feet, not their own feet. They covered his face, his beginning being unknown; they covered his feet, his end being incomprehensible; only the middle are to be seen, the things which are, whereby there may be some glimmering knowledge made out what God is.

The wise man hit it, when he said, "That which is afar off and exceeding deep—who can find it out?" Eccles 7:24. Who can find out what God is? The knowledge of him is so far off, that he whose arm is able to break even a bow of steel is not able to reach it; so far off, that he who is able to make his nest with the eagle is not able to fly unto it; and so exceeding deep, that he who could follow the leviathan could not fathom it; that he who could venture to the center of the earth, is not able to find it out! Who then is able to reach it? In a word, so far off and so deep too, that

"the depth says, It is not in me; and the sea says, It is not in me." It is such a deep to men and angels as far exceeds the capacity of both. Augustine speaking to that question, 'What God is?' gives this answer—"Surely such a one as he, who, when he is spoken of, cannot be spoken of; who, when he is considered, cannot be considered of; who, when he is compared to anything, cannot be compared; and when he is defined, grows greater by defining of him. If that great apostle—who learned his divinity among the angels, yes, to whom the Holy Spirit was an immediate tutor, did know but "in part," then certainly those who are most acute and judicious in divine knowledge may very well conclude—that they know but part of that part that was known to him." As for my own part, I dare pretend but to a spark of that knowledge that others have attained to, and yet who can tell but that God may turn this spark into such a flame as may warm the hearts of many of his dear and precious ones. Much is done many times by a spark.

O sirs! catch not at the present profits, pleasures, preferments, and honors of this world—but "lay up a good foundation for the time to come," provide for eternity, make sure your interest and propriety in God. It was an excellent saying of Lewis, emperor of Germany—"Such goods," said he, "are worth getting and owning, as will not sink or wash away if a shipwreck happens." How many of you have lost your all by shipwrecks! and how has divine providence by your multiplied crosses and losses taught you—that the good things and the great things of this world cannot be made sure! How many of you have had rich inheritances left you by your fathers, besides the great portions that you have had with your wives, and the vast estates that you have gained by trading; but what is become of all? Is not all buried in the deep, or in the grave of oblivion? Oh the fickleness and the grand impostury of this world! Oh the flux and reflux of riches, greatness, honors, and preferments! How many men have we seen shining in their worldly pomp and glory like stars in the skies—who are now vanished into smoke or comets! How has the moon of many great men's riches and honors been eclipsed at the full, and the sun of their pomp gone down at noon!

"It was," says the historian Justinian, "a wonderful precedent of vanity, and variety of human condition to see mighty Xerxes to flee away in a

small vessel, who but a little before needed sea-room for his navy." The Dutch, to express the world's vanity and uncertainty, have very wittily pictured a man with a full blown balloon on his shoulders, and another standing by pricking the balloon with a pin, with this motto—How soon is all blown away! I am not willing to make the porch too wide, else I might have given you famous instances of the vanity and uncertainty of all worldly wealth, pomp, and glory, from the Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, and Roman kingdoms, whose glory now lies all in the dust. By all this, it is most evident that earthly portions cannot be made sure, they "make themselves wings, and they fly away," Prov 23:5.

Oh! but God is a portion that may be made sure. In the time of the Marian persecution, there was a woman, who, being convened before bloody Bonner, then bishop of London, upon the trial of religion, he threatened her that he would take away her husband from her—says she, 'Christ is my husband!' I will take away your child; 'Christ,' says she, 'is better to me than ten sons!' I will strip you, says he, of all your outward comforts; 'but Christ is mine,' says she, 'and you cannot strip me of him.' A Christian may be stripped of anything but his God; he may be stripped of his estate, his friends, his relations, his liberty, his life—but he can never be stripped of his God. As God is a portion that none can give to a Christian but God himself; so God is a portion that none can take from a Christian but God himself; and, therefore, as ever you would have a sure portion, an abiding portion, a lasting portion, yes, an everlasting portion, make sure of God for your portion.

O Sirs! that you would judge that only worth much now, which will be found of much worth at last—when you shall lie upon a dying bed, and stand before a judgment-seat. Oh that men would prize and value all earthly portions now, as they will value them when they come to die, and when their souls shall sit upon their trembling lips, and when there shall be but a short step between them and eternity. Oh, at what a poor rate, at what a low rate do men then value their earthly portions! Certainly, it will be their very great wisdom to value their earthly portions now—as they would value them then. And oh that men would value this glorious, this matchless portion that is held forth in this treatise now, as they will value it and prize it when they come to die, and when they come to launch out

into the ocean of eternity!

I have read of a stationer, who, being at a fair, hung out several pictures of famous men, among which he had also the picture of Christ. Upon which divers men bought according to their several likings—the soldier buys his Caesar, the lawyer his Justinian, the physician his Galen, the philosopher his Aristotle, the poet his Virgil, the orator his Cicero, and the divine his Augustine. But all this while the picture of Christ hung by as a thing of no value, until a poor man, who had no more money than would purchase that, bought it, saying, Now every man has taken away his God, let me have mine too! O Sirs! it would make any gracious, any serious, any ingenious, any conscientious heart to bleed, to see at what a high rate all sorts and ranks of men do value earthly portions, which at best are but counterfeit pictures, when this glorious portion which is here treated of, hangs by as a thing of no value, of no price!

Most men are mad upon the world, and so they may have much of that for their portion, they care not whether ever they have God for their portion or not. Give them but a palace in Paris, and then with that French duke, they care not for a place in paradise; give them but a mess of pottage, and let who will take the birthright; give them but manna in a wilderness, and let who will take the land of Canaan; give them but ground which is pleasant and rich, and then with the Reubenites they will gladly take up their rest on this side the Holy Land; give them but their bags full, and their barns full, and then with the rich fool in the Gospel, they can think of nothing but of taking their ease, and of eating and drinking, and making merry, Luke 12:16-22. So brutish and foolish are they in their understandings, as if their precious and immortal souls were good for nothing but as salt to keep their bodies from rotting and stinking.

Oh that these men would seriously consider, that as a cup of pleasant wine, offered to a condemned man in the way to his execution, and as the feast of him who sat under a naked sword, hanging perpendicularly over his head by a slender thread, and as Adam's forbidden fruit, seconded by a flaming sword, and as Belshazzar's dainties, overlooked by an handwriting against the wall; such and only such are all earthly portions to those who have not God for their portion.

Well, gentlemen, remember this, **there is no true happiness to be found in any earthly portions.** Solomon, having made a critical inquiry after the excellency of all creature comforts, gives this in as the ultimate extraction from them all, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." if you should go to all the creatures round, they will tell you that happiness is not in them. If you should go to the earth, the earth will tell you that happiness grows not in the furrows of the field. If you go to the sea, the sea will tell you that happiness is not in the treasures of the deep. If you go to the beasts of the field, or to the birds of the air, they will tell you that happiness is not to be found on them. If you go to your bags, or heaps of gold and silver, they will tell you that happiness is not to be found in them. If you go to crowns and scepters, they will tell you that happiness is too precious and too glorious a gem to be found in them.

As it is not the great cage which makes the bird sing, so it is not the great estate which makes the happy life, nor the great earthly portion which makes the happy soul. There is no true comfort nor no true happiness to be drawn out of the standing pools of outward sufficiencies. All true comfort and happiness is only to be found in having of an all-sufficient God for your portion. Psalm 144:15, "Happy is that people that is in such a case, yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." And therefore, as ever you would be happy in both worlds, it very highly concerns you to get a saving interest in God, and to be restless in your own souls until you come to enjoy God for your portion.

A man who has God for his portion is a paragon; he is the rarest and the happiest man in the world; he is like the morning star in the midst of the clouds; he is like the moon when it is full; he is like the flower of the roses in the spring of the year; he is like the lilies by the springs of waters; he is like the branches of frankincense in the time of summer; he is like a vessel of gold that is set about with all manner of precious stones.

Nothing can make that man miserable, who has God for his portion; nor nothing can make that man happy, who lacks God for his portion. The more rich—the more wretched; the more great—the more graceless; the more honorable—the more miserable that man will be, who has not God for his portion. The Sodomites were very wealthy, and who more vile and

wicked than they? The Egyptians and Babylonians were very rich, great, and potent in the world, and what greater oppressors and persecutors of the people of God than these? Oh the slavery, the captivity, and the woeful misery of the people of God, under those cruel tyrants! Have not the Nimrods, the Nebuchadnezzars, the Belshazzars, the Alexanders, and the Caesars, etc., been commonly the lords of the world; and who so abominably wicked as these? No men for wickedness have been able to match them or come near them.

It has been long since observed, that Daniel sets forth the several monarchies of the world by sundry sorts of cruel beasts, to show that as they were gotten by beastly cruelty, so they were supported and maintained by brutish sensuality, craft, and tyranny.

Well, Sirs! you may be the lords of this world, and yet you will certainly be miserable in another world, except you get God for your portion. The top of man's happiness in this world lies in his having of God for his portion. He who has God for his portion enjoys all; and he who lacks a saving interest and propriety in God enjoys nothing at all.

Gentlemen, I have read of an heathen who, seeing a sudden shipwreck of all his wealth, said, Well, fortune, I see now that you would have me to be a philosopher. Oh that you would say under all your heavy losses and crosses, Well! we now see that God would have us "lay up treasure in heaven," Matt 6:19-20; we now see that God would have us look after a better portion than any this world affords; we now see that it highly concerns us to secure our interest and property in God; we now see that to enjoy God for our portion is the one thing necessary. Have not many of you said, nay sworn, that if you might but see and enjoy the delight of your eyes—that then you would have a sweeping trade, and abound in all plenty and prosperity, and grow rich and great and glorious in the world, and be eased of everything that did but look like a burden, etc. If it be indeed thus with you, why do you so complain, murmur, and repine? and why do many of you walk up and down the Exchange and streets with tears in your eyes, and with heaviness in your hearts, and with cracked credits, and threadbare coats, and empty purses? and why are so many of you broke, and so many prisoners, and so many hide, and so many fled? But if it be otherwise, and that you are sensible that you have put a cheat

upon yourselves, I say not upon others, and that as you have been self-flatterers, so you have been self-deceivers, the more highly it concerns you to do yourselves, your souls that right, as to make sure of God for your portion. For what else can make up those woeful disappointments under which you are fallen?

It is a sad sight to see all the arrows that men shoot to fall upon their own heads; or to see them twist a rope to hang themselves; or to see men dig a pit for others and to fall into it themselves. And it is but justice that men should bake as they brew, and that those who brew mischief should have the first and largest draught of it themselves. Now the best way to prevent so sad a sight and so great a mischief, is to get God for your portion—for when once God comes to be a man's portion, then "all things shall work together for his good," Rom 8:28, and then God will preserve him from such hurtful and mischievous actings.

The whole world is a great bedlam, and multitudes there are that think madly, and that design madly, and that talk madly, and that act madly, and that walk madly. Now as you would not be found in the number of those bedlams, it highly concerns you to get God for your portion, so that you may be filled with that wisdom that may preserve you from the folly and madness of this mad world.

Gentlemen, the following sermons I preached in 1660, and God blessed them then to those Christians that attended on my ministry, and I hope he will bless them also to the internal and eternal welfare of your souls, to whom they are now dedicated. They are much enlarged; the profit will be yours, the labor has been mine. I judge them very seasonable and suitable to present dispensations, else they had not seen the light at this time. Curiosity is the spiritual adultery of the soul; curiosity is that green-sickness of the soul, whereby it longs for novelties, and loathes sound and wholesome truths; it is the epidemic distemper of this age and hour.

And therefore, if any of you are troubled with this itch of curiosity, and love to be wise above what is written, and delight to scan the choice mysteries of religion by carnal reason, and affect elegant expressions and seraphic notions, and the flowers of rhetoric, more than sound and wholesome truths, then you may ease yourselves, if you please, of the

trouble of reading this following treatise. Only remember this, that the prudent farmer looks more and delights more in the ripeness and soundness and goodness of the corn that is in his field, than he does at the beauty of the cockle; and remember, that no man can live more miserably than he who lives altogether upon sweets; and he who looks more at the handsomeness than he does at the wholesomeness of the dishes of food which are set before him, may well pass for a fool.

Well, gentlemen, for a close, remember this, that as Noah was drunk with his own wine, and as Goliath was beheaded by his own sword, and as the rose is destroyed by the canker that it breeds in itself, and as Agrippina was killed by Nero, to whom she gave breath; so if ever you are eternally destroyed, you will be destroyed by yourselves; if ever you are undone, you will be undone by yourselves; if ever you are scourged to death, it will be by rods of your own making; and if ever the bitter cup of damnation be put into your hands, it will be found to be of your own preparing, mingling, and embittering.

Behold, I have set life and death, heaven and hell, glory and misery, before you in this treatise; and therefore, if you will needs choose death rather than life, hell rather than heaven, misery rather than glory, what can be more just—than that you should perish to all eternity? If you will not have God for your portion, you shall be sure to have His wrath for your portion, and hell for your portion!

Well, sirs! remember this at last—Every man shall only thank his own folly for his own bane, his own sin for his own everlasting shame, his own iniquity for his own endless misery!

I have now no more to do but to improve all the interest that I have in heaven, that this treatise may be blessed to all your souls, and that you all experience what it is to have God for your portion; for that will be my joy as well as yours, and my crown as well as yours, and my glorying as well as yours, in the great day of our Lord Jesus; and so "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified," Acts 20:32; and rest, gentlemen, your souls' servant,

Thomas Brooks.

## A MATCHLESS PORTION

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore  
I will hope in Him." Lamentations 3:24.

Certainly if Ennius could pick out gold out of a dunghill, I may, by divine assistance, much better pick out golden matter out of such a golden mine as my text is—to enrich the souls of men. The best of painters Apelles, to draw an exquisite Venus, had set before him an hundred choice and selected beauties, to take from one an eye, another a lip, a third a smile, a fourth an hand, and from each of them that special lineament in which the most excelled; but I have no need of any other scripture to be set before me to draw forth the excellency of the saints' portion, than that which I have now pitched upon; for the beauty, excellency, and glory of a hundred choice scriptures are epitomized in this one!

The Jewish doctors and other writers differ about the time of Jeremiah's penning this book of the Lamentations; but to be ignorant of the circumstance of time when this book was made, is such a crime as I suppose will not be charged upon any man's account in the great day of our Lord Jesus.

Doubtless this book of the Lamentations was composed by Jeremiah in the time of the Babylonian captivity. In this book the prophet sadly laments and bewails the grievous calamities and miseries that had befallen the Jews, namely—the ruin of their state, the devastation of their land, the destruction of their glorious city and temple, which was the great wonder of the world, the profanation of all his holy things, the contemptible and deplorable condition of all sorts, ranks, and degrees of men. And then he complains of *their sins as the procuring causes of all those calamities that God in his righteousness had inflicted upon them*. He exhorts them also to patience under the mighty hand of God, and stirs them up to repent and reform, as they would have their sins pardoned, judgments removed, divine wrath pacified, their insulting enemies suppressed, and former acts and grants of favor and grace restored to them.

But to come to the words of my text, "*The LORD* is my portion, says my

soul; therefore I will hope in Him." Lamentations 3:24

*The LORD* Jehovah, from havah, he was. This name Jehovah is the most proper name of God, and it is never attributed to any but to God.

1. First, Jehovah sets out God's **eternity**, in that it contains all times, future, present, and past.
2. Secondly, It sets out also God's **self-existence**, coming from havah, to be.
3. Thirdly, When either some special mercy is promised, or some extraordinary judgment is threatened, then the name of Jehovah is commonly annexed; to show that that God whose being is from himself, and who gives a being to all his creatures both on heaven and on earth—will certainly give a being to his promises and threatenings, and not fail to accomplish the words that are gone out of his mouth.
4. Fourthly, This name Jehovah consists only of quiescent letters, that is letters of rest, as the Hebrews call them, to show that there is no rest until we come to Jehovah, and that in him we may safely and securely rest, as the dove did in Noah's ark.

"Is my portion." the Hebrew word signifies to divide. He alludes, as I take it, to the dividing of the land of Canaan among the Israelites by lot. "The Lord," says he, "is my portion," my part, my lot; and with this portion I rest fully satisfied, as the Israelites were to do with their parts and portions in that pleasant land. It is true, says Jeremiah, in the name of the church, I am thus and thus afflicted, and sorely distressed on all hands; but yet "the Lord is my portion," and that supports and bears up my spirits from fainting and sinking in this evil day.

"Says my soul." The Hebrew word has nine various senses or significations in the Scripture. But let this suffice, that by **soul** here in the text we are to understand the heart, the mind, the spirit, and the understanding of a man. Well, says the prophet, though I am in a sea of sorrow, and in a gulf of misery, yet my heart tells me that "the Lord is my portion;" my mind tells me that "the Lord is my portion;" my spirit tells

me that "the Lord is my portion;" and my understanding tells me that "the Lord is my portion;" and therefore I will bear up bravely in the face of all calamities and miseries.

"Therefore will I hope in him." The Hebrew word that is here rendered hope, signifies both hoping, expecting, and trusting; also it signifies a patient waiting upon the Lord. [Gen 8:10; Isaiah 42:4; Psalm 31:25] The prophet Jeremiah had not only a witness above him—but also a witness within him, that the Lord was his portion; and therefore he resolves firmly to hope in the Lord, and sweetly to trust on the Lord, and quietly and patiently to wait upon the Lord, until God should turn his storm into a calm, and his sad winter into a blessed summer.

In my text there are three things observable:

First, An assertion or proposition in those words, "The Lord is my portion."

Secondly, A proof of it in those words, "says my soul."

Thirdly, The use or inference from the premises in those words, "Therefore will I hope in him."

The words being thus opened, the proposition that I intend to insist upon is this, namely:

**Doctrine. That the Lord is the saints' portion.**

I shall call in a few scriptures to witness to the truth of this proposition, and then I shall further open it to you. Psalm 16:5, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup—you maintain my lot." Psalm 73:26, "My flesh and my heart may fail—but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." Psalm 119:57, "You are my portion, O Lord—I have said that I would keep your words." Jer 10:16, "He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for he is the Maker of all things, including Israel, the tribe of his inheritance—the Lord Almighty is his name."

Now for the further opening and clearing up of this great and glorious,

this sweet and blessed truth, I shall endeavor to show you,

First, What a portion the Lord is to his saints, to his gracious ones.

Secondly, The reasons or grounds whereupon the saints have laid claim to God as their portion.

### WHAT A PORTION GOD IS

Now the excellency of this portion I shall show you by an induction of particulars, thus:

(1.) **God is a PRESENT portion.** He is a portion in hand, he is a portion in possession. All the scriptures that are cited to prove the doctrine, evidence this to be a truth, Psalm 48:14; Isaiah 25:9. And so does that Psalm 46:1, "God is *a very present help* in trouble." The Hebrew word is in the plural number *troubles*, that is, God is a present help in many troubles, in great troubles, and in continued troubles. It signifies the extremity of affliction and trouble. When the people of God are in their greatest extremity, then God will be a present help, a present portion to them. "But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says—Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Isaiah 43:1-3.

God will be a present help, a present relief, a present support, a present comfort, a present portion to his people—in all those great and various trials that they may be exercised under. Psalm 142:5, "I cried unto you, O Lord—I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." God is a portion in present possession, and not a portion only in

reversion. The psalmist does not say, You *may* be my portion in another world—but "You are my portion in the land of the living;" nor he does not say, You *will* be my portion in another world—but "You are my portion in the land of the living." Look, as Elkanah gave Hannah a worthy portion in hand, 1 Sam 1:5, so God gives himself to his saints as a worthy portion in hand. Many men wait, and wait long, for their earthly portions before they enjoy them; yes, their patience is oftentimes wore so threadbare in waiting, that they wish their parents in Abraham's bosom; yes, and sometimes in a worse place, that so they may inherit their honors, lordships, lands, treasures, etc. Look, as a bird in the hand is worth two, yes, ten, in the bush—so a portion in possession is worth two, yes, ten, in reversion. Now, God is a portion in present possession, and that speaks out the excellency of the saints' portion. As he in Plutarch said of the Scythians, that although they had no music nor vines among them, yet, as a better thing, they had gods; so I may say, though the saints have not this, nor that, nor the other earthly portion among them, yet, as a better thing—they have God for their present portion; and what can they desire more? But,

(2.) As God is a present portion, so **God is an IMMENSE portion**, he is a vast large portion, he is the greatest portion of all portions. 1 Tim 6:15, "The blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." These words are a stately and lofty description of the greatness of God. The apostle heaps up many words together, to show that in greatness God excels all. Isaiah 40:15-17, "Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing." Not only one nation—but many nations; yes, not only many nations—but all nations, in comparison of God, are but as the drop of a bucket; and what is lesser than a drop? and as the small dust of a balance; and what is of lighter weight and lesser worth than the small dust or powder of the balance that hangs on the scale, and yet never alters the weight? yes, they are nothing, they are less than nothing. And though Lebanon was a very great spacious forest, and had abundance of animals in it, yet God was a God of that infinite greatness, that though all the

animals harboring in that stately forest should be slain, and all the wood growing on it cut down to burn them with it—all would not make up a sacrifice any ways answerable or proportionable to his greatness with whom they had to do.

And so in that Psalm 147:5, "Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite," or as the Hebrew has it, "of his understanding there is no number." Such is his greatness, that he knows not only all kinds and sorts of things—but even all particulars, though they exceed all number. Psalm 145:3, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable," or as the Hebrew has it, "of his greatness there is no search." God is infinitely above all names, all notions, all conceptions, all expressions, and all parallels! Psalm 150:2, "Praise him for his mighty acts, praise him according to his excellent greatness," or greatness of greatness, or abundance of greatness, or according to the multitude of his greatness, as the Hebrew and Greek carries it; and so in that Deut 10:17, "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and awesome, who regards not people, nor takes reward." God is the original cause of all greatness. All that greatness that is in any created beings, whether they are angels or men, is from God; all their greatness is but a beam of his sun, a drop out of his sea, a mite out of his treasury. God is a God of that infinite greatness, that he fills heaven and earth with his presence; he is everywhere, and yet circumscribed to no place; he is in all things, and outside all things, and above all things, and this speaks out his immensity, Psalm 139.

**Job** had a very large portion, before God made a breach upon him—"He had seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred donkeys, and a very great household," Job 1:3; but at last God gives him twice as much as he had at first, "for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys," Job 42:12. Cattle are only instanced, because the wealth of that country consisted especially in cattle; but yet, doubtless, Job had a great many other good things, as goods, lands, possessions, and stately habitations; but what is all this to a saint's portion? **Certainly, had not Job had God for his portion, he had been but a rich fool, a golden beast,** notwithstanding all the great

things that God had heaped upon him.

And so **Ahasuerus** had a very large portion, "he reigned from India unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces," Esther 1:1-2; but what were all his provinces but as so many handfuls of dust, in comparison of the saints' portion? The whole Turkish empire, says Luther, is but a crust that God throws to a dog. Had a man all the world for his portion, it would be but a poor pittance. **Nebuchadnezzar** had a very great portion. Dan 5:18-19, "O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. " And so in that Jer 27:5-8, "With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please. Now I will hand all your countries over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him. All nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him." The portion that here God gives to Nebuchadnezzar is an amazingly large portion; and yet all these nations that God gave to him were but as so many molehills, or as so many birds' nests, compared with a saint's portion!

All nations are but as a drop of a bucket, that may in a moment be wiped off with a finger, in comparison of God, nay, they are all nothing; but that word is too high, for they are less than nothing. **Had a man as many worlds at his command as there be men on earth, or angels in heaven, yet they would be but as so many drops, or as so many atoms—compared to a saint's portion!**

When Alcibiades was proudly boasting of his spacious lands, Socrates wittily rebukes his pride by bringing him a map of the world, and wishing him to show him where his lands did lie; his lands would hardly amount to more than the prick of a pin. England, Scotland, and Ireland are but three little spots compared to the vast continents which are in other parts of the world; and what then is your palace, your lordships, your manors,

your farm, your house, your cottage—but a little speck—but a prick of a pin—compared to God, who is so great, so vast a portion!

Oh, sirs! had you the understanding of all the angels in heaven, and the tongues of all the men on earth, yet you would not be able to conceive, express, or set forth the greatness and largeness of a saint's portion. Can you count the stars of heaven, or number the sands of the sea, or stop the sun in his course, or raise the dead, or make a new world? Then, and not until then, will you be able to declare what a great, what an immense portion God is. If "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the great things that God has laid up in the gospel" (for so that 1 Cor 2:9 is to be understood), oh how much less, then, are they able to declare the great things that God has laid up for his people in another world! But,

(3.) Thirdly, As God is an immense portion, a large portion, so **God is an ALL-SUFFICIENT portion.** Gen 17:1, "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God—walk before me, and be perfect. I am God Almighty," or as some carry the words, "I am God all-sufficient, or self-sufficient." God has self-sufficiency and all-sufficiency in himself. Some derive the word Shaddai, that is here rendered almighty or all-sufficient, because God feeds his children with sufficiency of all good things, as the tender mother does the sucking child.

Gen 15:1, "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram—I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward;" I will be your shield to defend you from all kind of mischief and miseries, and I will be your exceeding great reward to supply you with all necessary and desirable mercies; and what can a saint desire more?

Psalm 84:11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory—and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly." The **sun**, which among all inanimate creatures is the most excellent, notes all manner of excellency, provision, and prosperity; and the **shield**, which among all artificial creatures is the chief, notes all manner of protection whatever. Under the name of **grace**, all spiritual

good is wrapped up; and under the name of **glory**, all eternal good is wrapped up; and under the last clause, "no good thing will he withhold," is wrapped up all temporal good—all put together speaks out God to be an all-sufficient portion.

Before the world was made, before angels or men had a being, God was as blessed and as glorious in himself as now he is. God is such an all-sufficient and such an excellent being, that nothing can be added to him to make him more excellent. Man in his best estate is so great a piece of vanity, Psalm 39:5, that he stands in need of a thousand thousand things; he needs the air to breathe in, the earth to bear him, and fire to warm him, and clothes to cover him, and a house to shelter him, and food to nourish him, and a bed to ease him, and friends to comfort him, etc. But this is the excellency of God, that he has all excellencies in himself, and stands in need of nothing. Were there as many worlds as there are men in the world, and were all those worlds full of blessed saints, yes, were there as many heavens as there are stars in heaven, and were all those heavens full of glorious angels, yet all these saints and angels together could not add the least to God; for what can drops taken out of the sea add unto the sea? what can finite creatures add to an infinite being?

Though all the men in the world should praise the sun, and say, The sun is a glorious creature, yet all this would add nothing to the light and glory of the sun; so, though all the saints and angels shall be blessing, and praising, and admiring, and worshiping of God to all eternity, yet they shall never be able to add anything to God, who is blessed forever.

O Christians! God is an all-sufficient portion—his power is all-sufficient to protect you; his wisdom is all-sufficient to direct you; his mercy is all-sufficient to pardon you; his goodness is all-sufficient to provide for you; his word is all-sufficient to support you and strengthen you; and his grace is all-sufficient to adorn you and enrich you; and his Spirit is all-sufficient to lead you and comfort you! What can you desire more? O sirs! God has within himself all the good of angels, of men, and universal nature; he has all glory, all dignity, all riches, all treasures, all pleasures, all delights, all comforts, all contentments, all joys, all beatitudes in himself. All the scattered excellencies and perfections that are in the creatures—are eminently, transcendently, and perfectly in him.

Look, as the worth and value of many pieces of silver are contracted in one piece of gold, so all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth are epitomized in God, according to that old saying, all good is in the chief good. **God is one infinite perfection in himself**—which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures. All the good, the excellency, the beauty and glory, that is in all created beings, are but parts of that whole that is in God; and all the good that is in them is borrowed and derived from God, who is the first cause, and the universal cause, of all that good that is in angels or men. God is a sufficient portion to secure your souls, and to supply all your wants, and to satisfy all your desires, and to answer all your expectations, and to suppress all your enemies, and, after all, to bring you to glory! What can you desire more?

But now all earthly portions are insufficient portions; they can neither prevent afflictions, nor support the soul under afflictions, nor mitigate afflictions, nor yet deliver a man from afflictions; they can neither arm the soul against temptations, nor comfort the soul under temptations, nor lead the soul out of temptations. All the creatures in the world are but as so many ciphers without God; when God frowns, all the creatures in the world are not sufficient to cheer the soul; when God withdraws, all the creatures in the world are not sufficient to sustain the soul; when God clouds his face, all the creature in the world are not sufficient to make it *sunshine* with the soul, etc. There is not enough in the whole creation to content, quiet, or satisfy one immortal soul. He who has most of the

world would have more, and he who has least of the world has enough, if his soul can but groundedly say—"The Lord is my portion." But,

(4.) Fourthly, As the Lord is an all-sufficient portion, so **the Lord is a most ABSOLUTE, NEEDFUL, and NECESSARY portion.** The lack of an earthly portion may trouble me—but the lack of God for my portion will damn me. It is not absolutely necessary that I should have a portion in gold, or silver, or jewels, or goods, or lands; but it is absolutely necessary that I should have God for my portion, I may have union and communion with God, though, with the apostles, I have neither gold nor silver in my purse, Acts 3:6; I may be holy and happy, though, with Lazarus, Luke 16:20-21, I have never a rag to hang on my back, nor never a dry crust to put into my belly; I may go to heaven at last, and I may be glorious in another world, though, with Job, I should be stripped of all my worldly glory, and set upon a ash-heap in this world, Job 1, etc. But I can never be happy here, nor blessed hereafter, except God is my portion. Though I could truly say that all the world were mine, yet if I could not truly say that the Lord is my portion, I should be but miserable under all my worldly enjoyments. To have God for my portion is absolutely necessary, for without it I am forever and ever undone.

"At that time you were without Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world." Eph 2:12. In this verse you have several withouts, and it is very observable that they that were without God in the world, they were without Christ, without the church, without the covenant, without the promise, and without hope in the world; and therefore, such people must needs be in a most sad and deplorable condition!

[1.] First, In relation to the soul, and in relation to salvation, God is the most absolute necessary portion. If God is not my portion, my soul can never enjoy communion with him in this world; if God is not my portion, my soul can never be saved by him in the other world. But,

[2.] Secondly, When sinners are under terrors and horrors of conscience, when their consciences are awakened and convinced of the vileness of their natures, of the unspeakable evil that is in sin, yes, in the least sin, and of their lost, undone, and miserable estate out of Christ, Oh then!

what would they not give to have God for their portion? Oh, then they would give all the gold and silver they have in the world to have God for their portion; oh, then they would give, Mic 6:6-7, "thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil; yes, they would give their firstborn, they would give the very fruit of their bodies," that they might have God to be the portion of their souls! Oh, then they would say, as Mephibosheth said unto the king, "Let Ziba take all, forasmuch as my Lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." 2 Sam 19:29-30. Under distress of conscience, poor sinners will cry out, Oh! let who will—take all our honors, and all our manors, and all our treasures, and all our stores, and all our lands, and all our lordships, and all our bags—so we may have God for our portion. Oh! let us but have God for our portion, and we care not a straw who takes all. Now, what does this speak out—but that, of all portions, God is the most absolute necessary portion? But,

[3.] Thirdly, Upon a dying bed, an awakened sinner sets the highest price, value, and esteem upon such as have God for their portion. Now he esteems a saint in rags, who has God for his portion, above a wicked emperor in his royal robes, who has only the world for his portion. What though wicked men, when they are in the height of their worldly prosperity, felicity, and glory, do slight the saints, and revile and scorn the saints, and despise and undervalue the saints, Lam 2:14-15; Zeph 2:8-10, etc.; yet, when death knocks at their doors, and when their consciences are startled, and when hell fire flashes in their faces, and when the worm within begins to gnaw, oh now, if all the world were a lump of gold, and in their hands to dispose of, they would give it all, so they might have that honor and happiness to change conditions with those who have God for their portion! Num 23:10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Though men who have their portion in this life do not love to live the life of the righteous, yet, when they come to die, they are often desirous that they might die the death of the righteous. And this many hundred ministers and Christians can witness from their own experience. Lazarus having God for his portion, when he died he went to heaven without a rag on his back, or a penny in his purse; whereas Dives, who did not have

God for his portion when he died, went tumbling down to hell in all his riches, bravery, and glory. Oh! it is infinitely better to go to heaven a beggar, than to go to hell an emperor!

This the sinner understands when his conscience comes to be enlightened upon a dying bed, and therefore he cries out, Oh send for such a minister, and send for such and such a Christian, and let them pray with me, and counsel me, and, if it be possible, give out some drops of comfort to me. Oh that I had never derided nor reviled them! Oh that I had never opposed and persecuted them! Oh that I had lived at such a rate of holiness and exactness as they have done! Oh that I had walked with God as they have walked! Oh that I had laid out my time, my strength, my treasure, my parts, my all for God, as they have done! Oh that my estate was as good, as safe, and as happy as theirs is! Oh that I could as truly say that the Lord is my portion, as they can say that the Lord is their portion! And what does all this speak out—but that high esteem and value that they set upon those who have God for their portion? So that upon this threefold account, we may safely conclude that God is a most absolute, needful, and necessary portion. But,

(5.) Fifthly, As the Lord is a most absolute, needful, and necessary portion, so **the Lord is a PURE and UNMIXED portion**. God is an unmixed good, he has nothing in him but goodness; he is an ocean of sweetness, without one drop of bitterness; he is a perfect beauty, without the least spot or shadow of deformity, Deut 32:4; Hab 1:13. All other portions are a bitter-sweet; but God is a rose without prickles. He is a good, in which there is not the least evil. 1 John 1:5, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." There are no mixtures in God. God is a most clear, bright, shining light, yes, he is all light, and in him is no darkness at all. God is all light and all love, all sweetness and all goodness, all kindness and all graciousness, and there is no impurity, no unloveliness, no bitterness, nor any darkness at all in God. The moon when it shines brightest has her dark spots and specks; but God is a light that shines most gloriously without the least spot or speck; God is a most pure, clear, splendid light.

It is very observable, that the apostle, to illustrate the perfect purity of God, adds a negative to his affirmative, "in him is no darkness at all;" that

is, God is so pure, that not the least spot, the smallest speck of vanity or folly, can cleave to him. God is a pure, a most pure being, without the least potentiality, defectibility, or mutability; and therefore in the highest sense he "is light, and in him is no darkness at all." By this metaphorical description of God the apostle would not have us think that the nature of God is changed into the nature of light; but by this similitude the apostle merely represents something of the purity and excellency of God to us. The sun is light, the moon is light, and the stars are light; but it would be blasphemy for us to imagine that the essence of God is the same with this of the creatures; but this, sirs! you must remember, that there are many excellent properties of **LIGHT**, for which God is often in the Scripture resembled to light. As

[1.] First, **Light is PURE**, and so is God. Hab 1:13, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." There are four things which God cannot do:

(1.) He cannot lie.

(2.) He cannot die.

(3.) He cannot deny himself,

(4.) He cannot look with a favorable eye upon iniquity. He is a God of such infinite purity, that he cannot look upon iniquity but with an hateful eye, an angry eye, a revengeful eye, and with a vindictive eye.

[2.] Secondly, **All things are CONSPICUOUS to the light**, and so they are to God. [Psalm 41:12; 1 Sam 2:1,3; Psalm 16:8; Psalm 119:168] Heb 4:13, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." The Greek word is a metaphor, say some, that is taken from the priests under the law, who when they killed the beasts for sacrifice, all things that were within the beasts were laid naked and bare before the priest, that so he might see what was sound and what was corrupted. Others say, the apostle alludes to the anatomizing of such creatures, wherein men are very cautious and curious to search out every little vein or muscle, though they lie never so close. All agree in this, that all men's

insides and outsides are anatomized, dissected, quartered, and laid naked to the eye of God! Job 34:21-22, "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." "If you cannot hide yourself from the sun, which is God's minister of light, how impossible will it be to hide yourself from him whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun!" says Ambrose. But,

[3.] Thirdly, **Without light nothing can be SEEN**; so without the beams of heavenly light no heavenly things can be seen. A man cannot see God—but in that light which comes down from above; a man cannot see Christ without first being enlightened by Christ; a man cannot see heaven—but in that light which comes from heaven, James 1:17; 1 Cor 2:10,12,14-16. Were it not for the sun, it would be perpetual night in the world, notwithstanding all the torches that could be lighted, yes, notwithstanding all the light of the moon and stars. So it would be **perpetual night with poor souls**, notwithstanding all the torchlight of natural parts, and creature comforts, and notwithstanding all the starlight of civil honesty and common gifts, and notwithstanding all the moonlight of temporary faith and formal profession, did not the Sun of righteousness arise and shine upon them! But,

[4.] Fourthly, **There is nothing more PLEASANT than the light**. Eccles 11:7, "Truly the light is sweet, and it is a very pleasant thing to behold the sun." A philosopher being asked whether it were not a pleasant thing to behold the sun? answered, that that was a blind man's question, because life without light is but a lifeless life. Now, as there is nothing more pleasant and delightful to the eye than light, so there is nothing more pleasant and delightful to the soul than God. The poor northern nations, in Strabo, that lack the light of the sun for some months together, when the term of his return approaches, they climb up into the highest mountains to spy it; and he who spies it first was accounted the best and most beloved of God, and they chose him king. Now the return of the sun is not more pleasant and delightful to those poor northern nations, than God is pleasant and delightful to all gracious souls. But,

[5.] Fifthly, **The light shines and scatters its rays over all the**

**world**, over east, west, north, and south, and so does the presence and goodness of God, Psalm 139. But,

[6.] Sixthly, **The light is a creature of a most resplendent BEAUTY, LUSTER, AND GLORY.** It dazzles the eyes of the beholders; and so God is a God of that transcendent beauty, majesty, and glory, that the very eyes of the angels are dazzled, as not being able to behold the brightness of his glory. Isaiah 6:2, "God dwells in that light which no man can approach unto." But,

[7.] Seventhly, and lastly, **Light is the most UNMIXED substance;** it will never mix with darkness; no more will God. 2 Cor 6:14, "What communion has light with darkness?" The nature of God is void of all composition. Light expels darkness, it never mixes nor mingles with it. By what has been said, you see that God is a pure and an unmixed light, and that in him there is no darkness at all.

But now all worldly portions are mixed with many troubles, sorrows, cares, fears, hazards, dangers, vexations, oppositions, crosses, losses, and oftentimes with many gripes of conscience too. All earthly portions are mixed portions; the goodness of all creatures is a mixed goodness; our wine is mixed with water, our silver with tin, our gold with dross, our wheat with chaff, and our honey with gall, etc. Every bee has his sting, and every rose has his prickles. And this mixture speaks out all earthly portions to be "vanity and vexation of spirit," Eccles 1:13.

That great king Xerxes was accustomed to say—You look upon my crown and my purple robes—but did you know how they were lined with thorns, you would not stoop to pick them up! And who is there in this our English Israel that cannot with both hands subscribe to this? The emblem of King Henry the Seventh, in all his buildings, in the windows, was still *a crown in a bush of thorns*; why, or with what historical allusion he did so, is uncertain; but surely it was to imply thus much—that great places are not free from great cares, that no man knows the weight of a scepter but he who sways it. This made Saul to hide himself among the stuff, when he should have been made king. Many a sleepless night, many a restless day, many a sad temptation, and many a busy shift, will their ambition cost them—who aspire to such places of eminency. Besides, high places are

commonly very slippery; he who stands in them may suddenly fall, and wound his conscience, or easily fall and break his neck. But,

(6.) Sixthly, As God is a pure and unmixed portion, so he is a **GLORIOUS, a HAPPY, and a BLESSED portion**. Psalm 16:5-6. He is so in himself, and he makes them so also—who enjoy him for their portion. Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance." All the happiness and blessedness of the people of God consists in this—that God is their God, and that he is their portion, and that they are his inheritance! The Hebrew word which is here rendered *blessed*, is, 'Oh the blessedness!' or 'Oh the heaped up happiness of those whose God is the Lord!' The happiness of such is so great and so glorious, as cannot be conceived, as cannot be uttered! The words are a joyful acclamation for their felicity—who have God for their portion.

Psalm 144:15, "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." David having prayed for many temporal blessings in the behalf of the people, Psalm 144:12-15, at last concludes, "Blessed are the people that are in such a case;" but presently he checks and corrects himself, and eats, as it were, his own words—but rather, "happy is that people whose God is the Lord." The Syriac renders it question-wise, "Are not the people happy, who are in such a case?" The answer is, "No," except they have God to boot, Psalm 146:5. Nothing can make that man truly miserable, who has God for his portion; nor can anything make that man truly happy, who lacks God for his portion. God is the **author** of all true happiness; he is the **donor** of all true happiness; he is the **maintainer** of all true happiness, and he is the **center** of all true happiness and blessedness; and, therefore, he who has him for his God, for his portion, is the only happy man in the world!

But now all earthly portions cannot make a man truly happy and blessed. A crown, a kingdom cannot; for Saul and other princes have found it so. Honors cannot; for Haman and others have found it so. A high and noble birth cannot; for Absalom, Amnon, and others have found it so. Riches cannot; for the rich fool in the Gospel, and many thousand others, have found it so. Large dominions and great commands cannot; for Ahasuerus, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and others, have found it so. Human

wisdom cannot; for Ahithophel and other great counselors have found it so. Splendid apparel and delectable food cannot; for Dives and others have found it so. Applause and credit among the people cannot; for Herod and others have found it so. Learning and great gifts cannot; for the scribes and pharisees, and many others, have found it so. **No earthly thing, nor earthly creature, can give happiness or blessedness to man.** Nothing can give what it has not. If the conduit has no water, it can give no water; if the sun has no light, it can give no light; if the physician has no remedy, he can give no remedy, etc.

But now it is a very true observation, though it be a very sad observation, namely, **That every wicked man's portion is cursed unto him.**

Do but compare these scriptures together, [Deut 28:17-20; Job 20:22-29; Job 24:18; Prov 3:33; Mal 2:2; etc.] and then let conscience judge. All a wicked man's **relations** are cursed to him, and all a wicked man's **contentments** and **enjoyments** are cursed to him, and all his **mercies** within doors are cursed to him, etc. What though a man should have as many as a thousand bags of gold for his portion, yet if the plague would be in every bag, would you count him happy? Surely not! Verily this is the case of every man who has not God for his portion. But

(7.) Seventhly, As God is a glorious portion, so he is a **SPECIAL portion**, he is a portion particular to his people, Psalm 142:5-6; Jer 10:16. This is evident in the text, and in all the scriptures cited to prove the point, Psalm 16:5, and so in that Psalm 67:6, "Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless **us**." And so Psalm 68:20, "He who is **our** God is the God of salvation," or "God of salvations," as it is in the Hebrew. God is a God of all manner of salvations; he has all sorts and ways of salvations; he is not only powerful—but also skillful, to save his people from ten thousand deaths and dangers.

Faith is an appropriating grace, it is much in appropriating of God to itself—"My Lord and my God," and my Redeemer and my Savior and my portion; [John 20:28; Job 19:25; Luke 1:47] Psalm 73:26, "My flesh and my heart fails—but God is the strength of my heart and **my** portion forever." In Gideon's camp every soldier had his own pitcher, Judg 7:16;

among Solomon's men of valor, every man wore his own sword, 1 Chron 26:30; and the five wise virgins each had oil in her own lamp, Matt 25:4. Luther was accustomed to say, that there lay a great deal of divinity couched up in the personal pronouns, as in mine, yours, his—and so faith's appropriating of God to the soul, as its own portion, is all in all.

God is a portion particular to the saints; he is the hidden manna, the new name, the white stone, the bread to eat, which others know not of. There is never a *hardened Pharaoh* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *murdering Saul* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a painted *bloody Jezebel* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *cunning Ahithophel* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *proud Haman* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *tyrannical Nebuchadnezzar* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *crafty Herod* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *rich Dives* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *treacherous Judas* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *hypocritical Simon Magus* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever an *apostatizing Demas* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion;" nor is there ever a *persecuting scribe or pharisee* in the world who can truly say, "The Lord is my portion." It is only the saint that can truly say, "The Lord is his portion," for God is particularly and specially his—he is only his.

But now **all earthly portions are common portions**; they are all common to good and bad, to the righteous and to the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean, to him that sacrifices and to him that sacrifices not; to him that swears and to him that fears an oath, Eccles 9:1-3. Was Abraham rich? so was Dives too; was David a king? so was Saul too; was Daniel a great favorite at court? so was Haman too, etc. And indeed **usually the basest and the worst of men have the largest share in earthly portions**; which made Luther say, that the whole Turkish empire was but a crust that God cast to a dog. Abraham gave unto his sons of the concubines gifts, and sent them away—but unto Isaac he gave

all that he had, Gen 25:5-6. So all earthly portions, which are *giftless gifts*—God gives them to the worst and vilest of men; Dan 4:17, "This word is by decree of the observers; the matter is a command from the holy ones. This is so the living will know that the Most High is ruler over the kingdom of men. He gives it to anyone He wants and sets over it the lowliest of men." And so in that Dan 11:31, "The next to come to power will be a despicable man who is not directly in line for royal succession. But he will slip in when least expected and take over the kingdom by flattery and intrigue." Interpreters do generally agree, that by this vile person in the text is meant Antiochus Epiphanes, who was so great and mighty a prince, that when the Samaritans did write to him, they wrote—'to Antiochus the great God.' And indeed his very name speaks him out to be some great and glorious person, for Antiochus Epiphanes is Antiochus the illustrious, the famous; and yet you see that the Holy Spirit, speaking of him, calls him a despicable man.

Ah! how vile in the eyes of God are the greatest men in the world who have not God for their portion! Augustus in his solemn feasts gave trifles to some—but gold to others. **God gives the trifling portions of this world to the vilest and worst of men—but his gold, his Christ, himself—he gives only to his saints.** Gal 2:20, "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Though many have counterfeit jewels, yet there are but a few who have the true diamond; though many have their earthly portions, yet there are but a few who have God for their portion. But,

(8.) Eighthly, As God is a particular and special portion, so he is a **UNIVERSAL portion**. God is a portion that includes all other portions. God has himself the good, the sweet, the profit, the pleasure, the delight, the comfort, etc.—of all portions. There is no good in wife, child, father, friend, husband, health, wealth, wit, wisdom, learning, honor, etc.—but is all found in God. Rev 21:7, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son;" or as the Greek has it—he who is overcoming, though he has not yet overcome, yet if he be striving for the conquest, and will rather die than he will give up the battle—"he shall inherit all things;" that is, he shall inherit God in all and all in God.

Gen 33:9, "And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep what you

have unto yourself;" as the Hebrew has it—"I have much, my brother." And indeed it was very much that an Esau should say he had much; it is more than many of the Esaus of these times will say. But Jacob speaks at a far higher rate in Gen 33:11—"Please take my gifts, for God has been very generous to me. I have more than enough." or rather, as the Hebrew has it—"I have all." Esau had much—but Jacob had all, because he had all in God, and God in all. **He has all—who has the possessor of all.** 2 Cor 6:10, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

There is in God an immense fullness, an ocean of goodness, and an overplus of all that graciousness, sweetness, and kindness that is to be found in all other things or creatures. As Noah had a copy of every kind of creature in that famous library of the ark, out of which all were reprinted to the world; so he who has God for his portion, has the original copy of all blessings, out of which all may easily be renewed. All the goodlinesses and all the glories of all the creatures are eminently and perfectly to be enjoyed in God.

**God is a universal excellency.** All the particular excellencies that are scattered up and down among angels, men, and all other creatures, are virtually and transcendentally in him; he has them all in his own being, Eph 1:3. All creatures in heaven and earth have but their particular excellencies; but God has in himself the very quintessence of all excellencies. The creatures have but drops of that sea, that ocean, that is in God. They have but their parts of that power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, holiness, faithfulness, loveliness, desirableness, sweetness, graciousness, beauty, and glory—which is in God. One has this part, and another has that; one has this particular excellency, and another has that; but the whole of all these parts and excellencies are to be found in God alone. There is none but that God, who is the universal good, who can truly say, "All power, all wisdom, all strength, all knowledge, all goodness, all sweetness, all beauty, all glory, all excellency, etc., dwells in me!" He who can truly say this, is a God; and he who cannot, is no God.

There is no angel in heaven, nor saint on earth, that has the whole of any one of those excellencies that are in God. Nay, **all** the angels in heaven, and all the saints on earth, have not among them the whole of any **one** of those glorious excellencies and perfections that are in God. All the

excellencies that are scattered up and down in the creatures, are united into one excellency in God; but there is not one excellency in God that is fully scattered up and down among all the creatures. There is a glorious union of all excellencies in God, and only in God.

Now this God, who is such a universal good, and who has all excellencies dwelling in himself; he says to the believer, as the king of Israel said to the king of Assyria, "I am yours, and all that I have is yours!" 1 Kings 20:4. **Our property reaches to all that God is, and to all that God has**, Jer 32:38,42. God is not parted, nor divided, nor distributed among his people, as earthly portions are divided among children in the family; so that one believer has one part of God, and another believer has another part of God, and a third another part of God; oh no! Every believer has the whole God wholly, he has all of God for his portion. God is not a believer's portion in a limited sense, nor in a comparative sense—but in an absolute sense. God **himself** is theirs, he is **wholly** theirs, he is **only** theirs, he is **always** theirs.

As Christ looks upon the Father, and says, "All that is yours is mine; and all that is mine is yours," 1 Cor 3:28; John 17:10, that may a saint say, looking upon God as his portion. He may truly say, 'O Lord, you are mine, and all that you have! And I am yours, and all that I have.' A saint may look upon God and say, 'O Lord, not only your gifts but your graces are mine, to adorn me and enrich me; and not only your mercies and your good things are mine to comfort me, and encourage me—but also you yourself are mine! And this is my joy and crown of rejoicing.' **To be able to say, 'God is mine!' is more than if I were able to say that ten thousand worlds, yes, and as many heavens, are mine!** For it is God alone, who is the sparkling diamond in the ring of glory!

Heaven would be but a low thing without God, says Augustine; and Bernard had rather enjoy Christ in a chimney-corner, than to be in heaven without him; and Luther had rather be in hell with Christ, than in heaven without him. **It is God alone that makes heaven to be heaven.**

Now God is so every particular believer's portion, as that he is every believer's portion. 1 Cor 1:1-2 "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus

Christ, through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with **all** that in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." As the sun is every man's sun to see by, to walk by, to work by; and as the sea is every man's sea to trade by, etc.; so **God is every believer's portion**. He is a poor saint's portion as well as a rich saint's portion; he is the despised believer's portion, as well as the exalted believer's portion; he is the weak believer's portion, as well as the strong believer's portion; he was as much his portion who miscalled his faith, and who in the behalf of his son cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief," Mark 11:24, as he was Abraham's portion, who, in the strength of his faith, offered up his only son, Gen 22. He was as much Job's portion sitting on a ash-heap, as he was David's portion sitting on a royal throne; he was as much Lazarus' portion, who never had a penny in his purse, as he was Solomon's portion, who made gold and silver as plenteous in Jerusalem as the stones of the streets, 2 Chron 1:15.

God is not my portion alone—but he is every saint's portion in heaven, and he is every saint's portion on earth. The father is every child's portion, and though they may wrangle and quarrel with one another, yet he is all their portions. And so it is here; and Oh what a spring of joy and comfort should this be to all the saints! Riches are not every believer's portion—but God is every believer's portion. Advancement in the world is not every believer's portion—but God is every believer's portion. Liberty and freedom are not every believer's portion—but God is every believer's portion. Honor and applause in the world is not every believer's portion—but God is every believer's portion. Prosperity and success are not every believer's portion—but God is every believer's portion, etc.

God is a universal portion, all things receive their being, essence, and existence from him, for the fullness of all things is in him, really and eminently. The heathen philosophers of old called God—'that which is all or everything.' God is the Lord of all, and contains all things in himself. Exod 33:19, "I will make all my goodness pass before you," that is, because in God are all good things, God is all things, God is everything. **The cream, the good, the sweet, the beauty, and the glory of**

**every creature, and of every thing, centers in God.** But,

(9.) Ninthly, As God is a universal portion, so **God is a SAFE portion, a SECURE portion.** He is a portion that none can rob or wrong you of; he is a portion that none can touch or take from you—he is a portion that none can cheat or spoil you of. God is such a portion, that no friend, no foe, no man, no enemy, no devil—can ever rob a Christian of. O Christians, God is so yours in Christ, and so yours by covenant, and so yours by promise, and so yours by purchase, and so yours by conquest, and so yours by donation, and so yours by marriage union and communion, and so yours by the gift of the Spirit, and so yours by the feelings and witnessings of the Spirit—that no power or policy on earth can ever lay a finger on your portion; or cheat, or rob you of your portion.

Psalm 48:14, "For this God is our God forever and ever, and he will be our guide even unto death." He is not only our God for the present, nor he will be only our God for a short time. Oh no! He will be our God forever and ever! If God is once your portion, he will be forever your portion. It must be a power that must overmatch the power of God, and a strength that must be above the strength of God—which could rob or spoil a Christian of his portion; but who is there that is stronger than God? Is the clay stronger than the potter, or the stubble than the flame, or weakness than strength? Yes, is not the very weakness of God stronger than man? and who then shall ever be able to take away a Christian's portion from him? Rom 9; 1 Cor 1:25; and 1 Cor 10:22.

But now **a man may be easily deprived of his earthly portion.** How many have been deprived of their earthly portions by storms at sea, and others by force and violence, and others by fraud and deceit, and others by hideous lying and hellish swearing? Many have lost their earthly portions by treachery, knavery, perjury, subtilty, robbery, etc. Some **play** away their earthly portions; and others with Esau **fool** away their earthly portions; and not a few, with the prodigal, **sin** away their earthly portions. Ahab's fingers itched to he a-fingering of Naboth's vineyard. 1 Kings 21:1-5. A man can no sooner come to enjoy an earthly portion—but other men's fingers itch to be a-fingering of his portion—as daily experience does sufficiently evidence.

But God is a portion that the fire cannot burn, nor the floods cannot drown, nor the thief cannot steal, nor the enemy cannot seize, nor the soldier cannot plunder a Christian of. **A man may take away my gold from me—but he cannot take away my God from me!** The Chaldeans and the Sabeans could take away Job's estate from him—but they could not take away Job's God from him, Job 1. And the Amalekites burnt Ziklag, and robbed David of his substance, and of his wives—but they could not rob him of his God, 1 Sam 30. And those persecutors in Heb 10:34, plundered the saints of their goods—but they could not plunder them of their God. Until weakness can make a breach upon strength, impotency upon omnipotency, the pitcher upon the potter, and the crawling worm upon the Lord Almighty—a saint's portion is safe and secure.

It is true, sickness and disease may take away my health and my strength from me, and death may take away my friends and my relations from me, and enemies may take away my estate, my liberty, my life from me; but none of all these can take away my God from me! I have read of the men of Tyrus, how that they chained and nailed their god Apollo to a post, that so they might be sure of him, supposing that all their safety lay in the enjoyment of him. Certainly God is so chained, and so linked, and so nailed to his people by his everlasting love, and by his everlasting covenant, and by the blood of his Son, and by his oath, and by that law of relation that is between him and them—that no created power shall ever be able to deprive them of him. But,

(10.) Tenthly, As God is a safe portion, a secure portion, so he **is a SUITABLE portion**. "Many are asking, 'Who can show us any good?' Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:6-8. No object is so suitable and adequate to the heart, as he is. He is a portion that punctually, exactly, and directly suits the condition of the soul. He suits the desires of the soul, the necessities of the soul, the wants of the soul, the longings of the soul, and the prayers of the soul. The soul can crave nothing, nor wish for nothing—but what is to be found in this portion. Here is light to enlighten the soul, and wisdom to counsel

the soul, and power to support the soul, and goodness to supply the soul, and mercy to pardon the soul, and beauty to delight the soul, and glory to ravish the soul, and fullness to fill the soul, etc. Health is not more suitable to the sick man, nor wealth to the poor man, nor bread to the hungry man, nor drink to the thirsty man, nor clothes to the naked man, nor balm to the wounded man, nor ease to the tormented man, nor health to the diseased man, nor a pardon to the condemned man, nor a guide to the blind man, etc. than this portion is suitable to all the necessities of man; and this speaks out the excellency of this portion above all other portions.

Now there is no earthly portion which can suit an immortal soul; he is a fool upon record who said, "Soul, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry," Luke 12:18-20. If the man, says Ambrose upon the words, had the soul of a swine, what could he have said more? for those things were more suitable to swine than they were to an immortal soul.

Man's soul is a spiritual and immortal substance, it is capable of union and communion with God; it is capable of a choice enjoyment of God here, and of an eternal fruition of God hereafter. A great shoe will not fit a little foot, nor a great sail a little ship, nor a great ring a little finger; no more will any earthly portion suit an immortal soul. The soul is the breath of God, the beauty of man, the wonder of angels, and the envy of devils. It is of an angelical nature; it is an heavenly spark, a celestial plant, and of a divine offspring. So that nothing can suit the soul below God, nor nothing can satisfy the soul without God. The soul is so high and so noble a piece, that all the riches of the east and west Indies, nor rocks of diamonds, nor mountains of gold, can fill it, or satisfy it, or suit it.

When a man is in prison, and condemned to die, if one should come to him, and tell him, that there is such a friend or such a relation that has left him a very large estate, a noble seat, etc., yet all this would not please him, nor content him, because it does not suit his present condition; oh—but now let a man bring him his pardon, sealed under his prince's hand, oh how will this delight him and joy him! And so tell a man who is ready to starve, that such and such loves him, and that such and such intends well towards him, etc., yet all this does not content him, it does not satisfy

him, and all because it does not suit him; oh but now do but bring him food to eat, and this will joy him and delight him, and all because it suits him. That is the highest good—which is the most suitable good to the soul, and such a good is God; that is the most excellent portion—which is the most suitable portion to the soul, and such a portion is God. But,

(11.) Eleventhly, As God is a suitable portion, so he is **an INCOMPREHENSIBLE portion**. No created mind can comprehend what a portion God is, Psalm 147:5; Job 26:14. It is true, that God is not incomprehensible, in regard of his own understanding, for he perfectly understands himself, else he could not be God; but God is incomprehensible in regard of us, and the angels, who are no ways able to comprehend infiniteness. 1 Kings 8:27, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!" God is an **infinite** being, and therefore he cannot be contained in any place, nor comprehended by any created being. Such multiplied phrases and Hebraisms as are here, as heaven, and the heaven of heavens, do very emphatically set out the immensity and incomprehensibility of God.

Job 37:23, "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out." We are as well able to fit the sea in a sea-shell, as we are able to comprehend God. God is above all name, all notion, and all comprehension. God is so incomprehensible, that you shall as soon count the stars of heaven, and number the sand of the sea, and stop the sun in his course, and raise the dead, and make a world, as you shall be able to comprehend the infiniteness of God's essence. Psalm 145:3, "His greatness is unsearchable." The most perfect knowledge that we can have of God is, that we cannot perfectly know him, because we do know him to be infinitely and incomprehensibly perfect. Rom 11:33, "Oh the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" When men and angels do search farthest into God's perfection, they do then most of all discover their own imperfection; for it is utterly impossible for angels or men, by their most accurate disquisition, to find out the Almighty to perfection, 1 Tim 6:16, "who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever.

Amen." Here is a denial both of the fact and the possibility. Observe the diligence of Paul, he does not say a light incomprehensible—but a light inaccessible, which is much more; for that which, being sought and searched for, cannot be comprehended, we say is incomprehensible; but that which allows not by any means the labor of searching after, and which no one can come near, that is unapproachable.

There is infinitely more in God than the tongues of men or angels can express. There is much in God beyond the apprehension and comprehension of all created beings. The sum of all that philosophers and schoolmen have attained to concerning this great principle, amounts to no more than this, namely, that men and angels can never comprehend that perfection which dwells in God; for the perfection of God is infinite, and therefore incomprehensible. When one was asked what God was, he answered, that he must be God himself, before he could know God fully.

When the tyrant Hiero asked the poet Simonides what God was, he asked for a day to study an answer; but the more he sought into the nature of God, the more difficult he found it to express; the next day, after being questioned, he asked two days, and the third time he asked for four, and so went on, doubling the number; and being asked why he did so, he answered, that *the more he studied the nature of God, the less he was able to define what God was!* He being so incomprehensible in his nature, the more this poor heathen inquired—the more he admired, and the less he understood.

It was a notable observation of Chrysostom, who being very busy and studious in searching into the nature of God, says, I am like a man digging in a deep spring; I stand here, and the water rises upon me; and I stand there, and still the water rises upon me. Indeed, this is a knowledge that passes knowledge, Eph 3:19.

The Turks build their mosques without any roof, because they hold as we do, that God is incomprehensible. God is a circle whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere—all which speaks out his infiniteness and incomprehensibility.

But now all earthly portions are easily apprehended and comprehended.

A portion in money, or plate, or goods, or lands, or jewels—is easily counted up. There are few, except it be children or fools—but can readily give an account of all earthly portions. The child's portion, and the wife's portion, and the servant's portion, and the soldier's portion, and the poor man's portion, and the rich man's portion, are talked on all the city over, and all the town over, and all the country over; but God is such an incomprehensible portion, that there is not a man in town, city, or country—who is able to comprehend him, Prov 3:15. But,

(12.) Twelfthly, As God is an incomprehensible portion, so **God is an INEXHAUSTIBLE portion**; a portion which can never be spent, which can never be exhausted; a fountain which still overflows; a rich mine which has no bottom; a spring which can never be drawn dry—but continues always full, without augmentation or diminution. John 4:14, "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." If grace in the soul be such a perpetual flowing fountain, that it shall never be exhausted until grace be swallowed up in glory—then certainly the God of grace is much more an inexhaustible fountain that can never be drawn dry. Angels, saints, and sinners have lived upon this portion almost this six thousand years, and it is not in the least diminished, Col 1:16-17.

God has his city-house, and his country-house, where millions have been kept at his table, and lived upon his purse, for days without number; and yet God is not one penny the poorer for all this. This portion is like the flour in the jar, and the oil in the jug—which never failed. 1 Kings 17:14-16, "For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.' She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah." God is such a portion as cannot be lessened nor diminished; he is such a portion as can never fail. Should all Christians now live to the age of the patriarchs, who lived many hundred years, and should they all live freely, and keep open house every day in the year, yet at the end, not a penny, no not a farthing

of this portion will be expended or diminished.

Though men have ever so great a fortune, yet if they still spend upon it they will certainly consume it; oh—but God is such a fortune as can never be spent, as can never be consumed. If a sparrow should but fetch a drop of water out of the sea once a day, yes, once in a thousand years, yet in time it would be exhausted. Oh but God is such a sea, such an ocean, that if every angel in heaven, and every saint and sinner on earth, should drink whole rivers at a draught, yet not one drop could be diminished! If a child should take but a sea-shell of water out of the sea every day, the sea would be really the less, though not visibly the less, and in time it would be exhausted, and drawn dry. But let all created beings be every day a-drawing from God, yet they shall never lessen him, they shall never draw him dry. The mother's breasts are often drawn dry—but the more you draw at the breasts of God, the more milk of grace and comfort will flow in upon you. Isaiah 66:10-11, "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance." God keeps open house for all comers and goers, for all created creatures both in heaven and earth; and though they are perpetually sucking at his breasts, yet the more they draw, the more the heavenly milk of divine joy, contentment, and satisfaction flows in abundantly upon them, Psalm 104:24.

All creatures, both high and low, rich and poor, honorable and base, noble and ignoble, bond and free, Jews and Gentiles—are all maintained upon God's own cost and charge; they are all fed at his table, and maintained by what comes out of his treasury, his purse; and yet God is not a pin the poorer for all this! It would break and beggar all the princes on earth, to keep but one day the least part of that innumerable company which God feeds, and clothes, and nourishes, and maintains every day upon the account of his own revenue, which is never the poorer for all the vast expenses that he is daily at. There is still in God a fullness of abundance, and a fullness of redundance, notwithstanding the vast sums that he has spent, and does daily expend. It were blasphemy to think that God should be a penny the poorer by all that he has laid out for the

maintenance of those millions of angels and men, who have had their dependence upon him, from their first creation to this very day. Look—as the sun has never the less light for filling the skies with light; and as the fountain has never the less water for filling the lesser vessels with water that are about it; so though God fills all the vessels, both of grace and glory, with his own fullness, yet he is never the less full himself; there is still in God the fullness of a fountain. Look—as the overflowing fountain pours out water abundantly, and yet after all it remains full; so though the Lord be such an overflowing fountain as that he fills all, yet still he retains all fullness in himself.

I have read of a Spanish ambassador, who, coming to see the treasury of Saint Mark in Venice, that is so much cried up in the world, he fell a-groping at the bottom of the chests and trunks, to see whether they had any bottom; and being asked the reason why he did so, answered in this among other things—'My master's treasure differs from yours, and excels yours, in that his has no bottom as yours have'—alluding to the mines in Mexico, Peru, and other parts of the western India. All men's mints, bags, purses, and coffers may be quickly exhausted and drawn dry—but God is such an inexhaustible portion, that he can never be drawn dry; all God's treasures are bottomless, and all his mints are bottomless, and all his bags are bottomless. Millions of thousands in heaven and earth feed every day upon him—and yet he feels it not; he is still a-giving, and yet his purse is never empty! He is still a-filling all the court of heaven, and all the creatures on earth—and yet he is a fountain that still overflows. There be those who say, that it is most certainly true of the oil at Rheims, that though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France, yet it never diminishes. But whatever truth is in this story, of this I am most sure—that though all the creatures in all worlds live and spend continually on Christ's treasury, yet it never diminishes!

But *all earthly portions are frequently exhausted and drawn dry*. The prodigal quickly spent his patrimony upon his harlots, Luke 15; and how many drunkards, and gluttons, and wantons, and gamesters, and lovers of pleasure—do continually waste their savings! Prov 23:20-21. "Have you entered into the treasures of the snow?" says God to Job, Job 38:22, etc. Now, says Gregory, the treasures of the snow are worldly riches, which

men rake together, even as children do snow, which the next shower washes away, and leaves nothing in the place of it but dirt. And ah! how many merchants, and shopkeepers, and others in these breaking times, have found all their riches and earthly portions to melt away—like snow before the sun! how many of late have been very rich one week, and stripped of all the next, and set with Job upon the ash-heap! All earthly portions are like water in a cistern, which may easily and quickly be drawn dry; but God is an inexhaustible portion, which can never be drawn dry; and this discovers the excellency of this portion above all other portions. But

(13.) Thirteenthly, As God is an inexhaustible portion, so **God is a SOUL-SATISFYING portion**, Psalm 17:15. He is a portion that gives the soul full satisfaction and contentment. Psalm 16:5-6, "Lord, You are my portion and my cup of blessing; You hold my future. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance." It was well with him as his heart could wish. And so in that Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you;" or as some render it, "I wish I were in heaven with you;" or as others read the words, "I have sought none in heaven or earth besides you;" or as others, "I desire none in heaven or earth besides you," or "I want none in heaven, nor none on earth like you; I love none in heaven, nor none on earth, in comparison of you; I esteem you instead of all other treasure, and above all other treasures which are in heaven, or which are on earth." The holy prophet had spiritual and sweet communion with Christ to comfort and strengthen him; he had a guard of glorious angels to protect him and secure him, and he had assurance of heaven in his bosom to gladden and rejoice him; and yet it was none of these, nay, it was not all these together—which could satisfy him; it was only an infinite good, an infinite God—who could satisfy him. He very well knew that the substantials of all true happiness and blessedness lay in God, and his enjoyment of God. It was not his high dignities nor honors—which could satisfy him; it was not the strength, riches, security, prosperity, and outward glory of his kingdom—which could satisfy him; it was not his delightful music, nor his noble attendance, nor his well furnished tables, nor his great victories, nor his stately palaces, nor his pleasant gardens, nor his beautiful wife, nor his

lovely children—which could satisfy him. All these without God could never satisfy him; but God without all these was enough to quiet him, and satisfy him.

John 14:8, "Philip said unto him—Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied." A sight of God will satisfy a gracious soul more than all worldly contentments and enjoyments! Yes, one sight of God will satisfy a saint more than all the glory of heaven will do. God is the glory of heaven. Heaven alone is not sufficient to content a gracious soul—but God alone is sufficient to content and satisfy a gracious soul. God only is that satisfying good, who is able to fill, quiet, content, and satisfy an immortal soul. Certainly, if there be enough in God to satisfy the spirits of just men made perfect, whose capacities are far greater than ours, Heb 12:23-25; and if there be enough in God to satisfy the angels, whose capacities are far above theirs; if there be enough in God to satisfy Jesus Christ, whose capacity is inconceivable and unexpressible; yes, if there be enough in God to satisfy himself—then certainly there must needs be in God enough to satisfy the souls of his people. If all fullness, and all goodness and infiniteness will satisfy the soul—then God will.

There is nothing beyond God imaginable, nor nothing beyond God desirable, nor nothing beyond God delectable; and therefore the soul who enjoys him, cannot but be satisfied with him. God is a portion beyond all imagination, all expectation, all apprehension, and all comparison; and therefore he who has him cannot but sit down and say—I have enough! Gen 33:11. Psalm 63:5-6, "You satisfy me more than the richest of foods. I will praise you with songs of joy. I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night." The richest of foods cannot so satisfy the appetite—as God can satisfy a gracious soul! Yes, one smile from God, one glance of his countenance, one good word from heaven, one report of love and grace—will infinitely more satisfy an immortal soul, than all the richest of foods, and all the dainties and delicacies of this world can satisfy the appetite of any mortal man! The Hebrew has it—my soul shall be topful of comfort, it shall be filled up to the brim with pleasure and delight, in the remembrance and enjoyment of God upon my bed, or upon my beds, in the plural, as the Hebrew has it. David had many a hard bed and many a hard lodging, while he was in his wilderness condition. It

oftentimes so happened, that he had nothing but the bare ground for his bed, and the stones for his pillows, and the hedges for his curtains, and the heavens for his canopy; yet in this condition God was sweeter than the richest of foods to him. Though his bed was ever so hard, yet in God he had full satisfaction and contentment.

Jer 31:14, "I will satisfy my people with my bounty," says the Lord. "My God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus," Phil 4:19, says Paul, that great apostle of the Gentiles. The Greek word signifies to fill up, even as he did the widow's vessels, 2 Kings 4:4, until they did overflow. God will fill up all, he will make up all, he will supply all the wants and necessities of his people. That water which can fill the sea, can much more fill a cup; and that sun which can fill the world with light, can much more fill my house with light. So that God who fills heaven and earth with his glory, can much more fill my soul with his glory!

To show what a satisfying portion God is—he is set forth by all those things which may satisfy the heart of man, as by bread, water, wine, milk, honors, riches, clothing, houses, lands, friends, father, mother, sister, brother, health, wealth, light, life, etc. And if these things will not satisfy, what will? It is enough, says old Jacob, that Joseph is alive, Gen 45:28; so says a gracious soul—It is enough that God is my portion. A pardon cannot more satisfy a condemned man, nor bread a hungry man, nor drink a thirsty man, nor clothes a naked man, nor health a sick man, etc.—than God does satisfy a gracious man. But,

Worldly portions can never satisfy the souls of men, Eccles 5:10. "The one who loves money is never satisfied with money, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income. This too is futile." All the world cannot fill the soul; nor can all the creatures in the world fill up the soul with complete satisfaction. As nothing can be the perfection of the soul—but he who made it, so nothing can be the satisfaction of the soul—but he who made it. If a man is hungry, **gold** cannot feed him; if naked, it cannot clothe him; if cold, it cannot warm him; if sick, it cannot recover him; if wounded, it cannot heal him; if weak, it cannot strengthen him; if fallen, it cannot raise him; if wandering, it cannot guide him; oh how much less able is it then to satisfy him! He who, out of love to gold, seeks after gold,

shall love still to seek it—but shall never be satisfied with it. A man shall as soon satisfy the grave, and satisfy hell, and satisfy the stomach with wind—as he shall be able to satisfy his soul with any earthly portion! All earthly portions are dissatisfying portions, they do but vex and fret, gall and grieve, tear and torment—the souls of men. The world is a circle, and the heart of man is a triangle—and *no triangle can fill a circle*. Some good or other will be always lacking to that man who has only outward good to live upon.

Absalom's **beauty** could not satisfy him; Haman's **honor** could not satisfy him; Ahab's **kingdom** could not satisfy him; Balaam's **gold** could not satisfy him; Ahithophel's **wisdom** could not satisfy him; the scribes' and pharisees' **learning** could not satisfy them; Dives's **riches** could not satisfy him. Alexander's conquests could not satisfy him; for when, as he thought, he had conquered one world, he sits down and wishes for another world to conquer; and Cyrus the Persian king was accustomed to say, did men but know the cares which he sustained under his imperial crown, he thought no man would stoop to take it up. Gilimex, king of the Vandals, when he was led in triumph by Belisarius, cried out, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity!" Charles the fifth, emperor of Germany, whom of all men the world judged most happy, cried out with detestation at all his honors, riches, pleasures, trophies, 'get you hence, let me hear no more of you!' And it has been long since said of our King Henry the second,

"He whom, alive, the world could scarce suffice,

When dead, in eight-foot earth contented lies."

By all these instances, it is most evident that no earthly portions can satisfy the souls of men. Can a man fill up his stomach with air? or can he fill up the huge ocean with a drop of water? or can a few drops of beer quench the thirst of a man in a burning fever? or can the smell of food, or dreaming of a banquet, satisfy a hungry stomach? No! no more can any earthly portions fill or satisfy the heart of man. If emptiness can fill the soul, if vanity can satisfy the soul, or if vexation can give contentment to the soul—then may earthly portions satisfy the soul—but not until then. When a man can gather grapes from thorns, and figs of thistles, and turn day into night, and winter into summer—then shall he find satisfaction in

the creatures; but not before. All earthly portions are weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and they are found to be lighter than the dust of the balance; and this will rather inflame the thirst—than quench it.

A man who has only the world for his portion, is like to Noah's dove out of the ark, which was in continual motion—but could find no resting place; but a man who has God for his portion is like the dove, returning and resting in the ark. The soul can never be at rest, until it comes to rest and center in God. God himself is the soul's only home. No good but the chief good, can suffice an immortal soul. Look, as God never rested until he had made man, so man can never rest until he comes to enjoy God; the soul of man is of a very vast capacity, and nothing can fill it to the brim but he who is fullness itself. *It is the breast—and not the doll nor the rattle—which will satisfy the hungry babe. And it is God, and not this or that creature—who can satisfy the soul of man.* But,

(14.) Fourteenthly, As God is a soul-satisfying portion, so **God is a permanent portion, a sure portion, a never-failing portion, a lasting, yes, an everlasting portion.** Psalm 73:26, "My flesh and my heart fails—but God is the strength, (or the rock,) of my heart, and my portion forever." God is a fountain which the hottest summer cannot dry; he is a bottomless treasure which can never be expended. God ever was, and ever will be. He cannot borrow his being from anything—who gives being and sustenance to all things. "God is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, he is yesterday and today, and the same forever," Rev 1:8. God is the Almighty, who is, and who was, and who is to come.

Exod 3:14, "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM." Some translate this text, according to the full scope of the tense among the Hebrews, "I am that I am, that I was, and that I will be;" for the tense among the Hebrews points at all differences of time, past, present, and to come; but others, observing the strict and proper signification of the future, translate it thus, "I will be that I will be." This name of God imports two of God's incommunicable attributes,

First, His **eternity**, when he says, "I will be."

Secondly, His **immutability**, when he says, "That I will be." The

Rabbies, upon this text, express themselves after this manner—"I that have been, and I the same now, and I the same for time to come," etc. But others, more agreeable to the Chaldee paraphrase, express themselves thus—"he who is, and was, and hereafter will be." But it is observable, that the angel unites all differences of time in that great and glorious acknowledgment, Rev 16:5, "You are righteous, O Lord, who is, and were, and shall be."

God is a God of that infinite excellency and glory—that it is utterly impossible for him to be better, or other than he is. If God should in the least be alterable or mutable, he would presently cease to be God. God is a God of that transcendent excellency, that there can be nothing added to him, nor nothing subtracted from him. If you add anything to him, you deny him to be God; and if you take anything from him, you destroy his being, James 1:17; Psalm 90:2, "From everlasting to everlasting you are God." God is eternal—he is neither capable of a beginning nor ending; and therefore the Egyptians used to signify God by a circle, and the Persians thought that they honored God most, when, going up to the top of the highest tower, they called him the circle of heaven. Now you know a circle has no end. And it was a custom among the Turks to go up every morning to a high tower, and to cry out, God always was, and always will be.

Some things have a beginning—but no ending, as angels and the souls of men; and some things have no beginning, and yet have an end, as the decrees of God in their final accomplishment; and some things have both a beginning and an ending, as all sublunary things; but God has neither beginning nor ending! All creatures have a lasting, angels have an outlasting—but God has an **everlasting** being. 1 Tim 1:17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, forever and ever. Amen." God is without beginning and end, first and last, past and to come.

Psalm 102:25-27, "Long ago You established the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; all of them will wear out like clothing. You will change them like a garment, and they will pass away. But You are the same, and Your years will never end." Were there no other scripture to prove the eternity and

immutability of God, this were enough. Whatever changes may pass upon the heavens and the earth—yet God will always remain unchangeable and unalterable. By what has been said, it is most evident that God is an everlasting portion, that he is a never-failing portion.

But all earthly portions are very uncertain; now they are, and shortly they are not. Prov 23:4-5, "Don't weary yourself trying to get rich. Why waste your time? For riches can disappear as though they had the wings of a bird!" Though the foolish world calls riches substance, yet they have no solid subsistence. All earthly portions are as transitory as a shadow, a ship, a bubble, a bird, a dream, an arrow, a runner who passes swiftly away. Riches were never true to any that have trusted in them. In this text, riches are said not to be, because they do not continue to be; they will not abide by a man, they will not long continue with a man, and therefore they are as if they were not. All earthly things are vain and transitory, they are rather phantoms and shadows—than real things themselves. 1 Cor 7:31, "For the fashion of this world passes away." The Greek word signifies a mathematical figure, which is a mere notion, and nothing in substance. All the glory of this world is rather a matter of shadow, than of substance; it is a body without a soul; it is a golden shell without a kernel; it is a shadow without a substance. There is no firmness, there is no solidness, there is no consistency, there is no constancy in any of the creatures. All the pomp, and state, and glory of the world is but a mere painted pageantry, a mask, a comedy, a fantasy!

Acts 25:23, "So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived at the auditorium with *great pomp*." The original words, signifies *great fantasy, or vain show*. The greatest glory and pomp of this world, in the eye of God, in the account of God—is but as a fantasy or a shadow. It was a custom in Rome, that when the emperor passed by upon some great day in all his imperial pomp, there was an officer appointed to burn flax before him, and to cry out, 'so the glory of this world passes away!' And this was purposely done to put him in mind that all his honor, pomp, glory, and grandeur should soon pass and vanish away, as the flax did, which he saw burnt before his eyes. That great conqueror of the world, Alexander, caused *a sword in a wheel* to be painted upon a table, to show that what he had gotten by the sword was subject to be turned about by

the wheel of fortune. Many great conquerors, besides him, have found it so, and many now alive have seen it so.

Look! As the *rainbow* shows itself in all its dainty colors, and then vanishes away—so does all worldly honors, riches, and preferments show themselves and then vanish away! And how many in our days have found it so! When one was a-commending the riches and wealth of merchants; the other person said, 'I do not love that wealth which hangs upon ropes, for if they break, the ship and all her wealth miscarries.' Certainly within these few months the miscarrying of several ships has caused several merchants sadly to miscarry. A storm at sea, a spark of fire, an unfaithful employee, a false oath, or a treacherous friend, may quickly bring a man to sit with Job upon an ash-heap! Look, as the bird flies from tree to tree, and as the beggar goes from door to door, and as the pilgrim travels from place to place, and as the physician walks from patient to patient; so all the riches, honors, and glory of this world do either fly from man to man, or else walk from man to man. Who knows not, that many times one is made honorable by another's disgrace? another is made full by another man's emptiness? and a third is made rich by another's poverty? How soon is the courtier's glory eclipsed, if the prince does but frown upon him! and how soon does the prince become a peasant, if *God* does but frown upon him! Now one is exalted—and shortly he is debased; now one is full—and at another time he is hungry; now one is clothed splendidly—and before long he is clothed with rags; now one is at liberty—and in a moment he is under captivity; now a man has many friends—and shortly he has not a friend. **There is nothing but vanity and uncertainty in all earthly portions!** But,

Fifteenthly, and lastly, As God is a permanent and never failing portion, so **God is an INCOMPARABLE portion**; and this follows clearly and soundly upon what has been said; for,

- (1.) If God is a **present** portion, a portion in hand, a portion in possession; and,
- (2.) If God is an **immense** portion, if he be the vastest, the largest, and the greatest portion; and,

- (3.) If God is an **all-sufficient** portion; and,
- (4.) If God is the most absolute, needful, and **necessary** portion; and
- (5.) If God is a pure and **unmixed** portion; and,
- (6.) If God is a **glorious**, a happy, and a blessed portion; and,
- (7.) If God is a **special** and **particular** portion; and,
- (8.) If God is a **universal** portion; and,
- (9.) If God is a **safe** portion, a secure portion, a portion that none can rob or wrong us of; and,
- (10.) If God is a **suitable** portion; and,
- (11.) If God is an **incomprehensible** portion; and,
- (12.) If God is an **inexhaustible** portion, a portion that can never be spent, that can never be exhausted or drawn dry; and,
- (13.) If God he a **soul-satisfying** portion; and,
- (14.) If God is a permanent and an everlasting portion—then it must very necessarily follow, that,
- (15.) **God is an INCOMPARABLE portion.** But such a portion God is, as I have proved at large; and, therefore, beyond all dispute, God must needs be an incomparable portion. Prov 3:13-15, "Happy is the man who finds wisdom," (that is, the Lord Jesus Christ), "and the man who gets understanding—for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her." All the gold of Ophir, and all the silver of the Indies, which are but the *guts and garbage of the earth*, are nothing, yes, less than nothing, compared with God. God is a portion more precious than all those things which are esteemed most precious.

A man may desire just about anything. He may desire that all the

mountains in the world may be turned into mountains of gold for his use; he may desire that all the rocks in the world may be turned into the richest pearls for his use; he may desire that all the treasure that is buried in the sea may be brought into his treasuries; he may desire that all the crowns and scepters of all the princes and emperors of the world, may be piled up at his gate, as they were once said to be at Alexander's; yet all these things are not comparable to a saint's portion, yes, they are not to be named in that day, wherein the excellency of a saint's portion is set forth.

Horace writes of a precious stone that was more worth than twenty thousand shekels, and Pliny valued the two precious pearls of Cleopatra at twelve hundred thousand shekels. But what were these, and what were all other precious stones in the world—but dung and dross, in comparison of a saint's portion? Phil 3:7,9.

Did any man enjoy all that he could desire—it would be but a very small portion compared with God. We may truly say of all the honors, riches, greatness, grandeur, and glory of this world, compared with God, as Gideon once said of the vintage of Abiezer, "The gleanings of Ephraim are better than the vintage of Abiezer," Judg 8:2. So the very gleanings, yes, the smallest gatherings of God, are far better, and more excellent and transcendent; and more satisfying, more delighting, more ravishing, more quieting, and more contenting—than all earthly portions are—or can be. What comparison is there between a drop of a bucket—and the vast ocean? Or what comparison is there between a speck of dust—and the whole earth? Why, you will say, there is no comparison between these things; and I will say, there is less comparison between all finite portions, and such an infinite portion as God is. For this is most certain, that there must needs be always an infinite distance between what is finite and what is infinite; and such a portion God is. By all that has been said, it is most evident that God is an incomparable portion.

But now all earthly portions are *comparable* portions. You may easily and safely compare one earthly portion with another—one prince's revenues may be comparable to another's; and one great man's lordships may be comparable to another's; and one merchant's estate may be comparable to another's; and one gentlemen's lands may be comparable to another's;

and one wife's portion may be comparable to another's; and one child's portion may be comparable to another's, etc. But God is an incomparable portion! There is no comparison to be made between God and other portions. And thus I have in these fifteen particulars fully discovered the excellency of the saints' portion above all other portions.

And, therefore, I shall now come to the second thing, and that is, to show you,

## **II. Upon what GROUNDS their title unto God as their portion is founded and bottomed; and they are these that follow:**

(1.) First, **The free favor and love of God, the good will and pleasure of God**, is the true ground and bottom of God's bestowing of himself as a portion upon his people, Deut 7:6-9; Ezek 16:1-15. There was no loveliness nor desirableness in them that should move him to bestow himself upon them. They had neither portion nor proportion, and therefore there was no cause in them why God should bestow himself as a portion upon them. God, for the glory of his own free grace and love, has bestowed himself as a portion upon those who have deserved to have their portion among devils and damned spirits, in those torments that are endless, ceaseless, and remediless.

The heathens thought that their gods and goddesses loved some certain trees, for some lovely good that was in them; for Jupiter loved the oak for durance, and Neptune the cedar for stature, and Apollo the laurel for greenness, and Venus the poplar for whiteness, and Pallas the vine for fruitfulness. But what should move the God of gods to love us, who were so unworthy, so filthy, so empty, so beggarly, that were trees indeed—but such as Jude mentions, "corrupt, fruitless, twice dead, and plucked up by the roots"? Jude 12. The question may be resolved in these words--he loves us because he loves us. The root of all divine love to us lies only in the bosom of God. But,

(2.) Secondly, **Their title to God as their portion is founded upon God's free and voluntary donation of himself to them in the**

**covenant of grace**, Ezek 11:19; Heb 8:10-13. In the covenant of grace, God has freely bestowed himself upon his people. Jer 32:38,40, "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God—and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." The covenant of grace is the great charter, it is the Magna Charta of all a saint's spiritual privileges and immunities. Now in this great charter, the Lord has proclaimed himself to be his people's God. Jer 10:16, "The portion of Jacob is the former of all things; the Lord Almighty is his name." He who is the former of all things, even the Lord Almighty, is the portion of Jacob; and he is Jacob's portion, by virtue of that covenant of grace--which is a free, a full, a rich, and an everlasting covenant—a covenant that he will never break, nor alter, nor falsify; a covenant that he has sworn to make good, as you may see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. [Psalm 89:34-35; Isaiah 54:9-10; Psalm 111:5; Psalm 105:9; Mic 7:20; Heb 6:13-19; Luke 1:73]

That covenant of grace, whereby God gives himself to be his people's God and portion, he is bound to make good by his oath; and, therefore, certainly God will never commit perjury. The Egyptians, though heathens, so hated perjury, that if any man did but swear "By the life of the king," and did not perform his oath, that man was to die, and no gold was to redeem his life. To think that God will not make good that covenant that he has bound himself by oath to make good, is blasphemy, yes, it is to debase him below the very heathen. All laws, both divine and human, have left no such bond of assurance to tie and fasten one to another, as that of an oath or covenant; which, as they are to be taken in sincerity, so they are to be kept inviolably. Certainly, the covenant and oath of the great God, is not like a gypsy's knot, that is fast or loose at pleasure. He will be sure, faithfully and inviolably to keep his covenant and his oath with his people. But,

(3.) Thirdly, **Their title to God as their God and portion, is founded and bottomed upon that marriage union that is between God and his people**, Jer 3:13-14. Hos 2:19-20, 23, "And I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you

will acknowledge the Lord. I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'" This threefold repetition, "I will betroth you," I will betroth you," I will betroth you," notes three things,

[1.] First, the certainty of their marriage union and communion with God.

[2.] Secondly, The excellency and dignity of their marriage union and communion with God. And,

[3.] Thirdly, The difficulty of believing their "marriage union and communion with God. There is nothing that Satan does so much envy and oppose, as he does the soul's marriage union and communion with God; and therefore God fetches it over again and again and again, "I will betroth you unto me," etc. And so in that Isaiah 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." And so, Isaiah 62:5, "As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you."

I have read of five sisters, of the same birth, pedigree and race, whereof one was married to a knight, another to an earl, a third to a gentleman, a fourth to a mean man, and the fifth to a filthy beggar. Though they were all alike by birth and descent, yet their difference did lie in their marriage. We are all alike by creation, by the fall, by nature, and by the first birth; it is only our marriage union and communion with God that differences us from others, and that exalts and lifts us up above others. Look, as the husband is the wife's by marriage union and communion, so God is the believer's God and portion, lay virtue of that marriage union and communion that is between God and the believer. And let thus much suffice for the second thing.

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

I shall come now to the third thing, and that is, to make some PRACTICAL APPLICATION of this blessed and glorious truth to ourselves; and, therefore,

Is it so, that God is the saint's portion, and that he is such an excellent, and such a transcendent portion above all other portions, as has been fully evidenced? Then,

[1.] First, **Let not the saints who have God for their portion fret and vex themselves, because of those earthly portions which God commonly bestows upon the worst of men.** There is a great aptness in the best of men to envy those earthly portions which God often bestows upon the worst of men. The lights of the sanctuary have burnt dim, stars of no small magnitude have twinkled, men of eminent parts, famous in their generations for religion and piety, have staggered in their judgments, to see the flourishing estate of the wicked. It made Job to complain, Job 21:7-16, and Job 24:12, and Jeremiah to expostulate with God, Jer 12:1-2, and David even to faint and sink, Psalm 73.

To see the prosperity of the ungodly; to see the wicked in wealth and the saints in want; the wicked in their robes and the saints in their rags; the wicked honored and the saints despised; the wicked exalted and the saints debased; the wicked upon thrones and saints upon dunghills—is a sight that has sadly put the best of men sometimes to fretting. But this is a temper of spirit that does in no way befit those who have God for their portion. Therefore the psalmist, in Psalm 37, cautions the saints against it no less than three times, as you may see in Psalm 37:1, 7-8. There is nothing that does so ill become a saint who has God for his portion, as to be sick of the frets. And to prevent this mischief, this sickness, the precept is doubled, and redoubled, "fret not, fret not, fret not." Those who have God for their portion should never fret or fume, storm or rage, because some are greater than they, or richer than they, or higher than they, or more honorable than they—because all their prosperity is nothing but an unhappy happiness; it is nothing but a banquet, like Haman's, before execution; and what man is there, that is in his wits, who would envy a malefactor who meets with an amusement as he is going along to execution?

All a wicked man's delicate meats, his fine sweets, and his murdering morsels, are sauced; and all his pleasant and delightful drinks are spiced—with the wrath and displeasure of an angry God! Why then should you fret and vex at their prosperity? What madness and folly would it be in a man who is heir to many millions, to envy a stage player that is clothed like a king—but yet not heir to one foot of land, no, nor worth one penny in all the world, and who at night must put off his royal apparel, and the next day put on his beggarly habit? Oh, sirs! it will be but a little, little while—before the great God will disrobe the wicked of all their prosperity, felicity, and worldly glory, and clothe them with the rags of shame, scorn, and contempt forever. Therefore, oh what folly and madness would it be for those who are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ of all the glory of heaven, to envy the prosperity of the wicked, Rom 8:17.

**The prosperity of the wicked lays them open to the worst and greatest SINS.**

[1.] First, It lays them open to all uncleanness and filthiness, Jer 5:7-8.

[2.] Secondly, It lays them open to pride and contempt of God, Psalm 73:3-13; Deut 32:15.

[3.] Thirdly, It lays them open to vex, oppress, tyrannize, persecute, insult, and triumph over the poor people of God, as you may see in Pharaoh, Saul, Ahab, Jezebel, Haman, and the scribes and pharisees.

[4.] Fourthly, It lays them open to a neglect and slighting of the ways of God, and of the ordinances of God, Job 21:5-16; Mal 3:13-15; Jer 22:21. When the protestants in France were in their prosperity, they slighted powerful preachings, etc., and began to relish a vain frothy way of preaching and living, which ushered in the massacre upon them. Moulin hit it, when, speaking of the French protestants, he said, "when the papists hurt us and persecute us for reading the scriptures, we burn with zeal to be reading of them; but now persecution is over, our Bibles are like old almanacs."

[5.] Fifthly, It lays them open to a stupidity, unmindfulness, and forgetfulness of the afflictions of the people of God, Amos 6:1-8.

Pharaoh's chief butler was no sooner set down in the seat of prosperity—but quite contrary to his promise, he easily forgets Joseph in misery.

[6.] Sixthly, It lays them open to dreadful apostasy from the ways and worship of God, Deut 32:15-18. No sooner was Israel possessed of the good land which flowed with milk and honey, etc.—but they forsook the true worship of God, and fell to the worshiping of idols, for which at last the good land spewed them out as a generation cursed and abhorred by God.

[7.] Seventhly, It lays them open to all carnal security, as you may see in the old world—their prosperity cast them into a bed of security, and their security ushered in a flood of sin, and that flood of sin ushered in a flood of wrath, Matt 24:37-39.

[8.] Eighthly, It lays them open to idolatry, which is a God-provoking and a land-destroying sin, Hos 2:6-8, and Hos 4:6-7, etc. Ah, sirs! who can seriously consider of the dreadful sins that the prosperity of the wicked lays them open to, and yet fret and vex at their prosperity?

Again, as their prosperity lays them open to the greatest sins, so their **prosperity lays them open to the greatest TEMPTATIONS.** Witness their tempting of *themselves*, and their own lusts; and witness their temptings of *others* to the worst of wickedness and villainies; and witness their frequent tempting and provoking of the great *God* to his own face; and witness their daily, yes, their hourly tempting of *Satan* to tempt their own souls. O sirs! as there is no condition that lays people open to such great transgressions as prosperity does, so there is no condition that lays people open to such horrid temptations as prosperity does; and why then should God's holy ones envy wicked men's prosperity, and worldly glory, etc.

Again, **Their prosperity, and worldly felicity and glory, is all the portion—and all the heaven and happiness that ever they are likely to have.** Psalm 17:14, "From men of the world, who have their portion in this life." Certainly, men whose hearts are worldly, whose minds are worldly, whose spirits are worldly, whose desires are worldly, whose hopes are worldly, and whose main ends are worldly—have only

the world for their portion; and what a pitiful perishing portion is that! Men that choose the world as their portion, and that delight in the world as their portion, and that trust to the world as their portion, and that in straits run to the world as their portion, and that take content and satisfaction in the world as their portion; doubtless these have never known what it is to have God for their portion.

That is a very heart-cutting and soul-killing word that you have in that Matt 6:2, "Verily I say unto you, that they have their reward." The scribes and pharisees desired the eyes of men, the praise of men, and the applause of men, for a reward of their alms, etc., and Christ tells them, that they have their reward; not God's reward—but theirs; that is, that reward that they had propounded to themselves, as the prime and ultimate end of their actions. And doubtless that word was a thunderbolt to Dives, "Remember that during your life you received your good things, just as Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, while you are in agony." Luke 16:25. Wicked men have their best here, their worst is to come. They have their comforts here, their torments are to come. They have their joys here, their sorrows are to come. They have their heaven here, their hell is to come.

Gregory being advanced to great preferment, professed that there was no scripture that struck so much terror and trembling into his heart, as that scripture did, "Here you have your reward." [Matt 6:2,5,16] Had wicked men but their eyes in their heads, and a little understanding in their hearts, and life in their consciences, they would quickly conclude that it is hell on this side hell, for a man to have all his portion in this world; and why then should you envy the prosperity of the wicked?

Again, **All their prosperity is cursed unto them**; as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Deut 28:15-68; Lev 26:14-89; Prov 3:33; Mal 2:2] All their comforts are cursed. There are snares on all their tables, and poison in all their cups, and the plague in all their fine clothes, etc. Dionysius the tyrant, to show Damocles, one of his flatterers, the felicity, or rather the infelicity, of a king, attired him as a king, and set him at the table, served as a king; and while he was in his imperial robes, he caused a naked sword, with the point downward, to be hung just over his head by a horse hair, which made Damocles to tremble, and to refrain

from both food and mirth. Though the feast was a royal feast, and the attendance royal attendance, and the music royal music—yet Damocles, for his life, could not taste of any of those rich varieties that were before him, nor take any comfort or contentment in any other part of his royal entertainment, because of the sword, the sword—which hung but by a single hair over his head. O sirs! a sword, a sharp sword, a two-edged sword, a sword of displeasure, a sword of wrath, a sword of vengeance—hangs over the head of every wicked person when he is in his most prosperous and flourishing condition! And had sinners but eyes to see this sword, it would be as the handwriting upon the wall; it would cause their thoughts to be troubled, and their countenances to be changed, and their joints to be loosed, and their knees to be dashed one against another! Why, then, should Christians fret and vex at the prosperity of the wicked?

Again, **When wicked men are at the highest, then are they nearest their fall**; as you may see in Psalm 37, and Psalm 73, and in those great instances of Pharaoh, Adonibezek, Benhadad, Ahab, Sennacherib, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Herod, etc. [Exod 14; Judg 1:6-7; 1 Kings 20,22; 2 Kings 19; Esther 6:4; Dan 5] Look! as the ship is soonest cast away when she is full sail, so when wicked men are at the top—when they are at the height of all their pomp, bravery, and worldly glory—then God usually tumbles them down into the very gulf of misery! The great ones of the world have suddenly fallen from their highest honors and dignities, and have been sorely and sadly exercised with the greatest scorns and calamities. Let me give you this in a few remarkable instances.

Valerian, the Roman emperor, fell from being an emperor to be a footstool to Sapor, the king of Persia, as often as he took horse.

Valens the emperor, being wounded in a fight with the Goths, in his flight he betook himself to a poor cottage, wherein he was burnt by the Goths.

Aurelianus, the Roman emperor, brought king Tetricus, and the noble queen Zenobia of Palmyra, in triumph to Rome in golden chains.

Bajazet, a proud emperor of the Turks, being taken prisoner by

Tamberlain, was bound in chains of gold, and used him for a footstool when he mounted his horse. And when he ate meals, he made him gather crumbs under his table and eat them for his food.

Caesar, having bathed his sword in the blood of the senate and his own countrymen, is, after a while, miserably murdered in the senate by his own friends, Cassius and Brutus, to show that they are but the scourges and rods of the Almighty, which he will cast into the fire as soon as he has done with them.

The victorious emperor, Henry the Fourth, who in sixty-two battles was victorious, fell to that poverty and misery before he died, that he was forced to beg in his old age, whereupon he broke forth into that speech of Job, "Have pity upon me, O my friends, for the hand of the Lord has touched me," Job 19:21. He died of grief and poverty.

King Guidimer, who was once a potent king of the Vandals—was brought so low as to entreat his friend to send him a sponge, a loaf of bread, and a harp—a sponge to dry up his tears, a loaf of bread to maintain his life, and an harp to solace himself in his misery.

Dionysius, king of Sicily, was such a cruel tyrant that his people banished him. After his banishment he went to Corinth, where he lived a base and contemptible life. At last he became a schoolmaster, that so, when he could no longer tyrannize over men, he might over boys.

Great Pompey, who used to boast that he could raise all Italy in arms with a stamp of his foot, had not so much as room to be buried in.

William the Conqueror's corpse lay three days unburied, his interment being hindered by one that claimed the ground to be his.

Pythias pined to death for lack of bread, who once was able to entertain and maintain Xerxes's mighty army.

Philip de Comines reports of a Duke of Exeter, who though he had married Edward the Fourth's sister—yet he saw him in the low countries begging barefoot.

And so Belisarius, a most famous general, and the only man living in his time for glorious victories, riches, and renown—yet in his old age he had his eyes put out by the empress Theodora; and being led at last in a string, he was forced to cry out, 'Give a crust to old blind Belisarius!'

By all these royal instances, you see the truth of that which once a royal slave hinted to Sesostris. The story runs thus: Sesostris having taken many of his neighbor kings prisoners, he made them to pull his chariot by turns. Now, it so happened that one of these royal slaves, as he was drawing in the chariot, had his eye almost continually fixed on the wheels, which Sesostris observing, asked him why he looked so seriously upon the wheels. He answered, that the moving of that spoke lowest which was even now highest, put him in mind of the instability of fortune. Sesostris, duly weighing the parable, would never after be drawn by his royal slaves any more.

By what has been said, it is more evident that when wicked men are highest they are nearest their fall; and that none fall so certainly and so suddenly, and under such dreadful calamities and miseries, as those who have been the most highly advanced in all worldly dignities and glories. And why, then, should any fret or vex at their outward prosperity or worldly felicity?

Again, **God will bring them to an account for all those talents of power, of honor, of riches, of trust, of time, of interest that God has given them in the world;** and the more they have employed the liberality and bounty of God against God or his glory, or interest, or people—the shorter shall be their felicity, and the more endless shall be their misery, Matt 25:14-31. The greatest account and the greatest damnation commonly attends the great ones of the world. I have read of Philip the Third of Spain, whose life was free from gross evils, professing that he would rather lose all his kingdoms than offend God willingly; yet being in the agony of death, and considering more thoroughly of that account he was to give to God, fear struck him, and these words broke from him, "Oh, would to God I had never reigned! Oh that those years I have spent in my kingdom, I had lived a private life in the wilderness! Oh that I had lived a solitary life with God, how much more confidently would I have gone to the throne of God! What does all my glory profit me

now—but that I have so much the more torment in my death, and the greater account to give up to God!"

I have read of a soldier, who, about to die for taking a bunch of grapes contrary to his general's command, as he was going along to execution, he went eating of his grapes, whereupon one of his fellow-soldiers rebuked him, saying, What! are you eating your grapes now you are going to execution? The poor fellow replied, 'O, friend, do not envy me my grapes; for I shall pay a dear price for them, I shall lose my life for them;' and so accordingly he did.

So I say, Oh you who have God for your portion, do not envy, do not fret and vex, at the prosperity of the wicked; for what though they have more than their heart can wish, what though they live in pleasure and wallow in all carnal and sensual delights, etc.—yet they have a sad account to give up to God, and they shall pay dear at last for all their worldly enjoyments. For without sound repentance on their part, and pardoning grace on God's part, they shall not only lose their lives—but they shall also forever lose their immortal souls. Therefore never fret at their prosperity!

O sirs, remember that Lazarus did not fret nor fume because Dives had robes for his rags; and delicacies for his scraps. Lazarus very well knew that though he was without any earthly good—yet he was not without God. He had a guard of glorious angels to transport his holy, precious, heaven-born soul into Abraham's bosom. He knew that it was better to beg on earth, than to beg in hell. O sirs, what is darkness compared to light, earth compared to heaven, chaff compared to wheat, tin compared to silver, dross compared to gold, or pebbles compared to pearls? No more are all earthly portions compared to that God, who is the saints' portion; and, therefore, let not the saints, who have such a matchless portion, envy the prosperity and felicity of wicked men.

It is the justice of envy to torment the envious; and, therefore, shun it as you would poison in your food, or a serpent in the way. A man were better have a serpent tumbling up and down in his bowels, than to have envy agnawing in his soul. Envy is as *pernicious* a wickedness, as it is a *foolish* and a *groundless* wickedness. Envy is a scourge to scourge the soul; it is a serpent to sting the soul; it is a poison to swell the soul; it is a saw to saw

the soul; it is a moth that corrupts the soul, and it is a canker that eats up the soul. Therefore fly from it, as you would fly from the most cruel and destroying adversary!

O sirs, to be angry, because God is bountiful to others! To frown, because God smiles upon others; to be bitter, because God is sweet in his dealings with others; and to sigh, because God multiplies favors and blessings upon others; what is this but to turn others' good into our own hurt, others' glory and mercy into our own punishment and torment? And if this be not to create a hell in our own hearts, I am much mistaken.

I shall conclude this first inference with the counsel of the prophet in that Psalm 49:16-17, "Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him." When the bodies of the wicked are rotting in their graves, and their souls are roaring in hell, none of their worldly greatness, pomp, state, glory, gallantry, riches, houses, or revenues, shall descend after them to administer one drop of comfort to them. Therefore never envy their outward prosperity or worldly glory. "This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me—until I entered the sanctuary of God; then *I understood their final destiny*. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!" Psalm 73.

(2) Secondly, If the saints have such an excellent, such a transcendent, and such a matchless portion, oh then, **let them be content with their present condition**, let them sit down satisfied and contented, though they have but a handful of meal in their barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, 1 Kings 17:12. O sirs, in having of God you have **much**, in having of God you have **enough**, in having of God you have **all**! Why then should you not sit down quiet with your present concition? Certainly, if much will not satisfy you, if enough will not satisfy you, if all will not satisfy you—then nothing will satisfy you.

Heb 13:5, "Let your lives be without covetousness (or love of silver, as the Greek word signifies); and be content with such things as you have (or as

the Greek has it, be content with present things)—for he has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." There are five negatives in the Greek, "I will not, not, not, not, not leave you nor forsake you;" fully to assure and fully to satisfy the people of God that he will never forsake them, and that he will everlastingly stick close to them. What does this unparalleled repetition—"I will never, never, never, never, never," import but this, "I will ever, ever, ever, yes and forever and ever take care of you, and look after you, and be mindful of you." Though they had changed their glory for contempt, Heb 11:36-38, their fine raiment for sheepskins and goatskins, their silver for brass, their plenty for scarcity, their fullness for emptiness, their stately houses for holes and caves, and dens of the earth—yet they are to be contented and satisfied with present things, upon this very ground—that God will always cleave to them, and that he will never turn his back upon them. The Hebrew Christians had been stripped and plundered of all their goods that were good for anything, and yet they must be contented, they must sit down satisfied, with their hands upon their mouths, though all were gone, Heb 10:34. Though men cannot bring their means to their minds—yet they must bring their minds to their means, and then they will sit down in silence, though they have but a rag on their backs, a penny in their purse, and a crust in their cupboards, etc.

O Christians! a little will satisfy **nature**; less will satisfy **grace**; though nothing will satisfy men's **lusts**; and why then should not Christians be contented with a little? O friends! you have but a short journey to go, you have but a little way home, and a little will serve to bear you UP, until you come to heaven. Therefore be contented with a little. To have more than will serve to bring a man to his journey's end is but a burden. One staff is helpful to a man in his journey—but a bundle is hurtful; and this, doubtless, Jacob well understood when he made that proposal in Gen 28:20-21, "If God will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, then shall the Lord be my God." Jacob does not say, If God will give me delicacies and sweets to eat—he shall be my God! Oh no! But if he will give me but bread to eat, though it be ever so coarse, and ever so black, and ever so dry—he shall be my God. He does not say, If God will give me so many hundreds, or so many thousands a year—he shall be my God! Oh no! But if he will give me bread to eat—he shall be my God. Nor he does not say, If God will give me so many thousands in my purse, a comfortable home, and a thriving trade—he shall be my God! Oh no! But if he will give me bread to eat—he shall be my God. Nor he does not say, If God will give me costly apparel, or rich and royal raiment to put on—he shall be my God! Oh no! But if God will give me raiment to put on, though it be ever so mean and poor—he shall be my God. If Jacob may but have a little bread to feed him, and a few clothes to cover him—it is as much as he looks for.

Look! as a wicked man in the fullness of his sufficiency is in straits, as Job speaks, Job 20:22, so a holy man, in the fullness of his straits, enjoys an all-sufficiency in God, as you may see in Jacob. O Christians! though you have but little—yet you have the highest and the noblest title that can be to that little that you do enjoy; for you have all in God, as the apostle shows in that large charter of a Christian, 1 Cor 3:21-23, which the wicked do not. Now, a hundred a year upon a good title is a better estate than a thousand a year upon a cracked, flawed title. Saints have the best title under heaven for all they enjoy, be it little or be it much. But all the titles that sinners have to their earthly enjoyments are but defective titles, yes, in comparison of the saints' titles, they are no titles.

Again, **That little that a saint has, he has it from the special love**

**and favor of God**; he has it from a reconciled God, Prov 15:17. Now, a little from special love is better than a great deal from a general providence. A penny from a reconciled God—is better than a pound from a bountiful God; a shilling from God as a father—is a better estate than a hundred from God as a creator. The kiss that a king gave to one in the story, was a greater gift than the golden cup that he gave to another; a little, with the kisses of God's mouth, is better than all the gold of Ophir, Song 1:2. A drop of mercy from God's special love is better than a sea of mercy from God's common bounty. Look! as one draught of clear, sweet spring water is more pleasing, satisfying, and delightful to the palate—than a sea of brackish salt water; so one draught out of the fountain of special grace is more pleasing, satisfying, and delightful to a gracious soul—than a whole sea of mercy from a spring of common grace! Therefore do not wonder when you see a Christian sit down contented with a little.

Again, **That little that a Christian has shall be certainly blessed and sanctified to him**, 1 Tim 4:3-5; Titus 1:15; Jer 32:41, etc. Though your mercies, O Christian, are ever so few, and ever so base—yet they shall assuredly be blessed unto you. The Lord has not only promised that he will bless your blessings to you—but he has also sworn by himself that in blessing, he will bless you; and how dare you then, O Christian, to think that the great and faithful God will be guilty of a lie, or that which is worse, of perjury? Gen 22:16-17.

Now, a little *blessed by God*—is better than a great deal *cursed by God*! A little blessed—is better than a world enjoyed; a pound blessed—is better than a thousand cursed; a black crust blessed—is better than a feast cursed; the gleanings blessed—are better than the whole harvest cursed; a drop of mercy blessed—is better than a sea of mercy cursed; Lazarus's crumbs blessed—was better than Dives' delicacies cursed; Jacob's little blessed unto him—was better than Esau's great estate which was cursed unto him. It is always better to have scraps with God's blessing—than to have manna and quails with God's curse; a thin table with God's blessing—is always better than a full table with a snare, Psalm 78:18,32; a threadbare coat with God's blessing—is better than a purple robe cursed; a hole, a cave, a den, a barn, a chimney-corner, with God's blessing—is better than stately palaces with a curse; a woolen cap blessed—is better

than a golden crown cursed; and it may be that emperor understood as much, that said of his crown, when he looked on it with tears, 'If you knew the cares that are under this crown, you would never stoop to take it up!'

And, therefore, why should not a Christian be contented with a little, seeing his little shall be blessed unto him? Isaac tills the ground, and sows his seed, and God blesses him with a hundred fold, Gen 26:12; and Cain tills the ground, and sows his seed—but the earth is cursed to him, and commanded not to yield its produce, Gen 4:12. Oh, therefore, never let a Christian murmur because he has but a little—but rather let him be still a-blessing of that God, who **has** blessed his little, and who **does** bless his little, and who **will** bless his little to him!

Again, **That little estate that a righteous man has, is most commonly a more lasting, a more abiding, a more permanent, and a more enduring estate—than the great and large estates of the wicked are**, Prov 15:16, and Prov 16:8. Psalm 37:16, "A little that a righteous man has—is better than the riches of many wicked." One old piece of gold—is worth more than a thousand new pennies; and one box of pearls—is more worth than many loads of pebbles; and one hundred pounds a year forever—is better than many hundreds in hand.

It is very observable the psalmist does not simply say, the estate—but the rich estate; the riches not of one, or a few—but of many wicked, are not comparable to that little that a righteous man has. The Hebrew word that is here rendered riches, signifies also a multitude, or an abundance, or store of riches. A little that a righteous man has is better than the multitude of riches, or the abundance of riches, or the store of riches that many wicked men have; and he gives you the reason of this in Psalm 37:17. "For the arms of the wicked shall be broken—but he upholds (or under-props) the righteous." By the arms of the wicked," you are to understand their strength, their valor, their power, their wit, their wealth, their abundance, which is all the arms they have to support and bear up themselves in the world with. Now, these arms shall be broken, and when they are broken, then, even then, will God uphold the righteous, that is, God will be a continual overflowing fountain of good to his righteous ones, so that they shall never lack, though all the springs of the wicked

are dried up round about them.

O Sirs! there are so many moths, and so many dangers, and so many crosses, and so many losses, and so many curses—which daily attend the great estates of wicked men, that they are very rarely long-lived. Ah! how many in this great city are there who have built their nests on high, and who have thought that they had laid up riches for many years, and that have said in their hearts, that their lands, and stocks, and trades, and houses, and pompous estates should abide forever—who are now broken in pieces like a potter's vessel! Ah! how often does the pride, the oppression, the lying, the cheating, the overreaching, the swearing, the cursing, the whoring, the covetousness, the drunkenness, and the wantonness of the wicked—cut the throat of all their mercies! These are the wicked nesses, which, like a fire—burns up all their outward enjoyments; and which turns their earthly paradise into a hell. It is the wickedness of the wicked which causes their prosperity to wither, and which provokes God to turn their plenty into scarcity, their glory into contempt, and their honor into shame.

It is very observable, that in the holy Scriptures the prosperous estates of the wicked are frequently compared to things of a **fleeting existence**, [Job 14:2; Job 21:17-18; Isaiah 29:5; 2 Kings 19:26; Job 24:24; Job 15:33; Job 20:8] to a *shadow* which soon passes away; to *chaff*, which a puff, a blast of wind easily disperses and scatters; to *grass*, which quickly withers before the sun; to tops of corn, which in an instant are cut off; to the unripe grape, which suddenly drops down; yes, to a *dream* in the night; and what is a dream—but a quick fancy, and a momentary vanity? All the **riches** that the wicked gain—either by their trades, or by their friends, or by their great places, or by their high offices, or by their subtle contrivances, or by their sinful compliances; and all the **honor** they gain in the court, or in the camp, or in the school—is but light and fleeting; it is but like the crackling of thorns under a pot. They are fading vanities—which commonly die before those who enjoy them are laid in the dust.

Oh, therefore, let all Christians be contented with their little, seeing that their little shall outlast the large estates of wicked and ungodly men! A man who has God for his portion can truly say that which no wicked man in the world can say, namely, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," Psalm 23:6. The psalmist does not say that goodness and mercy should follow him a day, or a few days, or many days—but that "goodness and mercy should follow him all the days of his life." The Hebrew word which is here rendered *to follow*, signifies to persecute; says the psalmist, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me, as the persecutor follows him he persecutes;" that is, it shall follow me frequently, it shall follow me constantly, it shall follow me swiftly, it shall follow me earnestly, it shall follow me unweariedly. The word signifies a studious, anxious, careful, diligent following; it is a metaphor that is taken from beasts and birds of prey, which follow and fly after their prey with the greatest eagerness, closeness, and unweariedness imaginable. Thus shall mercy and loving-kindness follow David all the days of his life. And if in a temptation, he should prove so weak and so foolish as to run away from goodness and mercy—yet goodness and mercy would follow him, like as the sun going down follows with his warm beams—the traveler who walks eastward.

**O—but now the mercies of the wicked are short-lived!** Though the wicked flourish and spread themselves like a green tree one day; yet they are cut down the next, and there is neither root nor branch to be found, tale nor tidings to be heard of them. For in a moment, they, with all their greatness, state, pomp, and glory—are utterly vanished and banished out of the world, Psalm 37:35-37. And so, Psalm 34:10, "The young lions lack and suffer hunger—but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." Young lions are lusty, strong, fierce, and active to seek their prey, and yet for all that, they shall lack and suffer hunger. By **young lions**, understand:

[1.] First, All wicked rulers; men who are in the highest places and authority, as the lion is the king of beasts, Prov 28:15; Ezek 32:2.

[2.] Secondly, By lions they understand all cruel oppressors, who are still oppressing and grinding of the faces of the poor. Prov 30:30; "rich oppressors," as the Septuagint renders it, "who live on the spoil of the poor, and are never satisfied."

[3.] Thirdly, By lions, they understand the tyrants and the mighty Nimrods of the world, who are sometimes called lions, Jer 2:15; 1 Chron

11:22; Nah 2:13.

[4.] And lastly, By lions, they understand all the crafty and subtle politicians of the earth. Ezek 38:13, "The lion lurks very craftily and secretly for his prey." The sum of all is this—That wicked men who are in the highest authority, and that great oppressors, cruel tyrants, and crafty politicians—shall be impoverished, and brought to poverty, beggary, and misery. And this we have often seen verified before our eyes.

O Christian! what though you have but a little of this world—yet the God of all mercies, and all the mercies of God; the God of all comforts, and all the comforts of God—are yours! What more would you have? In God is fullness—all fullness, infinite fullness; and if this, with a little of the world, will not satisfy you—I know not what will. If a God for your portion will not content you, all the world will never content you. Shall Diogenes, a heathen, be more content with his tub to shelter him, and with his dish to drink in, than Alexander was with all his conquests? And shall not a Christian sit down contented and satisfied in the enjoyment of God for his portion, though he has but a tub to shelter him, bread to feed him, and a dish of water to refresh him?

(3.) Thirdly, If God is the saint's portion—those sinners are much mistaken, who judge the saints to be the most unhappy men in the world. There are no men under heaven in such a blessed and happy estate as the saints are, Balaam himself being judge, Num 23:5-11. A man who has God for his portion, is honorable even in rags, Psalm 16:3. He has some beams, some rays, of the majesty and glory of God stamped upon his soul, and shining upon his face, and glittering in his life; and he who is so blind as not to behold this, is worse than Balaam the witch. Though the blind Jews could see no form, nor loveliness, nor beauty in Christ that they should desire him, Isaiah 53:2; yet the wise men who came from the east could see his divinity sparkling in the midst of the straw; they could see a heavenly majesty and glory upon him when he lay among the beasts, when he lay in a manger, Luke 2:7. Witness their tedious journey to find him, and witness their worshiping of him, and witness those rich and royal presents which they brought unto him, Matt 2:11.

So though the blind sots of the world can see no beauty, nor loveliness,

nor glory, in the saints, or upon the saints—which should render them amiable and desirable in their eyes; yet God, and Christ, and angels, and those who are wise in heart and wise to salvation, can see a great deal of divine beauty, majesty, and glory upon all those who have God for their portion. There is no happiness compared to that of having God for a man's portion. Psalm 144:15, "Happy is that people who are in such a case" (but give me that word again), "yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." **He who does not have God for his portion, can never be happy; and he who enjoys God for his portion can never be miserable.**

Augustine, speaking of one who, passing by a stately house which had fair lands about it, and asking another whom he met to whom that house and lands belonged, he answered, 'to such an one.' Oh, says he, that is a happy man indeed. No, says the other, not so happy as you think; for it is no such happiness to have that house and land—but he is happy indeed, who has the Lord for his God—for that is a privilege which exceeds all things put together. For, says he, he who has honor and riches may go to hell for all them—but he who has God to be his God, is sure to be everlastingly happy.

According as a man's portion is, so is he. Now, if God is a man's portion, who is the spring, the fountain, the top of all excellency and glory—then certainly that man must needs be an excellent man who has God for his portion; and upon this score it is that the righteous man is more excellent than his neighbor. Let the righteous man's neighbor be ever so great, and ever so rich, and ever so mighty, and ever so noble—yet if he has not God for his portion, the righteous man is more excellent than he. And the reason is evident, because he has that God for his portion—which is the most eminent and excellent portion. O sirs! if God is most excellent, if God is alone excellent, then they must needs be most excellent, who have God for their portion.

It is very observable that, according to the excellency of God, the excellency of the saints is in some proportion hinted at in Scripture; as in that Deut 33:26,29, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun;" and presently it follows, "Happy are you, O Israel; who is like unto you?" or, Oh the happinesses of you, O Israel! Oh the multiplied happiness, the

heaped-up happiness—which attends Israel! The saints who have God for their portion, are the world's paragons; they are worthies "of whom this world is not worthy;" they are such great, such noble, such worthy worthies—that this world is not worthy to think on them, to look on them, to wait on them, or to enjoy their company. One saint who has God for his portion—is more worth than all the millions of sinners in the world that have not God for their portion. God delights to reflect his glory upon his saints; for as there are none like to God, so there are none like to the people of God. Look! as God is great, so his people are great; and so in that 2 Sam 7:22-23, "Therefore you are great, O Lord God; for there is none like you, neither is there any God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears; and what one nation in the earth is like your people?" Look! as the excellency of God rises—so in a proportion the excellency of the saints rises; and Look! as there are no gods in all the world which are so excellent as God is—so there are no people in all the world who are so excellent as the people of God are.

Everyone who has God for his portion resembles the child of a king, as Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon of his brethren, Judg 8:18. If you look upon their divine and heavenly origin, you shall find that they are born of the blood-royal, and that they are the sons of the King of kings, and Lord of lords! Yes, all the saints who have God for their portion, are kings. Rev 1:6, "And has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." [Rev 17:14; Rev 5:10; Dan 7:27; 1 Cor 3:22-23; Psalm 34:14; Heb 1:14; Psalm 45:13; 1 Cor 1:30] They have the power, sovereignty, and authority of kings, they are privileged as kings, they are guarded as kings, they are adorned as kings, they are entertained as kings, they feed as kings—they feed high, they live upon God and Christ, and all the glory of heaven; and they are clothed as kings—they are clothed with Christ's righteousness, and with the garments of joy and gladness.

Kings have great alliance, and so have the saints who have God for their portion. Kings have a very great influence, and so have those who have God for their portion. A man in rags who has God for his portion—is a more honorable person than the greatest monarch on earth, who has only the world for his portion. I have read of Alexander the Great, and of Pompey the Great, and of Charles the Great, and of Abner the Great, and

of Herod the Great; but what were all these great men but grasshoppers, compared to the saints who have God for their portion? Men who have had God for their portion have been very famous, illustrious, and glorious—when they have been friendless, and houseless, and penniless; yes, when they have been under the swords, and saws, and harrows of persecution.

When Maximian, the tyrant, had plucked out one of Paphnutius the Confessor's eyes, that good emperor Constantine saw such a luster, beauty, and glory upon Paphnutius, that he fell upon him and kissed him; and he kissed that very hole most, wherein one of the Confessor's eyes had been, as being most ravished and delighted with that hole. The name of him who has God for his portion shall live, when the name of the wicked shall rot, Prov 10:7; Psalm 112:9. His name shall be written in golden characters upon marble, when the name of the wicked shall be written in the dust.

The blind besotted world are sadly mistaken, who are ready to set the crown of honor and happiness upon any heads, rather than upon theirs who have God for their portion. Look! as Samuel, beholding the beauty and stature of Eliab, would needs have him anointed, and the crown set upon his head; when the crown was designed for David at the sheepfold, 1 Sam 16:6,12. So vain men are very apt to set the crown of happiness upon their heads who have the greatest share in this world; whereas the crown of happiness and blessedness is only to be set on the heads of those who have God for their portion. What the Queen of Sheba said of Solomon's servants, "Happy are your men, happy are these your servants—who stand continually before you, and who hear your wisdom," 1 Kings 10:8, is here very applicable to the saints—"Happy, happy, yes, thrice happy are those precious sons and daughters of Zion, who have God for their portion." **A man who has God for his portion shall live happily and die happily, and after death he shall remain happy to all eternity.** Therefore we may well cry out, "Oh, the happiness and blessedness of that man who has God for his portion!" But,

(4.) Fourthly, If the saints have such an excellent, such a matchless, portion, oh, then, **let them never set their hearts and affections upon any earthly portions,** Prov 23:5. It is true, O Christian, you may

lay your hand upon an earthly portion—but you must never set your heart upon an earthly portion. Psalm 62:10, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." The Hebrews put the *heart* for the thoughts, affections, love, desire, joy, hope, confidence, etc. If riches increase, oh, set not your thoughts upon them; if riches increase, oh, set not your affections upon them; if riches increase, oh, set not your love upon them, set not your desires upon them, set not your joy and delight upon them; nor ever place your hope or confidence in them.

Oh! what a shame and dishonor would it be, to see men of great estates to rake in dunghills, and to sweep filthy streets! And is it not a greater shame, a greater dishonor, to see those who have the great God for their portion, to set their hearts and affections upon earthly trifles? It was a noble speech of that heathen, Themistocles, who, seeing something glisten like a pearl in the dark, scorned to stoop for it himself—but bid another stoop, saying, 'Stoop you, for you are not Themistocles.' Oh! it is below a holy Christian, a gracious Christian, a noble Christian—who has God for his portion, to stoop to the trifles of this world. **A holy Christian will set his feet upon those very things, which the men of the world set their hearts.**

Rev 12:1, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head was a crown of twelve stars." The church is compared to a woman for her weakness, for her lovingness, for her loveliness, and for her fruitfulness; and being clothed with the Sun of righteousness, she has the moon, that is, the world, under her feet. The church treads under her feet all temporary and transitory things, which are as changeable as the moon. She treads upon all worldly and carnal enjoyments and contentments, as things below her, as things not worthy of her. What vanity is it for a great man to set his heart on bird's nests, and paper kites which boys make fly in the air? And as great, yes, a greater vanity it is for the saints who have God for their portion, to set their hearts upon the poor little low things of this world.

"It is not for you to be a-fishing for minnows—but for towns, forts, and castles," said Cleopatra to Mark Antony. So say I, it is not for you who have God for your portion, to be a-fishing for the honors, riches, and

preferments of the world; but for more grace, more holiness, more communion with God, more power against corruptions, more strength to withstand temptations, more abilities to bear afflictions, more sense of divine love, and more assurance of interest in Christ, and in all that glory and happiness which comes by Christ.

When Alexander heard of the riches of India, he regarded not the kingdom of Macedonia—but gave away his gold; and when he was asked, what he kept for himself? he answered, 'the hope of better and greater things.' O Christians! when you look upon those riches of grace, those riches of glory, those riches of justification, those riches of sanctification, and those riches of consolation—which are in that God who is your portion—how should you disregard, how should you despise, how should you scorn the great things, and the mirthful things of the world! It was a notable speech of one, 'I desire neither wealth nor honor—any more than a feeble horse does an heavy saddle.'

O Christians! you have many thousand excellencies in **God** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in **Christ** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in the **Spirit** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in the **covenant** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in the **gospel** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in the **ordinances** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in **promises** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in **prophecies** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in choice **providences** to set your affections upon, and you have many thousand excellencies in the **saints** to set your affections upon. Therefore, for shame—set not your affections upon things below, set not your hearts upon things which perish, Col 3:1.

A man can never come to set his heart upon any earthly portion—but that God will either embitter it, or lessen it, or cloud it, or wholly strip him of it. Therefore sit loose, I say again, sit loose in your affections to all worldly enjoyments. But,

(5.) Fifthly, If the saints have such a glorious, such an incomparable

portion; then **let them be cheerful and comfortable under all worldly crosses, losses, and troubles**, Acts 5:17-42; Rom 5:2-4. With what a Roman spirit do many vain men of great estates bear up under great losses and crosses; and shall not grace do more than nature? Shall not the Spirit of God do more than a Roman spirit? O sirs, how can you look upon God as your portion, and not bear up bravely under any worldly loss? Heb 10:34. "You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." They had God for their portion, and the joy of the Lord was their strength, and therefore they could rejoice in whatever damage came upon them by the hand of violence.

And so **David** could comfort himself in his God, and encourage himself in his God—when Ziklag was burned, his wives and children carried captive, and the people were ready to stone him, 1 Sam 30:6. Now all was gone, he looks up to God as his portion, and so he bears up bravely and cheerfully in the midst of all extremity of misery.

And so **Habakkuk** was a man of the same noble temper, as you may see in that Hab 3:17-18. "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior."

"Though the fig tree does not bud—yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Ay—but that is nothing, to rejoice in the Lord as long as there is fruit on the vines; ay—but says he, "Though are no grapes on the vines—yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Ay—but that is nothing, to rejoice in the Lord so long as the labor of the olive crop does not fail; ay—but says he, "Though the olive crop fails—yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Ay—but that is nothing, to rejoice in the Lord so long as the fields yield their produce; ay—but says he, "Though the fields produce no food—yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Ay—but that is nothing, to rejoice in the Lord, so long as there are sheep in the pen; ay—but says he, "Though there are no sheep in the pen—yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Ay—but that is nothing, to rejoice in the Lord, so long as there are cattle in the stalls; yes—but says he, "Though there are no cattle in the stalls—yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of

my salvation."

Habakkuk could rejoice in the Lord, and joy in that God who was his portion, not only when all delightful comforts and contentments should fail—but also when all necessary comforts and contentments should fail. Habakkuk was a man of raised spirit; he knew that he had that God for his portion—who contained in himself all comforts and contentments, and who could easily make up the lack of any comfort or contentment; and who would certainly be himself in the place of every comfort and contentment; and in the power of this faith he rejoices and triumphs in a day of thick darkness and gloominess.

1 Sam 1:5,18, "But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion, for he loved Hannah, and her countenance was no more sad." O my brethren, it does never befit those who have God for their portion, to walk up and down the world with clouded countenances, with saddened countenances, or with dejected countenances, etc., and therefore, under all your crosses and losses—wipe your eyes, and walk up and down with pleasant countenances, with cheerful countenances, and with smiling countenances, and this will be an honor to God, and an honor to religion, and an honor to your profession, and an honor to that saintship which is too much slighted and scorned in the world.

Indeed, when wicked men are exercised with crosses and losses, it is no wonder to see them behave like madmen, and see them act bitterly, like Micah, when he cried out, "They have taken away my gods—what more do I have?" Wicked men's bags and goods are their gods; they are their portion, they are their all; and when these are gone—all is gone with them; when these are taken away—all is taken away with them. Therefore it is no wonder to hear them cry out, "Undone, undone!" and to see them sit down and weep, as if they were resolved to drown themselves in their own tears.

But you who have God for your portion—you have such a portion which shall never be taken from you. As Christ told Mary, "You have chosen the better part which shall never be taken from you," Luke 10:42. Therefore it highly concerns you to bear up bravely, as well when you have but little—as when you have much; and as well when you have nothing—as when

you have everything. You shall be sure to enjoy all in God, and God in all; and what more would you have?

Seneca once told a courtier who had lost his son, that he had no cause to mourn either for that or anything else—because Caesar was his friend! O then, what little cause have the saints to mourn for this or that loss—considering that God is their friend; yes, which is more, that God is their portion! I have read of a company of poor Christians, who, being banished to some remote parts, and one seeing them pass along, said, that it was a very sad condition that those poor people were in, to be thus banished from the society of men, and to be made companions with the beasts of the field. True, said another, it would be a sad condition indeed—if they were carried to a place where they could not find their God; but let them be of good cheer, for God goes along with them, and will follow them with the comforts of his grace wherever they go.

Would it not make a man either sigh or laugh to see a man lament and carry on bitterly for the loss of his shoestrings, when his purse is safe; or for the loss of a little stick, when all his goods are safe; or for the burning of a pig-stye, when his dwelling-house is safe; or for the loss of his scabbard, when his life is safe? And why, then, should a Christian lament and take on for the loss of this or that—so long as his God is safe, and his portion is safe? But,

(6.) Sixthly, If the saints have such an excellent and such a transcendent portion, as has been shown—then **away with all sinful shifts, ways, courses, and compliances to gain an earthly portion.** Was it not horrid, yes, hellish baseness in Ahab, who had a whole kingdom at his command, to steal poor Naboth's vineyard, by false swearing, hypocrisy, treachery, cruelty, and murder? 1 Kings 21. But, certainly, it is a far greater baseness and wickedness in those who have God for their portion, or at least pretend to have God for their portion—to be a-swindling, and a-shifting, and a-complying with the lusts of men, and with the abominations of the times; and all to keep what they have, or else to raise themselves, and greaten themselves, and enrich themselves, by others' ruin. These men might do well to make Jer 17:11 their daily companion—"Like a bird that hatches eggs she has not laid, so are those who get their wealth by unjust means. Sooner or later they will lose their riches

and, at the end of their lives, will become poor old fools."

The crafty fox in the fable congratulated himself to think how he had tricked the crow out of his breakfast; but when he had eaten it, and found himself poisoned with it—he wished that he had never meddled with it. O sirs! there is a day a-coming, wherein men shall wish that they had never labored to sin themselves into honors, riches, preferments, high offices, and high places—when God shall let some scalding drops of his wrath to fall upon their spirits—who have sold all their concernments, and their own consciences—to gain riches and high offices! How will they curse the day wherein they were born, and be ready, by the knife or the noose, to put an end to their most wretched days! Oh what a sad and lamentable thing would it be to see men worth many thousands a-year a-purloining from others! But it is a far more sad and lamentable thing to see men who pretend to have God for their portion, to act all this, and more than this—and all to lay up an earthly portion for themselves.

How many be there in these days who pretend very high towards God, and yet "sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes," Amos 2:6; yes, who pollute the name of God, the worship of God; and that slay the souls of men for handfuls of barley, and pieces of bread; and who will say anything, or swear anything, or bow, or crouch to anything—for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, or to be put into one of the priest's offices, Ezek 13:19; 1 Sam 2:36. O Christian, you have all honors and riches and preferments in that God who is your portion; and why then should you go about to sin yourself into the enjoyment of those things which you have already in your God? Have you forgot that Solomon got more hurt by his wealth, than ever he got good by his wisdom? and that David was best in a wilderness, and that our stomachs are usually worse in summer, and that the moon is furthest from the sun when it is fullest of light; and that all that a man gets by breaking with God and his conscience, he may put in his eye; and that the coal that the eagle carried from the sacrifice to her nest, set all on fire.

Have you forgotten what is said of Abraham in that Gen 13:2, namely, "That he was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold?" The Hebrew word which is here rendered *rich*, signifies *heavy*, to show that riches are a very heavy burden, and oftentimes a hindrance in the way to heaven. Oh!

how vain, how uncertain, how vexing, and how fleeting are the great things of the world! How unfit do they make many men to live; and how unwilling do they make many men to die! Oh what is gold in the purse—when there is guilt upon the conscience! What are full bags—when sin and wrath are at the bottom of them! O Christians! you have an infinite fullness in that God who is your portion, and that fills all in all. Why then should you break the hedge—to gain the world? But,

(7.) Seventhly. If the saints have such an excellent, glorious, and incomparable portion, 1 Cor 1:31, oh then **let them glory in their portion; let them rejoice and delight themselves in their portion.** Man is a creature very apt and prone to glory in earthly portions, when he should be a-glorying in the Lord. Jer 9:23-24, "Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches—but let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord." Isaiah 41:16, "You shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 45:25, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

Oh how should the saints, who have God for their portion, make their boast of their God, and rejoice in their God, and glory in their God! Shall the men of the world glory in an earthly portion—and shall not a saint glory in his heavenly portion? Shall they glory in a portion that they have only in hope—and shall not a Christian glory in that portion that he has already in hand? Shall they glory in a portion that they have only in reversion—and shall not a saint glory in that portion that he has in present possession? Shall they glory in their hundreds and thousands a year—and shall not a Christian glory in that God that fills heaven and earth with his glory? In all the scriptures there is no one duty more pressed than this—of rejoicing in God; and indeed, if you consider God as a saint's portion, there is everything in God that may encourage the soul to rejoice in him, and there is nothing in God that may in the least discourage the soul from rejoicing and glorying in him.

O Christians, the "joy of the Lord is your strength," Neh 8:10; it is your

*doing* strength, and your *bearing* strength, and your *suffering* strength, and your *prevailing* strength; it is your strength to *work* for God, and it is your strength to *wait* on God, and it is your strength to exalt and lift up God, and it is your strength to walk with God; it is your strength to live, and your strength to die. Therefore be sure to keep up your joy in God. It is one of the saddest sights in all the world to see a man who has God for his portion, with Cain to walk up and down this world with a dejected countenance. It was holy joy and cheerfulness that made the faces of several martyrs to shine as if they had been the faces of angels. One observes of Crispina, that she was cheerful when she was arrested, and joyful when she was led to the judge, and merry when she was sent to prison, and so she was when bound, and when lift up in a cage, and when examined, and when condemned.

O Christians! how can you number up the several souls that you deject, the foul mouths that you open, and the bad reports that you bring upon the Lord and his ways—by your sad, dejected, and anxious walking! It is very observable that the Lord takes it so very unkindly at his people's hands—when they go sighing, lamenting, and mourning up and down; whereas they should be a-rejoicing and a-delighting of themselves in him and his goodness—that he threatens to pursue them to the death with all manner of calamities and miseries upon that very score. Deut 28:47-48, "Because you have not served the Lord your God with joy and enthusiasm for the abundant benefits you have received, you will serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you. You will be left hungry, thirsty, naked, and lacking in everything. They will oppress you harshly until you are destroyed." But,

(8.) Eighthly. If the saints have such a great, such a large, and such an all-sufficient portion as has been showed they have, then certainly **they shall never lack anything that is good for them**. David tells you that his cup run over, Psalm 23:5-6. The words are an allusion to the Hebrew feasts. David's table was richly and nobly spread, both in sight and spite of all his enemies. In one God—is every good; and what can he lack, who enjoys that God? God is a bundle of all goodness and sweetness. And Look! as God is the best God, so he is the greatest and the fullest good. He can as easily fill the most capacious souls up to the very brim

with all inward and outward excellencies and mercies—as Christ did once fill those waterpots of Galilee up to the very brim with wine, John 2:1-11. If God has enough in himself for himself—then certainly he has enough in himself for us. That water which can fill the sea—can much more easily fill my cup or my pot. "My people shall be satisfied with goodness, says the Lord," Jer 31:14; "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good; and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul," Jer 32:40-41; "My God shall supply all your need," Phil 4:19, or, "My God shall fill up all your need," as he did the widow's vessels in that 2 Kings 4:3-6. Godliness has the promise both of this life and that which is to come, 1 Tim 4:8.

He who has God for his portion, shall have all other things cast into his store, as paper and packing thread is cast into the bargain; or as an handful of corn is cast into the corn you buy; or as hucksters cast in an extra among the fruit you buy; or as an inch of measure is given into a yard of cloth, Matt 6:25,31-33. O sirs, **how can that man be poor, how can that man lack—who has the Lord of heaven and earth for his portion?** Surely he cannot lack light—who enjoys the sun; nor he cannot lack bread—who has all sorts of grain in his barns, nor can he lack water—who has the fountain at his door; no more can he lack anything—who has God for his portion—who is everything, and who will be everything to every gracious soul.

O Christians! the thought, the tongue, the desire, the wish, the conception—all fall short of God, and of that great goodness which he has laid up for those who fear him, Psalm 31:19; and why then should they be afraid of any real lack? Psalm 104:10-31. How does that pretty bird, the robin-redbreast, cheerfully sit and sing in the chamber window, and yet knows not where he shall get the next meal, and at night must take up his lodging in a bush. Oh what a shame is it that men who have God for their portion should act below this little bird.

I have read of famous Mr. Dod, who is doubtless now high in heaven, who intended to marry, was much troubled with fears and cares how he would live in that condition, his incomes being so small that they would but maintain him in a single condition; and looking out at a window, and

seeing a hen scraping for food for her numerous chicks about her, thought thus with himself—"This hen did but live before it had these chickens, and now she lives with all her little ones;" upon which he added this thought also, 'I see the fowls of the air neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet my heavenly Father feeds them,' Matt 6:25; and thus he overcame his fears of lacking any necessity. O Christians! you have such a Father for your portion—as will as soon cease to be—as he will cease to supply you with all things necessary for your good. It was a good saying of one, 'I would desire neither more nor less than enough; for I may as well die of a surfeit as of hunger, and he is rich enough who lacks not bread, and high enough in dignity who is not forced to serve.

Rather than Israel should lack—did not God feed them with manna in the wilderness? and rather than Elijah and the widow should not have their needs supplied—did not God work a miracle, by causing the handful of meal in the barrel, and the little oil in the cruse, to last and hold out until he supplied them in another way? Rather than Elijah shall lack, God will feed him by a raven, and by that miraculous operation save him from a perishing condition. O Christians! all the **attributes** of God are so engaged for you, that you cannot lack; and all the **promises** of God are so engaged to you that you cannot lack; and all the **affections** of God are so set upon you that you cannot lack; and why then should you fear for your necessities?

O Christians! has God given you his Son, his Spirit, his grace, his glory, yes, himself—and will he deny you lesser things, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Romans 8:32. Has he given you those things which are more worth than ten thousand worlds—and will he not give you bread to eat, and clothing to put on? Has he given you those spiritual riches that infinitely exceed and excel all the riches, rubies, and pearls in the world—and will he deny you a little money in your purses to afford your necessities until you come to heaven? **Has he given you a crown—and will he deny you a crust?** Has he given you his royal robes—and will he deny you a few rags? Has he given you a royal palace—and will he deny you a poor cottage to shelter you from the stormy winter and from the scorching summer? Does he feed his enemies, and clothe

his enemies, and protect his enemies, and provide for his enemies—who are under his wrath and curse—and will he not do as much for you, O you of little faith? Will he do so much for those who hate him—and will he not do as much for those who love him? Doubtless he will. Will he feed the ravens, and provide for the ox and the donkey, and clothe the grass of the field; and will he allow you, who are his love, his joy, his delight, to starve at his feet, for lack of necessities? Surely not!

But suppose you were under many real needs—yet certainly this very consideration, that the Lord is your portion, should quiet your hearts, and bear up your spirits bravely under them all. Jerome tells us of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, coming to see him, asked him whether he was not sorely troubled and afflicted for lack of his sight. Oh yes, said Dydimus, it is a very great affliction and grief to me. Whereupon Alexander chide him, saying, Has God given you the excellency of an angel, of a Christian, and are you troubled for that which rats and mice, and brute beasts enjoy? O Christians! if God has given you himself for a portion, then certainly it is a sinful thing, a shameful thing, an unworthy thing for you to be so troubled, afflicted, and grieved—because you lack this and that worldly contentment and enjoyment, which God bestows upon such whose wickedness has debased them below the ox and the donkey, I mean, men of beastly spirits, and beastly principles, and beastly practices, Isaiah 1:2-3. Look! as Benjamin's portion was five times greater than his brethren's, Gen 43:34; so those who have God for their portion have five thousand times a greater portion than the wicked of the world, whose portion only lies in perishing trifles, and in foolish vanities. Therefore there is no just reason, no Scripture reason, why they should be afraid of wants. But,

(9.) Ninthly, If the saints have such a great, such a large, such an all-sufficient, such an infinite, and such an incomparable portion, as has been made evident they have, oh then, **away with all inordinate cares for the things of this life.** Oh say to all vexing, wasting, distracting, and disturbing cares, as Ephraim once said to his idols, "Get you hence, for what have I any more to do with you?" Hos 14:8. Christ's counsel should lie warm upon every man's heart, who has God for his portion, "So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we

drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." Matt 6:31-32; and so should the apostle's, "Cast all your care on him; for he cares for you," 1 Pet 5:7, and so should the psalmist's also, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain you—he shall never allow the righteous to be moved," Psalm 55:22.

Some write that lions sleep with their eyes open and shining; but the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the keeper of Israel, never slumbers nor sleeps; his eyes are always open upon the upright; he still stands sentinel for his people's good, and therefore why should inordinate cares eat up the hearts of Christians? O Christians! of all burdens, the burden of carking cares will sit the heaviest upon your spirits. There is no burden that will bow you and break you like this. Inordinate cares and worries—vex the heart, they divide the heart, they scratch and tear the heart, they pierce and wound the heart through and through with many sorrows, 1 Tim 6:10. Inordinate cares will either crowd out duties, as in Martha, Luke 10:40, or else they will crowd into duties and spoil duties, as in that Luke 8:14, "the cares of the world choke the word."

Look! as Pharaoh's ill-favored lean cows ate up the fat cows, Gen 41:4, so all inordinate ill-favored cares will eat up all those fat and noble cares for God, for his glory, for heaven, for holiness, for grace, for glory, for power against corruptions, for strength to resist temptations, and for support and comfort under afflictions, etc., with which the soul should be filled and delighted. Oh that you would forever remember these few things, to prevent all inordinate, distrustful, and distracting cares.

[1.] First, That they are a dishonor and a reproach to **the all-sufficiency** of God; as if he were not able to supply all your needs, and to answer all your desires, and to support you in all your distresses, and to deliver you out of all your calamities and miseries, etc.

[2.] Secondly, Inordinate cares are a dishonor and a reproach to the **omniscience** of God. [Psalm 139:11; Psalm 40:5; Job 31:4; 2 Chron 16:9; etc.] As if your needs were not as well known to him as his own works, and as if he had not a fixed eye upon all the straits and trials that

lies upon you, and as if he did not know every burden that makes you to groan, and did not behold every affliction that makes you to sigh, and did not observe every tear that drops from your eyes, etc.; whereas his eye is still upon you. Deut 11:11-12, "But the land, where you go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord your God cares for—the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, unto the end of the year." And do you think that he will not have as great a care, and as tender a regard for you who are his jewels, his treasure, his joy; yes, who are the delight of his soul, and the price of his Son's blood?

[3.] Thirdly, Inordinate cares are a dishonor and a reproach to the **authority** of God. As if the earth were not the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and as if all creatures were not at his command and at his dispose, whereas he is the great proprietary, and all is his by primitive right, and all the creatures are at his service, and are ready at a word of command to serve where he pleases, and when he pleases, and as he pleases, and whom he pleases, Psalm 24:1; Psalm 50:10.

[4.] Fourthly, Inordinate cares are a dishonor and a reproach to the **mercy, bounty, and liberality** of God. They proclaim God to be a hard master, and not to be of so free, so noble, and so generous a spirit, as Scripture and the experiences of many thousands speaks him to be. I have read of a duke of Milan, that marrying his daughter to a son of England, he made a dinner of thirty courses, and at every course he gave so many gifts to every guest at the table, as there were dishes in the course. Here was a rich and royal entertainment, here was noble bounty indeed; but this bounty is not to be named in comparison with the bounty and liberality of God to his people.

Princes' treasures have been often exhausted and drawn dry—but the treasures of God's bounty and liberality were never, nor never shall be, exhausted or drawn dry. O Christians! you are as well able to count the stars of heaven, and to number the sands of the sea, as you are able to number up the mercies and favors of God which attend his people in one day, yes, which attend them in one hour of the day, or in one minute of an hour; such is his liberality and bounty towards them. God is always best, when he is most in the exercise of his bounty and liberality towards his

people. His favors and mercies seldom come single. There is a series, a chain of them, and every former draws on a future. Yes, such is the bounty and liberality of God, that he never takes away one mercy—but he has another ready to give in the place of it; as Joshua began to shine before Moses' candle was put out; and before Joshua died, Othniel the son of Kenaz was risen up to judge. Eli was not gathered to his fathers, before Samuel appeared hopeful; nor Sarah was not taken away until Rebekah was ready to come in her place. The Jews have a saying, that never does there die any illustrious man—but there is another born as bright on the same day.

[5.] Fifthly, Inordinate cares are a reproach and a dishonor to the **fidelity** of God. As if he were not the faithful witness, the faithful God, who has bound himself by promise, by covenant, and by oath, to take care of his people, and to provide for his people, and to look after the welfare of his people. [Rev 1:5; Rev 3:14; Isaiah 49:7; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Thess 3:3; Heb 10:23; Rev 19:11; Heb 6:18-19] God is that ocean and fountain from whence all that faithfulness that is in angels and men do issue and flow; and his faithfulness is the rule and measure of all that faithfulness which is in all created beings; and his faithfulness is unchangeable and perfect. Though the angels fell from their faithfulness, and Adam fell from his—yet it is impossible that ever God should fall from his. God's faithfulness is a foundation-faithfulness; it is that foundation upon which all our faith, hope, prayers, praises, and obedience stands. Therefore, whoever is unfaithful, God will be sure to show himself a faithful God, in making good all that he has spoken concerning them that fear him.

I had rather, said Plutarch, that men should say there was never any such person in the world as Plutarch, rather than say that Plutarch is unfaithful. Men were better say that there is no God, than to say that God is an unfaithful God—and yet this is the constant language of inordinate cares. O Christians! God's goodness inclines him to make good promises, precious promises; and his faithfulness engages him to make good those promises, 2 Pet 1:4. If the word be once gone out of his mouth, heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot of that word shall fail, Matt 5:18. Men say, and then unsay, what they have said; they often eat their

words as soon as they have spoke them; but so will not God. This faithfulness of God Joshua stoutly asserts to the height; he throws down the gauntlet, and does, as it were, challenge all Israel to show but that one thing that God had failed them in of all the good things that he had promised, Josh 23:14-15. If God in very faithfulness, afflicts his people—to make good his threatenings; oh, how much more in faithfulness will he preserve and provide for his people—to make good his promises! Psalm 119:75. God has never broke his word nor cracked his credit by deceiving, or by giving one penny less than what he has promised to give. God stands upon nothing more than his faithfulness, and glories in nothing more than his faithfulness; and yet all inordinate cares leaves a blot upon his faithfulness. But,

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, Inordinate cares are a reproach to the **pity** and **compassion** of God, Matt 6:32. They speak out God to be a God of no pity, of no compassion, of no tenderness; whereas God is all pities, all affections, all compassions, all tendernesses. Psalm 103:13, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them those who fear him." There is an ocean of love and pity in a father's heart to his children, Gen 33:13-14; and there is much more in God's to his. Hence he is called the Father by way of eminency; and indeed, originally and properly, there is no Father compared to him, there is no Father like him, there is no Father besides him. He is called the Father of all mercies, because all the mercies, all the pities, all the affections, all the compassions which are in all the fathers on earth, are but a drop of his ocean, a spark of his flame, a mite out of his treasury.

That father who sees his child in need, and pities him not; or pitying, if able, relieves him not—forfeits the very name of *father*, and may better write himself *monster* than man. I have read of a young man who, being at sea in a mighty storm, was very merry when all the passengers were at their wit's end for fear, etc.; and when he was asked the reason of his mirth, he answered, that the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew that such was his father's pity and compassion, that he would take care of him. O Christians! whatever storms the people of God may be in—yet such is his pity and compassion towards them, that he will be sure to take care of them. While God has a breast, there is no reason why his children

should fear the want of milk.

That golden promise, Heb 13:5, were there no more, has enough in it to steel and arm the soul against all inordinate cares. The Greek has five negatives, and may thus be rendered—"I will not, not leave you, neither will I not, not ever forsake you." Five times, as one well observes, is this precious promise renewed, that we may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of its consolations, that we may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of its glory. O Christians! shall the word, the promise, of a king, arm us and cheer us up against all inordinate cares; and shall not the word, the promise, of the King of kings, so often repeated, much more arm us against all base, distrustful, and distracting cares?

O Christians! the remembrance of this blessed truth, that God is your portion, should make you sing care away, as that famous martyr said, "My soul is turned to her rest; I have taken a sweet nap in Christ's lap. Therefore I will now sing away care." If the sense of God's being a man's portion will not burn up all those inordinate cares which commonly fill his head, and which disturb, and distract, and rack his heart—I profess I cannot tell what will. It was a strange speech of Socrates, a heathen—Since God is so mindful for you, says he, what need you be worried for anything yourselves? But,

(10.) Tenthly, **If God is the saints' portion, then all is theirs.** As one said, 'Christ is mine—so all is mine!' So may a Christian say, 'God is mine—so all is mine.' If God is your portion, then heaven and earth are yours; then all the good and all the glory of both worlds are yours; then all the upper and the nether springs are yours. 1 Cor 3:21, "All things are yours! Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours!" The scope of the apostle is not to show that such as are saints, and have God for their portion, have a common interest in all men's earthly possessions; but it is to show that all things are prepared, ordered, and ordained by God to serve the interest of his people, to work for the good of his people, and to help on the happiness and blessedness of his people.

All the gifts, and all the graces, and all the experiences, and all the excellencies, and all the mercies of the ministers of the gospel—are all for

the information, edification, confirmation, consolation, and salvation of the church; and all the good and all the sweet of the creatures are to be let out for the good of the people of God, and for the comfort of the people of God, and for the encouragement of the people of God; all changes, all conditions, all occurrences, shall be sure "to work together for their good," who have God for their portion. Whatever the present posture of things are, or whatever the future state of things shall be—yet they shall all issue in their good, in their profit, in their advantage, to those who who have God for their portion.

Look! as the wife shares in her husband's honor and wealth; and as the branches partake of the fatness and sweetness of the root; and as the members derive sense and motion from the head—so the saints share in all that good which is in God. God is giving—as the fig-tree, the vine, and the olive tree are giving. O Christians! if God is your portion, then every **promise** in the book of God is yours, and every **attribute** in the book of God is yours, and every **privilege** in the book of God is yours, and every **comfort** in the book of God is yours, and every **blessing** in the book of God is yours, and every **treasure** in the book of God is yours, and every **mercy** in the book of God is yours, and every **ordinance** in the book of God is yours, and every **sweet** in the book of God is yours. If God is yours—all is yours!

When Alexander asked king Porus, who was then his prisoner, how he would be treated; he answered—"like a king." Alexander again replying, Do you desire nothing else? No, says he, all things are in this one word, 'like a king.' So all things are in this one word—"The Lord is my portion." He who has God for his portion, has all things, because God is all things! God is a good who contains all good in himself. All the good that is to be found in honors, in riches, in pleasures, in preferments, in husband, in wife, in children, in friends, etc., is to be found only and eminently in God. You have all—in that great God that is the saints' great all, Col 3:11. But,

(11.) Eleventhly, If God is the saint's portion, and such a portion as I have at large discovered him to be, then certainly **God is no injurious portion, no mischievous portion, no hurtful portion, no harmful portion.** Surely there can be no danger, no hazard, no hurt in

having God for a man's portion. Oh! but oftentimes earthly portions do a great deal of hurt, a great deal of mischief; they ruin men's bodies, they blast and blot men's names, and they lay men open to such sins, and snares, and temptations, which forever undoes their immortal souls. Oh what a snare are worldly portions to most men! yes, what fuel are they to corruption! and how often do they lay people open to destruction! Eccles 5:13, "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." Though riches in themselves are God's blessings—yet through the corruptions that are in men's hearts, they prove weapons of wickedness and engines to evil. "There is a sore evil," the Septuagint reads it—a sore disease. Others read it—an evil disease; others read it—a sore weakness. The Hebrew word signifies such a sore evil as sticks close and is not easily removed; and may be a thousand thousand ways for their hurt.

Latimer says, that if he had an enemy to whom it was lawful to wish evil, he would chiefly wish him great store of riches, for then he should never enjoy any quiet. As I have read of one Pheraulas, a poor man, on whom king Cyrus bestowed so much that he knew not what to do with his riches. Being wearied out with care in keeping of them, he desired to live quietly, though poor, as he had done before, than to possess all those riches with discontent. Therefore he gave away all his wealth, desiring only to enjoy so much as might relieve his necessities, and give him a quiet possession of himself.

Queen Mary said, when she was dying, that if they should open her when she was dead, they should find gold lying at the bottom of her heart, implying that the loss of it broke her heart.

The historian observes that the riches of Cyprus invited the Romans to hazard many dangerous fights for the conquering of it.

When the Indians had taken some of the Spaniards, who made gold their God, they filled their mouths with it, and so choked them; they melted their gold, and poured it down their throats, resolving that they should have their fill of gold, who preferred gold before the lives and souls of men. How many millions of bodies and souls have the Spaniards destroyed, to possess the riches of the West Indies! But let me a little

further show you how hurtful, **how dangerous and pernicious earthly riches, earthly portions, are oftentimes to their owners;** and this I shall do by a brief induction of these particulars.

[1.] First, Riches encourage and advantage people to make the strongest and the stoutest opposition against the godly. Rich people usually are the greatest opposers of Christian people. James 2:6-7, "Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?" And this you may see also in the rich citizens of Jerusalem, and in king Herod; and the very same spirit you may run and read in the scribes and pharisees, who were the rich and the great men of the times, and the very same opposing spirit lives and works strongly in the hearts of many great ones this day. But,

[2.] Secondly, Earthly portions estrange the heart from God; as you see in the prodigal, Luke 1:5, and in those wealthy monsters who say unto God, "Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?" Job 21:13-15. But,

[3.] Thirdly, As earthly portions estrange the soul from God; so they do often swell the soul, and puff up the soul with pride, Psalm 10:1-7, etc. Salvian counts pride the rich man's inheritance. Men's minds ebb and flow with their means, their arrogance commonly rises with their outward good. Pride, says Bernard, is the rich man's cousin, it blows him up like a balloon; it makes him grow secure, and so prepares him for sudden ruin —so that he may well sing his part with those sad souls, "What has pride profited us? or what profit has the pomp of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like as a shadow, and as a dream in the night." But,

[4.] Fourthly, Earthly riches commonly cast men into a deep sleep of carnal security. Thus they served David in that Psalm 30:6-7, and thus they served the fool in the Gospel, Luke 12:16-22, and thus they served the old world; and so they did Sodom and Gomorrah afterwards, and so they did the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and their armies, Judg 8:11-12, and so did the people of Laish, in Judg 18:6-28. And so the

peace, plenty, and prosperity of the Bohemians cast them into so great a security, that they began to grow very loose and base in their lives, and very cold and careless in the things of God, and in all their soul-concernments; insomuch that many of their most pious and prudent men did predict that certainly some horrible storm would suddenly arise, and that some dreadful tempest perhaps would beat upon them—as accordingly it came to pass. Alexander slew him whom he found asleep on the watch; and God finding the Bohemians in a deep sleep of sin and security, he brought the devouring sword upon them. Mercury could not kill Argus, until he had cast him into a sleep, and with an enchanted rod closed his eyes. No more can the devil or the world hurt any man, until by dandling of him on the knee of prosperity, he comes to lull him asleep in the bed of security. But,

[5.] Fifthly, Earthly riches do frequently divert the souls of men from embracing and closing with the golden seasons and opportunities of grace. Riches are the thorns which choke the word, and which make men barren and unfruitful under the word, Matt 13:22. Rich Felix had no leisure to hear poor Paul, though the hearing of a sermon might have saved his soul, and made him happy in both worlds, Acts 24:24-27. The rich fool in the Gospel was so taken up in pulling down his barns, and in building of greater ones, that he had no time to prevent the ruin of his soul, Luke 12:15-22. Dives was so taken up with his riches, pomp, state, and with his royal apparel, royal attendance, and royal fare—that he never minded heaven, nor ever dreaded hell—until he awoke with everlasting flames about his ears! Luke 16:19-31.

Sicily is so full of sweet flowers, that dogs cannot hunt there; and what do all the sweet profits, pleasures, and preferments of this world—but make men lose the scent of grace, the scent of glory, the scent of holiness, and the scent of happiness. It is true, rich men will have their eating times, and their drinking times, and their trading times, and their sporting times, and their sleeping times, and that which is worse—their sinning times, etc. But ah, how rare is it to see rich men covet after hearing times and praying times, and reading times, and meditating times, and mourning times, and repenting times, and reforming times. Rich men will have time for everything—but to honor God, exalt Christ, obey the

Spirit, love the saints, attend ordinances, and save their own immortal souls. Oh the time, the thoughts, the strength, the energy--which rich men spend and consume upon their riches, while their precious souls lie a-bleeding to death, and an eternity of misery is hastening upon them. Some say, that where gold grows--no plant will thrive. Certainly, where riches thrive most--no grace will thrive. But,

[6.] Sixthly, Earthly riches commonly load the soul with a multitude of cares, fears, griefs, and vexations--which mightily disturb the soul, distract the soul; yes, often rack, torture, and torment the soul. What if such a friend should be unfaithful to his trust? what if such a ship should miscarry? what if such a one should go bankrupt--who owes me so much? what if my title to such a land should not prove good? what if flaws are found in my title for such and such lands? what if fire should consume my habitation? what if thieves should rob me of my treasure? etc., and what do all these *whats* tend to--but to break a man's heart in a thousand pieces? But,

[7.] Seventhly, Earthly riches are many times fuel for the greatest and the grossest sins; as pride, oppression, revenge, cruelty, tyranny, gluttony, drunkenness, wantonness, and all manner of uncleanness and filthiness. But,

[8.] Eighthly, Earthly riches are many times reserved as witnesses against the rich in the great day of their account. James 5:1-3, "Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days." The rust of the rich man's cankered gold and his moth-eaten apparel shall be brought in as dreadful witnesses against him in the great day. The poet reasoned Pluto to be the god of *riches* and of *hell* too--as if they were inseparable. By all these particulars you see how hurtful, how harmful earthly portions often prove to their owners.

Oh--but now God is a portion which will never hurt a man, which will never harm a man, which will never in the least injure a man. Among all "the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb 12:22-23, there is not one to

be found, who will give in his witness against this sweet and blessed truth that I have asserted; and among all the saints on earth you shall not find one—but will with both hands readily subscribe to this glorious maxim, namely—That God is such a portion, which has never hurt them, which has never harmed them; yes, that he is such a portion which has done them good all their days, and one upon whom they have lived, and by whom they have been maintained ever since they trusted in him. Holy Polycarp hit it, when he said, "This sixty-eight years have I served the Lord, and he never did me any hurt; and shall I now forsake him? Surely not!"

But now earthly riches, for the most part, do a world of mischief and hurt to their owners. Oh the souls which earthly riches have pierced through and through with many sorrows! Oh the minds which earthly riches have blinded! Oh the hearts which earthly riches have hardened! Oh the consciences which earthly riches have benumbed! Oh the wills which earthly riches have perverted! Oh the affections which earthly riches have disordered! Oh the lives which earthly riches have corrupted! And Oh the souls which earthly riches have destroyed! But,

[9.] Ninthly and lastly, Earthly riches, for the most part, make men unwilling to die. Oh how terrible is the king of terrors to the rich and the great ones of the world, 1 Sam 28:20; Dan 5:1-7. And so Henry Beaufort, that rich and wretched cardinal, perceiving death at hand, spoke thus—'How can I die, being so rich? If the whole realm could save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Why will not death be hired? Will money do nothing?' It is reported that Queen Elizabeth could not endure so much as to hear death named; and Sigismund the emperor, and Louis the Eleventh, king of France, straitly charged all their servants, that when they saw them sick, they should never dare to name that bitter word *death* in their ears. Vitellius, an emperor of Rome—a notorious glutton, as you may easily judge, by his having at one supper two thousand fishes, and seven thousand birds—when he could not flee death, he made himself drunk that he might not be sensible of the pangs of death.

It was a very prudent and Christian speech of Charles the Fifth to the duke of Venice, who when he had showed him the glory of his princely

palace and earthly paradise, instead of admiring it, or him for it—he only returned him this grave and serious memento, "these are the things which make us unwilling to die!" And by daily experience we find that of all men wealthy men are most unwilling to die. Oh—but now God is such a portion as fits and disposes the soul to die, yes, as makes the soul look and long for death, and that makes death more desirable than life itself. A man who has God for his portion, who has God in his arms—may well sing it out with old Simeon, "Lord, let your servant depart in peace, according to your word—for my eyes have seen your salvation," Luke 2:25,29-30; and with Paul, "I desire to depart—and to be with Christ," Phil 1:23; and with the church, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a roe, or to a young deer upon the mountain of spices," Song 8:14; and, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev 22:20.

"Did Christ die for me that I might live with him? I will not therefore desire to live long away from him. All men go willingly to see him whom they love; and shall I be unwilling to die that I may see him whom my soul loves? Surely not!" Augustine longed to die that he might see that head which was once crowned with thorns. The dying words of my young Lord Harrington were these—"O my God, when shall I be with you?" Cyprian could receive the cruelest sentence of death with a 'thanks be to God!' Holy Andrew saluted the cross on which he was to be crucified, saying, "Take me from men, and restore me to my master!" And so Laurence Saunders, when he was come to the stake at which he was to be burnt, he kissed it, saying, "Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life. But,

(12.) Twelfthly, If God is the saints' portion, oh then **let the saints still think of God, and look upon God their best portion.** A man who has God for his portion should always have very high, noble, sweet, and precious thoughts of God. It does not befit those who have God for their portion—to be always looking upon God as an angry God, or as a displeased Father, or as an incensed judge, or as an enraged enemy, or as a bitter friend. When God would make known his name, his nature, his glory to Moses, he proclaims himself to be, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercies for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," Exod

34:6-7. And certainly to keep up such precious thoughts and notions as these are of God, is that work of works which lies upon every man's hand, who has God for his portion.

O Christians! there is a very great aptness and proneness, even in those who have God for their portion, to have black, dark, hard, dismal, and dreadful thoughts and apprehensions of God—as you may see in Asaph, Heman, Job, David, etc. [Psalm 77; Psalm 88; Job 3; Psalm 73:11-14] By nature we are as full of hard thoughts of God—as hell is full of sin. When the heart is not mightily overawed by the Spirit of God and overpowered by the grace of God—there all manner of dark and dismal apprehensions of God abounds. Besides, Satan knows very well that our corrupt natures are made up of sad and hard thoughts of God. Therefore he will use all his power and craft to blow up every spark, every hard thought of God, into a flame; especially when outward troubles and inward distresses are upon us.

What says Satan? "Do you think that God loves you? O Christian, when he deals thus sharply and severely with you, does he pretend kindness to you, and yet hide his face from you, and set you up as a mark to shoot at? How can he be your friend—who has cast you down at your enemies' feet, and given you up into their paws and jaws? How can you think that he has any pity and compassion towards you—who makes no better provision for you? What vanity is it to believe that he will give you a crown—who denies you a crust? And that he will give you a house not made with hands—and yet allow you to be turned out of house and home? He will do so much for you in another world—who does so little for you in this world!" And thus Satan takes his opportunities to provoke corrupt nature and to kill the soul with hard thoughts of God.

And certainly that Christian is a very great stranger to his own heart, who is not able to say from experience that it is one of the highest and hardest works—to keep up good and gracious thoughts of God, to keep up honorable and noble thoughts of God—in a suffering condition or under dark and dismal dispensations. Oh, but those who have God for their portion—they should abandon and abhor all hard thoughts of God, yes, however severe the dealings of God are towards them—yet it is their duty and their glory to keep up very sweet and precious thoughts of God,

Psalm 73:1.

O Christians! the more choice and honorable thoughts you keep up of God in your own souls, the more you will love the Lord, and the more you will delight in the Lord, and the more content and satisfaction you will take in the Lord. Such Christians who take a pleasure to be representing God to themselves in the most hideous, terrible, and amazing shapes—they kill their love and their joy, and they create a hell of torments in their own souls. Well, Christians! let me put a cluster of the grapes of Canaan into your hands at once, by telling you that the more glorious and blessed thoughts you keep up in your souls of God, the more spiritual, the more frequent, the more fervent, the more abundant, the more constant, and the more unwearied you will be in the work of the Lord, and the more all your graces will be acted, exercised, strengthened, and increased; yes, and the more your evidences for heaven will be cleared, your gracious experiences multiplied, your communion with God raised, your way to glory facilitated, and all your sufferings sweetened.

Therefore never let noble and precious thoughts of God die in your souls. Though he **frowns** upon you, O Christian, yet say that he is your portion; and though he **chides** you, yet say that he is your portion; and though he **corrects** you, yet say that he is your portion; and though he **deserts** you and carries it strangely towards you, yet say that he is your portion; and though he snatches many a **mercy** from you, yet say that he is your portion; and though he multiplies your **burdens** upon you, yet say that he is your portion; and though he writes **bitter things** against you, yet say that he is your portion; yes, though he should pass a sentence of **death** upon you, yet still say that he is your portion. O Christians, this would still raise a heaven in your hearts—if under all dispensations you would still look upon God as your portion, and live upon God as your portion. But,

(13.) Thirteenthly, If God is a believer's portion, then **never let a believer be afraid to die, or unwilling to die**. Let those be afraid to die—who have only this world for their portion here, and hell for their portion hereafter; but let not a saint be afraid of death—who has the Lord of life for his portion. A man who has God for his portion should rather invite death than tremble at it; he should rather sweetly welcome it, than

turn his back upon it; for death to such a one is but the way to paradise, the way to all heavenly delights, the way to those everlasting springs of pleasure which are at God's right hand, the way to life, immortality, and glory, and the way to a clear, full, constant, and eternal enjoyment of God, Psalm 16:11. Augustine upon those words, Exod 33:20-21, "You can not see my face and live," makes this short but sweet reply, "Then, Lord, let me die, that I may see your face." Death is the bridge which leads to the paradise of God. All the hurt that it can do is to bring a believer to a full enjoyment of God, his everlasting portion.

When Modestus, the emperor's lieutenant, threatened to kill Basil, he answered, 'If that be all, I fear not; yes, your master cannot more pleasure me than in sending me unto my heavenly Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten.' Old Alderman Jordan used to say that death would be the best friend he had in the world, and that he would willingly go forth to meet it; or rather say with holy Paul, "O death, where is your sting?" triumphing over it. What is a drop of vinegar put into an ocean of wine? what is it for one to have a rainy day, who is going to take possession of a kingdom? A Dutch martyr feeling the flame to come to his beard, "Ah, said he, what a small pain is this, to be compared to the glory to come!" Lactantius boasts of the braveness of that spirit which was upon the martyrs in his time. Our children and women, not to speak of men, says he, do in silence overcome their tormentors, and the fire cannot so much as fetch a sigh from them. John Noyes took up a faggot at the fire and kissed it, saying, "Blessed be the time that ever I was born, to come to this preferment." Never did a neckerchief fit me so well as this chain, said Alice Driver, when they fastened her to the stake to be burnt. Mr. Bradford took off his cap, and thanked God, when the keeper's wife brought him word that he was to be burnt on the morrow. Mr. Rogers, the first who was burnt in Queen Mary's days, sang in the flames. 'Be of good cheer,' said the woman-martyr to her husband that was to suffer with her, 'for though we have but an ill dinner on earth, we shall sup with Christ in heaven.' And what said Justin Martyr to his murderers, in behalf of himself and his fellow-martyrs? "You may kill us—but you can never hurt us."

Ah, Christians! how can you read over these choice instances and not

blush, and not be ashamed to consider what a readiness, what a forwardness, and what a noble willingness there was in these brave worthies to die and go to heaven, and to be fully possessed of their God, of their portion, while you shrug at the very thoughts of death, and frequently put that day far from you, and had rather, with Peter, fall upon "building of tabernacles," Matt 17:4, than, with Paul, "desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ," Phil 1:23. O Christians! how justly may that father be angry with his child that is unwilling to come home! and how justly may that husband be displeased with his wife who is unwilling to ride to him in a rainy day, or to cross the sea to enjoy his company! And is not this your case? is not this just your case, who have God for your portion, and yet are unwilling to die, that you may come to a full enjoyment of your portion? But,

(14.) Fourteenthly, and lastly, If God is the saint's portion, then let all the saints **give all diligence to make this clearly and fully out to their own souls—that God is their portion**, 2 Pet 1:5-8. Next to a man's having God for his portion, it is the greatest mercy in this world for a man to know that God is his portion, and to be able groundedly to say with the church, "The Lord is **my** portion!" Now this is a work that may be done. I suppose there is never a believer on earth but may attain unto this personal evidence and certainty of knowledge that God is his portion. Express promises speaks out such a thing as this is— Zech 13:9, "They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'" Ezek 34:30, "Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord." God will as soon put the faith of reliance and the faith of assurance to a blush, as he will put the faith of expectance to a blush: Psalm 22:26, "The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the Lord will praise him—may your hearts live forever!" Sooner or later, such as seek him shall have such an answer of their prayers as shall turn their prayers into praises, and their petitions into thanksgivings.

Psalm 84:11, "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly." God will be an universal, all-sufficient, and satisfactory good to those who walk uprightly. The Lord is

as full of goodness as the sun is full of light, and he will as freely, and as fully, and as impartially communicate his goodness to those who walk uprightly, as the sun does her light both to the just and the unjust, Matt 5:45. As under the name of no good thing will he withhold, all **temporal** good things are to be understood, so under the name of grace all **spiritual** good things are to be understood, and under the name of glory all **eternal** good things are to be understood. And now, if God will give all spiritual and all eternal good things to his people, how can he then but sooner or later give a clear and satisfactory evidence into his people's bosoms that he is their portion?

And not only express promises—but also the graces of the Spirit and the testimony of the Spirit confirms the same thing. The language of every saving grace is this—'The Lord is your portion, O believing soul.' And the language and testimony of the Spirit is the same. Rom 8:15, "You have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Rom 8:16, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." Shall an instinct in nature teach young ones to know their mothers, and shall not the Spirit of God, by a divine instinct, teach the saints to know God to be their God, and to be their portion also? Surely yes! Though this or that particular Christian may go to his grave without a satisfactory evidence in his own bosom that God is his portion—yet in an ordinary course, at first or last, God does give his people some assurance that he is their portion, yes, rather than they shall always live or die without assurance of their salvation; and that he is their portion, he will work a miracle to assure them of his love.

I have both heard and read of a rare story of Mrs. Honeywood, a famous professor of the gospel, and one that for many years together lay under the burden of a wounded spirit, and was much troubled in mind for lack of assurance that God was her portion, and that she would be saved from wrath to come. At length there came a godly minister to her, who endeavored to settle her faith and hope in Christ; and pressing many gospel promises upon her, she took it with a kind of indignation and anger that he should offer to present any promises to her, to whom, as she thought, they did not belong; and having a delicate Venice-glass in her hand, she held it up, and said, Speak no more to me of salvation, for I

shall as surely be damned as this poor brittle glass shall be broke against the wall, throwing it with all her force to break it. But it so pleased God that, by a miraculous providence, the glass was preserved whole. The minister, beholding the miracle, took up the glass, and said unto her, "Behold, God must work a miracle before you, before you will believe." And forever after that day she had very strong assurance of her salvation, and that God was her portion; and so lived and died in a sweet and comfortable sense of the love and favor of God.

Now, to provoke you to labor with all your might to attain to a clear, personal, satisfactory evidence in your own bosoms that God is your portion, do but seriously consider and lay to heart **the rare and singular advantages that will redound to your souls** by this means. I shall only touch upon some, by which yourselves may guess at others.

[1.] First, By this means **your hearts will come to be fixed, settled, and established**. A man's soul never comes to be fixed and settled by knowing in the general that God is the saint's portion—but by a personal evidence and certainty of knowledge that he is his particular portion. While a man's particular property is unsettled, all is unsettled in his soul; but when a man's particular property is settled, when he can say, 'This God is **my** God, and the Lord is **my** portion,' then all is settled, then all is at peace in the soul, Psalm 57:7; Psalm 108:1; Psalm 112:7. A man who has God for his portion, if he does not know it, will still be like a ship at sea in the midst of a storm, tossed here and there, and now rolling on one side and then on the other, and never quiet, never lying still; but a man who has God for his portion, and knows it, he is like a ship in a good harbor, that lies quiet and still; yes, he is like mount Zion, which cannot be moved. But,

[2.] Secondly, A clear, personal evidence that God is a man's portion, **will rid his soul of all sinful doubts**. O Christians! now your hearts are as full of doubts as hell is full of darkness. One day you doubt whether your graces are true, and another day you doubt whether your comforts are true. Now, you doubt of your saintship, and then of your sonship, and then of your heirship. Sometimes you doubt of your communion with God, sometimes you doubt of your acquaintance with God, and

sometimes you doubt of your acceptance with God. One hour you doubt of the favor of God, and the next hour you doubt of your access to God. And as it is thus with you, so it will be thus with you until you come to have some clear satisfaction in your own spirits that God is your portion.

O Christians! had you but once a personal evidence in your own bosoms that God is your portion, all those doubts which are bred and fed by ignorance and unbelief, and which rob the soul of all joy, comfort, and content, and which render men babes in Christianity, and which cast reproach upon God, Christ, and the promises, etc., and which most gratify and advantage Satan to tempt and try your souls—would vanish and disperse as the clouds do before the sun when it shines in its brightness! Until a Christian's eyes are opened to see God to be his portion, his heart will be full of doubts and perplexities. Though Mary Magdalene was very near to Christ—yet she stands sighing, mourning, and complaining, that "they had stolen away her Lord," John 20:13-16. A Christian may have God for his portion—yet until he comes to see God to be his portion, he will spend his days in sighing, mourning, and complaining.

O Christians! until you come to see God to be your portion, your doubts will lie down with you and rise with you, they will talk with you and walk with you, until they make your lives a very hell. It was an excellent speech of Luther, "The whole Scripture," says he, "does principally aim at this thing, that we should not doubt—but that we should hope, trust, and believe that God is a merciful, bountiful, and gracious God to his people." And what will bring a man's heart over to answer to this blessed aim of the Scripture? Certainly nothing below an assurance that God is his portion.

It was a noble resolution of blessed Bradford, who, in one of his epistles, says thus—"O Lord, sometimes methinks I feel it so with me, as if there were no difference between my heart and the hearts of the wicked. My *mind* is as blind as theirs, and my *will* as stout, stubborn, and rebellious as theirs; and my *affections* are as much disordered as theirs, and my *conscience* as much benumbed and stupefied as theirs, and my *heart* as hard and flinty as theirs, etc.; shall I therefore conclude that you are not my Father? Nay, I will reason otherwise," says he; "I do believe you are

my Father; I will come unto you, that you may enlighten this blind *mind* of mine, and bend and bow this stout and stubborn *will* of mine; and that you may put order into these disordered *affections* of mine, and that you may put life and quickness into this stupefied and benumbed *conscience* of mine, and that you may put softness and tenderness into this hard and flinty *heart* of mine." And thus he nobly reasoned himself, and believed himself, out of all his fears and doubts. There is no such way for a man to be rid of all his fears and doubts, as to live in the sight and faith of this truth—that God is his portion.

Plutarch reports of one, who would not be resolved of his doubts, because he would not lose the pleasure in seeking for resolution, like to him who would not have his physician to quench the thirst he felt in his illness, because he would not lose the pleasure of drinking; and like those who would not be freed from their sins, because they would not lose the pleasure of sinning. But I hope better things of all those who have God for their portion, than to find them in love with their doubts, or to be unwilling to be rid of their doubts. Next to a man's going to hell, it is one of the greatest afflictions in the world for a man always to live in doubts about his going to heaven. Next to damnation, it is one of the greatest troubles that can attend a Christian, to be always exercised and perplexed with doubts about his salvation. **Next to being damned, it is the hell of hells to live in continual fears of damnation.** Now the only way to prevent all this, is to know that God is your portion. But,

[3.] Thirdly, A clear, personal evidence that God is a man's portion, **will exceedingly sweeten all the crosses, losses, and changes that shall attend him in this world.** Habakkuk knew that God was the God of his salvation; and that he was his portion. Therefore he rejoices—"Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation." Hab 3:17-18. And the same noble temper was upon those worthies in Heb 10:34, "When all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew you had better things waiting for you in eternity." They took joyfully the confiscation of their earthly portions,

being well assured in their own souls that they should enjoy a heavenly portion, an everlasting portion. And so the apostles knew that they had "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor 5:1; and this carried them bravely through honor and dishonor, through evil report and good report, and through all weaknesses, sicknesses, distresses, needs, dangers, and death; and this made their *heavy* afflictions light, and their *long* afflictions short, and their *bitter* afflictions sweet, 2 Cor 4:16-18. This was that tree which, being cast in the waters of Marah, made them sweet, Exod 15:23-25; and this was that that did unsting all their crosses, losses, and reproaches, and that made them rejoice and sing under those very burdens and trials that would have broke the necks, backs, and hearts of others, Acts 5 and Acts 16.

When a man has a clear personal evidence that God is his portion, then no outward changes will make any considerable change in him. Though Laban had changed Jacob's wages ten times—yet Jacob was Jacob still, Gen 31:7. Let times change, and men change, and powers change, and nations change—yet a man who has God for his portion, and knows it, will never change his countenance, nor change his Master, nor change his service, nor change his works, nor change his ways. Under all changes he will still be 'always the same'. Many great and dreadful changes passed upon Joseph—but yet under all Joseph's bow "abode in strength," Gen 49:23-24. When a man knows that God is his portion, whatever changes may pass upon him—yet his bow will still abide in strength.

How many are there in these days, who have changed their names, their notes, their coats, their principles, their practices—and all for worldly advantages. These changelings, who change from better to worse, and from naught to be very naught, yes, stark naught, are the worst and the naughtiest of men, and deserve to be hanged in chains; and certainly, when the wrath of God breaks forth, these changelings shall be as stubble before it, Mal 4:1; Heb 10:38. God abhors none as he does those who run from him to serve other lords, and who gad about to change their way. Jer 2:36-37, "Why do you gad about so much, changing your ways? You will be disappointed by Egypt as you were by Assyria. You will also leave that place with your hands on your head, for the Lord has rejected those you trust; you will not be helped by them." There is nothing that will keep a

man from apostasy, and from making a defection from God, his ways, his worship, his glory, etc., like a blessed persuasion that God is his portion, 2 Pet 1:5-11. But,

[4.] Fourthly, A clear personal evidence that God is a man's portion, **will exceedingly raise and advance the comfort and joy of a man's heart.** It is not merely my having of God for my portion—but it is my seeing, it is my knowing, it is my fruition of God as my portion—which is the true spring of all delight, comfort, and consolation. When a man's interest in God is clear, then all the precious promises will be full wells of salvation, and full breasts of consolation to him—but until then they will be but as dry breasts, as barren heaths, as a desolate wilderness, and as empty wells. While a man is doubtful whether God is his God, it is certain that the spring of joy and comfort will run low in his soul; while a man lives in fear that his title and interest is not good, how can he rejoice? When a man's interest in God is clear—then his heaven of joy begins. A man who has God for his portion, and knows it, cannot but live in a paradise of joy, and walk in a paradise of joy, and work in a paradise of joy, and eat in a paradise of joy, and recreate himself in a paradise of joy, and rest in a paradise of joy. He cannot but have a heaven of joy within him, and an heaven of joy about him, and an heaven of joy over him. All his looks will speak out joy within, and all his words will speak out joy within, and all his works will speak out joy within, and all his ways will speak out joy within.

I remember a notable saying of one, 'How sweet was it to me, to be suddenly without those sweet vanities! Those things which I was afraid to lose—with joy I let go; for you, who are the true and only sweetness, did cast out those from me, and instead of them did enter in yourself, who is more delightful than all pleasure, and more clear than all light.' When a man's interest in God is clear, his joy will be full, John 16:24; when a man is happy, and knows it, he cannot but rejoice; when a man has God for his portion, and knows it, all the world cannot hinder the strong consolations of God from rising high in his soul.

Why have the saints in heaven more joy and delight than the saints on earth? Because they have a clearer and a fuller knowledge of their interest and property in God, than the others have! The knowledge of a man's

property in God is the comfort of comforts. Property makes every comfort, a pleasurable comfort, a delightful comfort. When a man walks in a fair meadow, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a pleasant garden, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a fruitful field, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a stately habitation, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a rich treasury, and can write *mine* upon it, oh how does it please him! how does it delight him! how does it joy and rejoice him!

Of all words, this word *mine* is the sweetest and the most comforting word. Ah! when a man can look upon God, and write *mine*; when he can look upon God, and say, 'This God is my God forever and ever!' when he can look upon God, and say, 'This God is my portion!' when he can look upon God, and say with Thomas, "*My Lord and my God!*"—how will all the springs of joy rise in his soul! Oh who can but joy to be owner of that God who fills heaven and earth with his fullness? Who can but rejoice to have him for his portion, in having of whom he has all things, in having of whom he can lack nothing? The serious thoughts of our property in God will add much sweet to all our sweets; yes, it will make every bitter, sweet. When a man seriously thinks, 'It is my God who cheers me with his presence, it is my God who supports me with his power, it is my God who guides me by his counsel, it is my God who supplies me with his goodness, and it is my God who blesses all my blessings to me; it is my God who afflicts me in love, it is my God who has broken me in my estate and in my credit, it is my God who has sorely visited such a child, it is my God who has passed a sentence of death upon such a friend, it is my God who has thus straitened me in my liberty, and it is my God who has thus cast me down at my enemies' feet, etc.—how do these thoughts cheer up the spirit of a man, and make every bitter, sweet; and every burden, light unto him.

A beautiful face is at all times pleasing to the eye—but then especially when there is joy manifested in the countenance. Joy in the face puts a new beauty upon a person, and makes that which before was beautiful to be exceeding beautiful; it puts a luster upon beauty. And so does holy joy put a divine beauty and luster upon all the ways of God, and upon all the people of God. And therefore, it highly concerns all Christians, as they would have a heavenly beauty, luster, and glory upon them, to rejoice;

and that they may rejoice, it does as highly concern them to know their interest and property in God. But,

[5.] Fifthly, A clear personal evidence that God is a man's portion will very **much raise him in his communion with God, and exceedingly sweeten his fellowship with God.** There are no Christians on earth that have such high, such choice, such free, such full, such sweet, and such uninterrupted communion with God—as those who have a clear sight of their interest and property in God.

The spouse, in that book of Solomon's Song, again, and again, and again—sings and sounds out her property and interest in Christ. Song 2:16, "My beloved is *mine*, and I am his." Song 6:3, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is *mine*." Song 7:10, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me." Now, mark—how does the sense of her property in Christ work? Why, it works very highly, very strongly, very inflamingly, very affectionately. Song 1:2-4, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine. Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you! Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers!" Song 1:13, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts." Song 2:3-6, "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me."

The spouse had a clear sight and a deep sense of her interest and property in Christ; and oh, how high, how close, how full, how sweet, is she in her communion and fellowship with Christ! It is the sight and sense of property and interest, which heightens and sweetens that communion which is between husband and wife, father and child, brother and sister, and friend and friend. So it is the sight and sense of a man's property and interest in God—which heightens and sweetens his communion and fellowship with God. A clear sight of a man's interest and property in God will exceedingly sweeten every thought of God, and every appearance of God, and every taste of God, and every smile of God, and every

communication of God, and every ordinance of God, and every work of God, and every way of God! Yes, it will sweeten every rod which is in the hand of God, and every wrinkle which is in face of God, Psalm 139:17-18. A man who sees his interest in God, will hang upon him, and trust in him—though he should write ever such bitter things against him; and though he should deal ever so severely with him; yes, though he should slay him, as you may see in Job 13:15. He hit it who said, A man whose soul is conversant with God shall find more pleasure in the desert and in death, than in the palace of a prince.

Urbanus Regius, having one day's converse with Luther, said that it was one of the sweetest days that ever he had in all his life. But if one day's communion with Luther was so sweet, oh how sweet must one day's communion with God is. And therefore, as ever you would have high, and full, and sweet communion with God—keep up a clear sight, a blessed sense of your interest and property in God. But,

[6.] Sixthly, A clear personal evidence that God is a man's portion, is **a man's all in all**. O Christians! this is the life of your lives, and the life of your prayers, and the life of your praises, and the life of your confidences, and the life of your mercies, and the life of your comforts, and the life of your hopes, etc. A clear sight of your property in God is the very life of promises, the life of ordinances, the life of providences, the life of experiences, and the life of your gracious evidences. It is a pearl of great price; it is your paradise; it is manna in a wilderness; it is water out of a rock; it is a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night; it is Jacob's ladder; it is a salve for every sore; it is a cure for every disease; it is a remedy against every malady; it is an anchor at sea, and a shield on shore; it is a star to guide you, a staff to support you, a sword to defend you, a pavilion to hide you, a fire to warm you, a banquet to refresh you, a city of refuge to secure you, and a cordial to cheer you! What more could you desire? But,

[7.] Seventhly, and lastly, A clear personal evidence that God is a man's portion **will exceedingly sweeten the thoughts of death**, and all the approaches of death, and all the warnings and forerunners of death unto him. It will make a man look upon his last day as his best day, Eccles 7:1; it will make a man look upon the *king of terrors* as the *king of desires*,

Job 18:14; it will make a man laugh at the shaking of the spear, at the sounding of the trumpet, at the confused noise of the battle, at garments rolled in blood, at the sighs and groans of the wounded, and at the heaps of the slain.

It was the martyrs' clear sight of their interest and property in God, which made them welcome the lions, and dare their persecutors, and to kiss the stake, and to sing and clap their hands in the midst of the flames, and to tread upon hot burning coals as upon beds of roses, and divinely to triumph over their tormentors. It was this which made the primitive Christians fearless of martyrdom, and which made them willingly and cheerfully lay down their lives, that they might, Elijah-like, mount to heaven in fiery chariots.

A man who sees his property in God, knows *that death shall be the funeral of all his sins, sorrows, afflictions, temptations, desertions, oppositions, vexations, oppressions, and persecutions.* He knows that death shall be the **resurrection** of his hopes, joys, delights, comforts, and contentments; and that it shall bring him to a more clear, full, perfect, and constant enjoyment of God! This makes him sweetly and triumphantly to sing it out, "O death! where is your sting? O grave! where is your victory?" 1 Cor 15:35-37.

And oh that these seven considerations might prevail with all your souls to be restless, until you have in your own bosoms clear and full satisfaction that God is your portion. Now this last inference leads me by the hand to an use of trial and examination. O Christians! if God is the saint's portion, the believer's portion, how highly does it concern everyone who looks upon himself as a saint or as a believer, to search, try, and examine whether God is his portion or not!

**How Shall We Know Whether God is our Portion?**

But you will say, **How shall we know whether God is our portion?** Oh! were all the world a lump of gold, and in our hands to dispose of—we would give it to know that God is our portion! Oh! the knowledge of this would be as life from the dead; it would create a heaven in our hearts on this side heaven; it would presently put us into a paradise of pleasure and delight. But still the question is, How shall we know it? It is an easy thing to *say* that God is our portion; but how shall we come *infallibly to know* that God is truly our portion?

Now, to give clear and full satisfaction to this great and weighty question, I shall give in these following answers, by which you may certainly and undoubtedly know, whether God is your portion or no:

[1.] First, **If God is your portion—then you have very sweet, precious, high, and honorable thoughts of God**—then your thoughts will still be running out after God, and your meditations of him will be sweet. A man who has God for his portion, is always best when his thoughts and meditations are running out most after God. Psalm 104:34, "My meditations of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." Psalm 63:5-6, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips; when I remember you upon my bed (or beds, as the Hebrew has it; David bedded at many places—but still his thoughts were always running out to God), and meditate on you in the night watches." Psalm 139:17-18, "How precious also are your thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand—when I awake, I am still with you." The psalmist had very frequent, high, precious, and honorable thoughts of God; he valued nothing at so high a rate as sweet and noble thoughts of God, and of his power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, and graciousness, etc.

David had such precious thoughts of God, and such great and glorious thoughts of God, and such infinite and innumerable thoughts of God—that he was as able to number the sands of the sea, as he was able to number them up—"And when I awake I was still with you." He was still contemplating upon God; he fell asleep with precious thoughts of God, and he awoke with precious thoughts of God; he rose up with precious thoughts of God, and he lay down with precious thoughts of God; he went

forth with precious thoughts of God, and he returned home with precious thoughts of God. Take a Christian when he is himself—when he is neither under sad desertions, nor under black temptations, nor under great afflictions—and he can as soon forget his own house, the wife of his bosom, his own children—yes, he can as soon forget to eat his bread—as he can forget his God.

When Alexander the Great had overthrown Darius, king of Persia, he took among the spoils a most rich cabinet, full of the choicest jewels that were in all the world; upon which there rose a dispute before him, to what use he should put the cabinet; and everyone having spent his judgment according to his fancy, the king himself concluded, that he would keep that cabinet, to be a treasury to lay up the books of Homer in, which were his greatest joy and delight.

A sanctified memory is a rich cabinet full of the choicest thoughts of God; it is that rich treasury wherein a Christian is still a-laying up more and more precious thoughts of God, and more and more high and holy thoughts of God, and more and more honorable and noble thoughts of God, and more and more solemn and reverent thoughts of God, and more and more sweet and comfortable thoughts of God, and more and more tender and compassionate thoughts of God, etc. Take a Christian in his ordinary course, and you shall find that wherever he is, his thoughts are running out after God; and about whatever he is, his thoughts are still a-running out after God; and into what company soever he is cast, whether they are good or bad—yet still his thoughts are running out after God, etc.

Look! as an earthly-minded man has his thoughts and meditations still exercised and taken up with the world, as you may see in Haman, whose heart and thoughts were taken up with his honors, preferments, riches, wife, children, and friends, etc. Esther 5:10-12, "Then he gathered together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, and boasted to them about his great wealth and his many children. He bragged about the honors the king had given him and how he had been promoted over all the other officials and leaders. Then Haman added—And that's not all! Queen Esther invited only me and the king himself to the banquet she prepared for us. And she has invited me to dine with her and the king again tomorrow!" And the same spirit you may see working in those who had

made gold their God, in that Psalm 49:10-11, "Those who are wise must finally die, just like the foolish and senseless, leaving all their wealth behind. The grave is their eternal home, where they will stay forever. They may name their estates after themselves, but they leave their wealth to others. They will not last long despite their riches—they will die like the animals." The Hebrew runs thus—"Their inwards are their houses forever," as if their houses were got within them. Not only the thoughts—but the very inmost thoughts, the most retired thoughts and recesses of worldlings' souls, are taken up about earthly things; and though they care not whether their names are written in heaven or not—yet they do all they can to propagate and immortalize their names on earth.

And the rich fool was one in spirit with these the psalmist speaks of, as you may see in that Luke 12 "And he told them this parable—The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself (the Greek word signifies to talk with a man's self, or to reason with a man's self. This foolish worldling was much in talking to himself, and in reasoning with himself about his goods and barns, etc., as the usual manner of men is, who are of a worldly spirit), 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" Among all his worldly thoughts, there is not one thought of God, of Christ, of grace, of heaven, of holiness, of eternity, to be found. His thoughts were so taken up with his bags, and his barns, and his buildings, and his ease, and his belly, that he had no time to think of providing for another world. Therefore God quickly dispatches him out of this world, and throws him down from the highest pinnacle of prosperity and worldly glory—into the greatest gulf of wrath and misery, Luke 12:20.

And this foolish worldling puts me in mind of another, who, being offered a horse by his fellow upon condition that he would but say the Lord's prayer, and think upon nothing but God, which offer being accepted, he began—"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be your name." But I must have the bridle too, said he. No, nor the horse neither, said the other; for you have lost both already.

When worldlings should most think of God, and be most struck with the dread and majesty of God, and be most afflicted and taken up with the glory of God—yet then their thoughts and hearts will be a-gadding and a-running after the world, as you may see in Ezekiel's hearers; Ezek 33:30-32, and in Paul's, Phil 3:18-19. When queen Mary was dying, she said that if they did but open her when she was dead, they should find Calais lying at her heart. Ah! how often does stinking lusts and rotten towns, and moth-eaten bags, and other trifling vanities, lie near those hearts—where God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and grace, and ordinances, and saints, and heaven should lie! Look! as the thoughts of the men of the world do mainly run out after the world, after their earthly portions, so the thoughts of those who have God for their portion do mainly run out after God, and they are never so well as when they are most a-thinking and a-musing on God. But,

[2.] Secondly, **If God is your portion—then in all your straits, trials, troubles, and needs, you will run to your God, you will fly to the Lord, as to your only city of refuge.** [Psalm 28:1; 31:2-3; 61:2; 62:2,6-7; 92:15; 94:22; 32:1-2] 1 Sam 30:6, "David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God." When a shower of stones were coming about David's ears, he runs and shelters himself under the wings of his God. Though David was an exile in an heathenish country; though Ziklag, the place of his habitation, was burnt; though he had neither house nor home to flee to; though his wives were in his enemies' hands; and though his friends and followers were desperately incensed, enraged, exasperated, and provoked against him, and took counsel together about stoning of him, looking upon him as the author of all their crosses, losses, calamities, and miseries—yet now he comforts and encourages himself in the Lord his God. Psalm 142:4, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld—but there was no man who would know me—refuge failed me; but no man cared for my soul." But what does the psalmist do in this case? Does he despair or despond? No! Does he cast away his hope and confidence in God? No! Why, what does he do then? Why, when all outward comforts fail him, he runs to God as to his last refuge. Psalm 142:5-6, "I cry to you, O Lord; I say—You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.

Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me!"

He does not run in his straits from God to the creatures, for that had been to run from the fountain of living waters—to broken cisterns; Jer 2:12-13; John 6:68; Isaiah 33:16; from the light of the sun—to the light of a candle; and from the Rock of ages—to a leaf driven about with the wind; and from paradise—into an howling wilderness, etc. But where does he run then? Why, he runs to God! He knew that God was his light, his life, his love, his peace, his joy, his strength, his shelter, his safety, his security, his crown, his glory—and therefore he runs to his God!

And, indeed, in times of danger, where should the child run to shelter himself but to his father? and where should the wife run but to her husband? and the servant but to his master? and the soldier but to his stronghold? and a Christian but to his God? Prov 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runs into it and is safe." Sometimes by the name of the Lord we are to understand God himself—but most commonly *God's attributes* are called his *name*, because by them he is known, as a man is by his name; and here by the name of the Lord we are to understand the power of the Lord, for by that God is known, as men are known by their names. Now God himself is a strong tower, and the power of God is a strong tower, yes, it is a tower as high as heaven, and as strong as strength itself; it is a tower so **deep** nothing can undermine it, so **thick** no cannon can pierce it, so **high** no ladder can scale it, so **strong** that no enemy can assault it or ever be able to stand before it, and so well furnished and provided for all purposes and intents, that all the powers of darkness can never distress it, or in the least straiten it.

Now into this impregnable and indomitable tower, the righteous in all their distresses and dangers run. All creatures run to their refuges when they are hunted and pursued, and so do righteous souls to theirs. But what does the righteous man gain by running to his strong tower? Why, he gains safety; he is safe, says the text, or rather according to the Hebrew—he is exalted, he is set aloft, he is a soul out of the range of gunshot, he is a soul out of all hazard and danger, he is safe in everlasting arms, he is safe in his strong tower of defense; he can easily overlook all hazards, yes, he can look upon the greatest dangers with an holy neglect.

When the burning fiery furnace was heated seven times hotter than at first—where do Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego run? Why, they run to God. Dan 3:16-18, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king—O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

And so Moses in that Psalm 90:1, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations;" or as the Hebrew has it, you have been our refuge-place in generation after generation. By this Hebraism, *generation after generation*, the prophet sets forth all generations, to show that there has been no generation wherein God has not been the refuge of his people. God was a refuge to his people before the flood, and he has been a refuge since the flood, and he will be a refuge to his people, while he has a people in the world. All the time that Moses and the people of Israel were a-traveling up and down in that terrible howling wilderness, wherein they were compassed about with dreadful dangers on all hands, God was a refuge and a dwelling place unto them. In all their troubles and travels for four hundred years together, God was a shelter, a refuge, and an house of defense unto them. Every man's house is his strong castle, and there he retreats when dangers come; and thus did the people of God in the text. When dangers threatened them, they still run to their God, they still made their retreat to the Holy One of Israel.

A man who has God for his portion, when he is in his worst condition—can never be houseless nor harborless. As long as God lives, he can never lack a house—a mansion-house to hide his head in. All the powers on earth and all the powers of hell can never unhouse, nor never unharbor, nor never unshelter that man who has God for his portion!

It was a witty saying of that learned man Picus Mirandula, "God created the earth for beasts to inhabit, the sea for fish, the air for birds, and heaven for angels and stars; so that man has no place to dwell and abide in, but God alone." And certainly he who by faith dwells in God, dwells in the best, the noblest, the safest, and the strongest house that ever was

dwelt in. And so Psalm 91:1-2, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress—my God; in him will I trust." In this whole psalm the safety of a saint is set forth to the life; to *abide under the shadow of the Almighty*, notes the defense and protection of God. Those words, "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," are a metaphor taken from a bird or a hen, who hides her young ones under her wings, and so secures them from birds of prey. God never lacks a wing to hide his children under. Look! as little chicks run under the wings of the hen when danger is near, so the people of God do commonly run under the wings of God when danger is near. And certainly, that Christian may well bid defiance to all dangers, and easily and sweetly sing away all cares and fears, who can by faith shelter himself and lodge himself under the shadow of Shaddai.

Look! as the worldling in all his straits, troubles, trials, dangers, and needs, still runs to his bags, to his earthly portion for support, for comfort, for support, for relief, for shelter, for protection, Prov 18:11; Matt 19:24; 1 Tim 6:17. So a Christian in all his troubles, trials, and distresses, still runs to his God for shelter, comfort, and support.

Psalm 31:1-3, "In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me." Psalm 61:2-4, "From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings." Psalm 94:21-22, "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent. But the Lord is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge." Psalm 57:2, "I will cry unto God most High; unto God who performs all things for me." Isaiah 25:9, "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us—this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Mic 7:7, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation—my God will hear."

Thus you see that the saints in all their straits and trials do still run to God. They know that that God that is their portion is an all-sufficient God, and that he is a sun and a shield to those who walk uprightly. Therefore they delight to be still a running under his shadow. A man who has God for his portion, may truly say in his greatest distresses and troubles, "Well, though I have no riches to fly to, nor any friends to shelter me, nor any relations to stand by me, nor any visible power on earth to protect me—yet I have a God for my portion, who is always willing to supply me, and able to secure me."

Psalm 18:1-2, "I will love you, O Lord, my strength," or as the Hebrew has it, "I will dearly love the Lord," or "I will love him with inmost feelings of affections," as a tenderhearted mother loves her dearest babe with the inmost affections of affections. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." In this verse you have nine different expressions to discover what an all-sufficient refuge, God is to his people in their greatest distresses. When a Christian in his worst condition—yet he has celestial bread to eat, which the world knows nothing of. The grand policy of a Christian to secure himself against all dangers is to run to God. But,

[3.] Thirdly, **If God is your portion—then you will hold fast your portion, and rather part with anything, than part with your portion.** Naboth would not upon any terms part with his inheritance; he would rather let all go, yes, his very life go, than let his inheritance go, his portion go. 1 Kings 21:3, "And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you;" or, as the Hebrew has it, "The Lord keep me from this as from an abominable thing." To alter or alienate the property of inheritances was expressly forbidden by God in his law, Lev 25:23; Num 36:7; Ezek 46:18. Therefore Naboth looks upon Ahab's offer and motion as a detestable and an abominable thing, and resolves to hold fast his inheritance, whatever it cost him. So a Christian will hold fast his God, whatever comes on it; he will let anything go, rather than let his God go or his Christ go.

Song 3:4, "I found him whom my soul loves; I held him, and would not let him go." The Hebrew word that is here rendered *held* signifies to hold,

as a man would hold his possession, his inheritance. The word signifies to hold with both hands, to hold with all one's might and with all one's strength; and thus the spouse held the Lord Jesus; she held him with both hands; she held him with all her might and with all her strength; she held him with a holy violence, with a holy force; she held him as a man would hold his prisoner who had a mind to escape; or as a man would hold his sword or shield, when his life is in danger.

So Jacob, Gen 32:26, "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let you go, except you bless me." When Jacob was all alone, and in a dark night, and upon one leg, and when his joints were out of joint, and he very much overmatched—yet then he holds God fast, he wrestles and weeps, and weeps and wrestles, he tugs and sweats, and sweats and tugs, and will not let go his hold, until, like a prince, he had prevailed with God, Hos 12:4.

Ruth, you know, was so glued to her mother Naomi, that no arguments could prevail with her to leave her mother. She was fully resolved in this, that where her mother went, she would go; and where her mother lodged, she would lodge; and that her mother's people would be her people; and her mother's God her God; and that where her mother died there she would die; and there would she be buried, Ruth 1:14-19. So a man who has God for his portion is so glued to his God, that nothing can take him off from following of God and from cleaving to God.

When David was in his wilderness condition—yet then his soul followed hard after God, then his soul stuck close to God. Psalm 63:1-2, "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you—my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water." Psalm 63:8, "My soul follows hard after you;" or, as the words may be read, "My soul cleaves after you." David's enemies did not follow harder after him than he followed hard after God. The wife in a man's bosom could not cleave so close to him as David's soul did cleave close to God when he was in a wilderness estate, when he was in an afflicted condition.

It is nothing to follow God in a paradise—but it is rare to follow God in a wilderness; it is nothing to follow God when the way is strewn with rosebuds—but it is the glory of a Christian to follow God when the way is

strewed with thorns and briars; it is nothing to follow God in a crowd, or with the crowd. But it is the excellency of a Christian to follow God in a wilderness, where few or none follows after him. It is nothing to follow God in the midst of all encouragements—but it is wonderful to follow God in the midst of all discouragements. Oh the integrity! oh the ingenuity! oh the strong intention! oh the deep affection! oh the noble resolution—of that Christian who hangs upon God in a wilderness, and who cleaves to God in a wilderness, and who follows hard after God in a wilderness!

Look! as Shechem's soul did cleave to Dinah, and as Jacob's soul did cleave to Rachel, and as Jonathan's soul did cleave to David in the very face of all hazards, dangers, difficulties, troubles, trials, and distresses—so the very soul of a man who has God for his portion will cleave to God in the very face of all hazards, dangers, difficulties, troubles, trials, and distresses that he meets withal, Psalm 44:8-23. It is neither the frowns of men, nor the reproaches of men, nor the scorns of men, nor the contempts of men, nor the oppositions of men, nor the treacheries of men, nor the multitudes of men—which will work him to let go his hold of God. A man who has God for his portion knows that, while he holds his God, he holds his life; and that, while he holds his God, he holds his comfort, his crown, his heaven, his all. Therefore he will rather let all go—than let his God go.

And so much the several *leave nots* which are scattered up and down in the blessed Scripture, do clearly evidence; as that in 1 Kings 8:57, "The Lord our God is with us, as he was with our fathers—let him not leave us, nor forsake us;" and that Psalm 27:9, "Hide not your face far from me; put not your servant away in anger; you have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." And so Psalm 119:121, "I have done judgment and justice; leave me not to my oppressors." And so Psalm 141:8, "But my eyes are unto you, O God the Lord—in you is my trust; leave not my soul destitute," or leave not my soul naked, as the Hebrew word signifies. And so in that Jer 14:9, "O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name; leave us not." Now in these five scriptures you have five *leave us nots*, and what do they import? Certainly nothing less than a marvelous unwillingness in the people of God to part with God, or to let go their hold of God. A man who has God for his

portion will rather die at the foot of God, than he will let go his hold of God. Job 13:15, "Though he slay me—yet will I trust in him." But,

[4.] Fourthly, **If God is your portion, then you live upon God as upon your portion.** Look! as the men of the world live upon their earthly portions, so a man who has God for his portion lives upon his God, as you may plainly see by comparing these scriptures. [1 Sam 30:6; Hab 3:17-18; Psalm 73:26; Rom 14:7-8; Gal 2:20; Phil 1:21] Look! how the poor man lives upon his labors, the covetous man upon his bags, the ambitious man upon his honors, the voluptuous man upon his pleasures, etc., so does a Christian live upon his God.

In all his *duties* he lives upon God, and in all his *mercies* he lives upon God, and in all his *needs* he lives upon God, and in all his *straits* and *trials* he lives upon God, and in all his *contentments* and *enjoyments* he still lives upon God. He lives upon God for his *justification*. Rom 8:33, "It is God who justifies." And he still lives upon God for the perfecting of his *sanctification*; Phil 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And he lives upon God for the maintaining and increasing of his *consolation*, 2 Cor 1:3-5. When he is under the frowns of the world, then he lives upon the smiles of God; when he is under the hatred of the world, then he lives upon the loves of God; and when he is under the reproaches of the world, then he lives upon his acceptance with God; when he is under the threatenings of the world, then he lives upon the protection of God; and when he is under the evil designs and plottings of the world, then he lives upon the wisdom and counsel of God; when he is under the slights and neglects of the world, then he lives upon the care of God; and when he is under the crosses and losses of the world, then he lives upon the fullness and goodness of God, etc.

Alexander told his soldiers, 'I keep awake—that you may sleep.' Most sure I am, that he who is the saint's portion never slumbers nor sleeps, Psalm 121:3-4. God is always watchful and wakeful to do his people good; he never lacks skill or will to help them, he never lacks a purse, a hand, or a heart to supply them, etc.

O Christians! Every man singles out something to live upon. Some single out one thing, some another. Says the wife—I must live upon my husband; says the child—I must live upon my father; says the servant—I must live upon my master; says the old—We must live upon the labors of the young; says the poor—We must live upon the charity of the rich. Why then shall not a Christian live upon his God? A Christian who has God for his portion may say, when he is in his worst condition, 'Well, though I have not this, nor that, nor the other outward comfort to live upon—yet I have the *power* of a God to live on, and I have the *providence* of a God to live on, and I have the *promise* of a God to live on, and I have the *oath* of a God to live on, and I have the *love* of a God to live on, and I have the *bounty* of a God to live on, and I have the *fullness* of a God to live on, and I have the *care* of a God to live on—and what more can I desire?

John of Alexandria, nicknamed *the Almoner*, when he had distributed all to the poor, he thanked God that he had now nothing left him to live upon but his Lord and Master Jesus Christ. When all is gone—yet a Christian has his God to live upon as his portion, and that is enough to answer to all other things, and to make up the lack of all other things. Look! as he has nothing which is truly good—who has not God for his portion; so he lacks nothing which is truly good—who has God for his portion. It was a weighty saying of Cajetan, "The spiritual good of a man consists in this—that a man has friendship with God, and consequently that he lives for him, to him, with him, in him." Old godly Similes said, that he had been in the world sixty years—but had lived but seven, counting his life not from his first birth—but from his new birth. A man lives no longer than he lives upon God as his portion—when a man begins to live upon God as his portion, then he begins to live indeed, and not until then. But,

[5.] Fifthly, **If God is your portion—then he carries your heart away from all other things**, Psalm 42:12. The portion always carries

the heart with it. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" Matthew 6:19-21.

Psalm 63:1, "O God, you are my God, early will I seek you" (or, I will diligently seek you, as merchants seek precious stones which are of greatest value), "my soul thirsts for you." He does not say, my soul thirsts for water—but my soul thirsts for God; nor he does not say, my soul thirsts for the blood of my enemies—but my soul thirsts for God; nor he does not say, my soul thirsts for deliverance out of this dry and barren wilderness—but my soul thirsts for God in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water; nor he does not say, my soul thirsts for a crown, a kingdom—but my soul thirsts for God, "my flesh longs for God." These words note his earnest, ardent, and strong affections towards God.

And so Psalm 84:2, "My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God." The word that is here rendered cries, signifies to shout, shrill, or cry out, as soldiers do at the beginning of a battle; or when they cry out after a victory, 'Victory, victory, victory!' The Hebrew word notes a strong cry, or to cry as a child cries when it is very hungry, for now every whit of the child cries—hands cry, and face cries, and feet cry. And so Psalm 119:20, "My soul breaks for the longings it has unto your judgments at all times." Look! a soul who has God for his portion cannot rest until he comes to God, until he comes to his center. It is very observable, that when the God of glory appeared to Abraham, he made nothing of leaving his father's house, his kindred, and his country, Acts 7:1-5; Gen 12:1. A glimpse of that glory works him to give up all easily, readily, and quietly. A man who can look upon the God of glory to be his portion—he cannot but look upon the greatest, the nearest, and the dearest enjoyments of the world, as nothing. He cannot but look upon honor as a bubble; and worldly pomp as emptiness; and great men as a lie; and poor men as vanity. He cannot but look upon his nearest and his dearest relations, his highest and his noblest friends, his choicest and his sweetest comforts—but as a dream and a shadow that soon vanishes away.

It is observable in the courts of kings and princes, that children and the

cruder sort of people are much taken with pictures and their rich shows, and feed their fancies with the sight of rich hangings and fine mirthful things; whereas such as are great favorites at court, pass by all those things as things that are below them, and as things that are not worthy of their notice, who have business with the king, and who have the eye, the ear, the hand, and the heart of the king to take pleasure and delight in. Just so, most men admire the poor low things of the world, and are much taken with them as things that have a great deal of worth and excellency in them. But a man who has God for his portion, the King of kings for his portion, and all that he has—he passes by all the mirthful and great things of the world, as things below him, as things not worthy of him. His business is with his God, and his thoughts, his heart, and affections are taken up with his God.

Naturalists tell us that the magnet will not attract, in the presence of the diamond. O Christians! while a man can eye God as his portion, all the pride, pomp, bravery, glory, and gallantry in the world will never be able to attract him from God, Heb 11:24-27,35. It is reported that when the tyrant Trajan commanded Ignatius to be torn open, they found *Jesus Christ* written upon his heart in characters of gold. Here was an heart worth gold indeed; Christ carried away his heart from all other things. So **if God is your portion, he will certainly carry your heart away from all earthly things.**

Look! as earthly portions carry away worldly hearts from God, Ezek 33:31-32; Luke 12:16-21; so when God once comes to be a man's portion, he carries his heart away from the world, the flesh, and the devil. All the world cannot keep a man's interest and his heart asunder. If a man make sin his interest, all the world cannot keep sin and his heart asunder. If a man make the world his interest, all the power on earth cannot keep the world and his heart asunder. And so if a man make God his interest, all the world cannot keep God and his heart asunder—no sword, no prison, no tortures, no flames can keep a man's interest and his heart asunder. A man's heart will be working towards his interest, even through the very fire, as you may see in the three children, Dan 3:17-18. Look! as the needle's point in the seaman's compass never stands still—but quivers and shakes until it come right against the north pole; and as the wise men

of the east never stood still until they were right under the star which appeared to them; and as the star itself never stood still until it came right over that other star, which shined more brightly in the manger than the sun did in the firmament; and as Noah's dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot all the while she was fluttering over the flood, until she returned to the ark with an olive branch in her mouth—so the heart of a Christian that has God for his portion can never rest, can never be at quiet—but in God. But,

[6.] Sixthly, **If God is your portion, then you will own your God, and stand up courageously and resolutely for your God.** Every man will defend his portion, and stand up stoutly and resolutely for his portion; and so will every Christian do for his God. Psalm 119:46, "I will speak of your testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed." David was resolved upon a noble and resolute owning of God and his testimonies before the greatest and the highest of men; and this he would do and not blush, this he would do and not be ashamed, this he would do and not be daunted. It was neither the majesty or authority of princes, it was neither the power or dread of princes, which could hinder David from giving in his testimony on God's side, or on truth's side. Josh 24:18, "We will serve the Lord, for he is our God." Josh 24:21-24, "But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the Lord." Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord." "Yes, we are witnesses," they replied. "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel." And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and obey him."

They had chosen God to be their God, as God had chosen them to be his peculiar people above all the nations of the earth. Therefore, notwithstanding all that Joshua had objected, they were fully resolved to own the Lord, and to cleave to the Lord, and to obey the Lord, and wholly to devote themselves to the service of the Lord. Having taken the Lord to be their God, they were firmly resolved to own the Lord really, and to own him fully, and to own him primarily, and to own him only, and to own him everlastingly.

"You have declared this day that the Lord is your God and that you will

walk in his ways, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, and that you will obey him. And the Lord has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands." Deuteronomy 26:17-18. They had declared God to be their God, and therefore they were resolved upon all those holy ways and means whereby they might evidence to the world their owning of God to be their God. And so in that 2 Chron 30:8, "They yield themselves unto the Lord," or, as the Hebrew has it, "They give the hand unto the Lord." You know when men make covenants or agreements to own one another, or to stand by one another, they commonly shake hands, or take one another by the hand. Certainly all those who have the Lord for their portion, have given their hands to the Lord—that they will own him, and stand by him, and cleave to him, as Jonathan did to David, or as Ruth did to Naomi.

How stoutly and courageously did the three children own the Lord, and stand by the Lord in the face of the fiery furnace, Dan 3:17-18. And Daniel will choose to be rather cast into the den of lions, than that the honor of God should in the least be clouded, or his glory darkened by any neglects or omissions of his, Dan 6. And so did all those worthies, "of whom this world was not worthy," Heb 11:34. Oh, how did they own God, and stand up for God, notwithstanding the edge of the sword, the violence of fire, the cruel mockings and scourgings, the bonds and imprisonments, the stoning and sawing asunder, the temptings and wanderings about in sheepskins and goatskins, and all other trials and torments that did attend them.

Basil affirms that the primitive Christians did so courageously and resolutely own God, and stand up for God in the face of the most dreadful sufferings; that many of the heathens, seeing their heroic zeal, courage, magnanimity, and steadfastness, turned Christians. Domitian raised the second persecution against the Christians because they would not give the title of *Lord* to any but Christ, nor worship any but God alone. Among the many thousand instances that might be given, let me only give you a few of a later date, whereby you may see how courageously and resolutely the saints have stood up for God, and owned God, in the face of the greatest dangers that has attended them.

Luther owned God and stood up resolutely for God against the world. And when the emperor sent for him to Worms, and his friends dissuaded him from going, as sometimes Paul's did him, 'Go,' said he, 'I will surely go since I am sent for in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; yes, though I knew that there were as many devils in Worms to resist me as there be tiles to cover the houses—yet I would go!' And when he and his associates were threatened with many dangers from opposers on all hands, he lets fall this heroic and magnanimous speech, 'Come, let us sing the Psalm 46, and then let them do their worst!'

William Flower, the martyr, said that the heavens should as soon fall as he would forsake his profession, or budge in the least degree from it.

Apollonius, being asked if he did not tremble at the sight of the tyrant, made this answer, 'God, who has given him a terrible visage, has given also unto me an undaunted heart.'

When the persecutors by their dreadful threatenings labored to terrify one of the martyrs, he replied, that 'there was nothing of things visible, nor nothing of things invisible, that he was afraid of. I will,' says he, 'stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.'

When Bishop Gardiner asked Rowland Taylor if he did not know him, etc., he answered, "Yes, I know you, and all your greatness—yet you are but a mortal man; and if I should be afraid of your lordly looks, why do you not fear God, the Lord of us all?"

The executioner kindling the fire behind Jerome of Prague, he bade him kindle it before his face, for, said he, if I had been afraid of it, I had not come to this place, having had so many opportunities offered me to escape it. And at the giving up of the Spirit, he said, "This soul of mine in flames of fire, O Christ, I offer you!"

When Dionysius was given up to the executioner to be beheaded, he remained resolute, courageous, and constant, saying, "Come life, come death, I will worship none but the God of heaven and earth."

Thus you see by these instances that men that have God for their portion will courageously own God, and bravely and resolutely stand up for God, whatever comes on it.

The blood that has been shed in most nations under heaven does clearly evidence this—that men will own their earthly portions, and that they will stand up stoutly, resolutely, and courageously in the defense of them. And so certainly will all those own God, and stand up in the defense of God, his glory, and truth—who have God for their portion. Take a true bred Christian, when he is himself, take a Christian in his ordinary course, and he cannot but own his God, and stand up stoutly and courageously for his God in the face of all difficulties and dangers. But,

[7.] Seventhly, **If God is your portion—then you will look upon all things below your God as poor, low, mean, and contemptible things.** Psalm 73:24-25. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." A worldly man looks upon all things below his earthly portion as contemptible; and so does a Christian look upon all things below his God as contemptible. Phil 3:7-8, "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish" (The Greek word properly signifies such sordid, coarse, and contemptible things, which are either cast away by dogs, or cast unto dogs), "that I may win Christ."

And it is very observable, that after this great apostle had been in the third heaven, and had been blessed with a glorious sight of God, he looked upon the world as a poor, base, low, contemptible thing, 2 Cor 12:1-3; Gal 6:14, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Paul scorned, despised, and rejected the world—and the world scorned, despised, and rejected him. Paul cast off the world—and the world cast off him. He disregarded the world—and the world disregarded him. He was dead to the world—and the world was dead to him. The world and Paul were well agreed: the world cared not a pin for Paul—and Paul cared not a straw for the world.

And so, when Moses had seen him who was invisible, when he had taken a full prospect of the eternal world, and when he had beheld God as his portion—oh, how does he slight, scorn, and trample upon all the honors, preferments, profits, pleasures, delights, and contentments of Egypt, as things below him, and as things that in no respects were worthy of him, Heb 11:24-27. It is a Rabbinical fable, that as a child, Moses had Pharaoh's crown given him to play with; and he made a football of it, and cast it down to the ground, and kicked it about, as if it were a sign of his future vilifying and despising of temporal things. I shall not much trouble my head about what Moses did when he was a child; but of this I am sure, having the word of God for it, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter" that is, he did little less than make a football of Pharaoh's crown! Witness his refusing with an holy scorn and disdain to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and so to succeed Pharaoh in the throne.

And so in that Rev 12:1-2, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven—a woman clothed with the sun, and the *moon under her feet*, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." The church here is compared to a woman for her weakness, fruitfulness, and loveliness; and it is observable, that she is clothed with the sun, that is, with Christ's own loveliness and righteousness, which resembles the sun in its several properties and effects. Now this woman, the church, is said to have the moon under her feet. By the moon we are to understand all temporary and transitory things. Now the church treads upon all these things as trash and trumpery that were much below her, and despised by her. Look! as the great men of the world do commonly look upon all portions that are below their own, with an eye of scorn, disdain, and contempt—as Haman did, Esther 5:9-14; and as those bold daring sinners did—Psalm 73:4-14. So do those who have God for their portion look upon all things below their God, with an eye of scorn and disdain.

I have read of Lazarus, that after his resurrection from the dead, he was never seen to laugh; his thoughts, his heart, his affections were so fixed upon God, and so taken up with God, with his portion, that he was as a dead man to all the mirthful and great things of the world—he saw nothing in them worthy of a smile.

And so when once Galeacius, that famous Italian marquis, came to understand that God was his portion, in the face of the highest offers imaginable—of honor, favor, profit, and advancement—he cried out, 'Cursed be he who prefers all the glory of the world, to one day's communion with God!'

The old Grecians, who had altogether fed on *acorns* before—when *bread* came into use among them, they threw all their acorns to the swine. And the Lacedæmonians despised their iron and leather money—when gold and silver came into use among them. **So when a man comes once to experience God to be his portion, ah, at what a low rate will he value the swelling honors, the deceitful riches, and the vanishing pleasures of this beggarly world!** John 4:14. Christians are compared to eagles. Now the eagle is a kingly, a princely bird; it is a bird of a sharp piercing sight, and of a swift and lofty flight; it flies high and sets light by things below, except it be when necessity compels her—and so it is with those who have God for their portion; they **fly high and they live high, in God, and therefore they cannot but set light by the toys and trifles of the world.** But,

[8.] Eighthly, **If God is your portion—then your God is most precious to you—then you set the highest price and value imaginable upon your God.** Every man sets the highest price upon his portion. Though a man may set a good price upon his delightful gardens, his pleasant walks, his delicate fishponds, his fruitful trees, his sweet flowers, etc.—yet it is no price to that which he sets upon his chief portion. 'Well,' says a man, 'though here are an hundred things to delight my eye, and to please my fancy, and to satiate my appetite—yet I infinitely value my portion above them all.' Who but a fool would cast away a fortune—for a momentary pleasure?

So though a Christian may set a considerable value upon all his outward comforts and contentments—yet it is no value to that he sets upon his God—upon his portion. '*This and that* are precious to me,' says a Christian—'but my God is infinitely more precious than all,' Psalm 18:24-25; Psalm 4:6-7. A Christian sets up God above his goods, Heb 10:34; and above his lusts, Gal 5:24; and above his relations, 1 Sam 30:1-7; yes, and

above his very life. Rev 12:11, "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death. Psalm 63:3, "Your loving-kindness is better than *life*." The Hebrew is *lives*. Put many lives together—yet there is more excellency and glory in the least beam, in the least discovery of divine love—than there is in all earth's vanities. A man may be weary of life—but never of divine love. Histories tell us of many who have been weary of their lives—but no histories can furnish us with an instance of any one that was ever weary of divine love.

Look! as the people prized David above themselves, saying, "You are worth ten thousand of us," 2 Sam 18:3, so those who indeed have God for their portion—oh how do they prize God above themselves, and above everything below themselves! And doubtless, those who do not lift up God above all—they have no saving interest in God at all. Whatever a man eyes as his greatest interest, that he sets up above all, and before all other things in the world. Now if a man eyes God as his greatest interest, he cannot but set God atop of all. I have not credulity enough to think that ever such did truly love God—who love anything more than God, or who set up anything above God, Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple."

Look! as Darius set up Daniel over all, and as Pharaoh set up Joseph above all; so a man who has God for his portion, he sets up God over all, and he sets up God above all. Augustine set so high a price upon Christ, that he has long since told us that he would willingly go through hell to Christ! Bernard said, 'I had rather be in my chimney-corner with Christ, than in heaven without him.' When one of the martyrs was offered riches and honors if he would recant, he made this excellent answer, 'Do but offer me something which is better than my Lord Jesus Christ—and I shall recant.' And I have read of another, that set so high a price upon the Lord Jesus, that whenever he did but mention the name of Jesus, his eyes dropped tears. Were every star in the skies a sun—yet a man who has God for his portion would prize him above them all.

'Do you ask me where be my jewels? My jewels are my husband,' said Phocion's wife. 'Do you ask me where be my ornaments? My ornaments

are my two sons, brought up in virtue and learning,' said the mother of the Gracchi. 'Do you ask me where be my treasures? My treasures are my friends,' said Constantius,. So if you ask a Christian where his jewels, his ornaments, his treasures, his comforts, and the delights of his soul are—he will answer you that they are all in God! He will tell you that God is his portion, and that God is his great all, and that he enjoys all in God, and God in all, and therefore he cannot but prize God above all. But to prevent mistakes in this weighty case, let me give you **a few brief hints;** as,

[1.] First, **If God is truly precious to you—then ALL of God is precious to you;** his name is precious to you, his honor is precious to you, his ordinances are precious to you, his promises are precious to you, his precepts are precious to you, his threatenings are precious to you, his rebukes are precious to you, his people are precious to you, and all his concerns are precious to you.

Look! as every sparkling stone that is set round about a rich diamond is precious in the eyes of the jeweler, so is every sparkling excellency in God precious in his eyes, who sets a high value upon God. Look! as all of the newborn babe is precious in the eyes of the tender mother—as head, face, hands, arms, body, feet—so all of God is very precious in his eyes, who has any tender regard of God. Look! as all of a husband is precious in the eyes of a loving wife, namely, his person, name, credit, honor, estate, liberty, life, etc., so all of God is very precious in his eyes that loves God with a real love, with a superlative love. But,

[2.] Secondly, **If God is most precious to you—then all the dishonors which are done to God, his truth, his worship, his ways, his ordinances, his institutions, his government, his people—are most grievous and burdensome to you.** "The reproaches of those who reproached you have fallen upon me," Psalm 69:9; "I beheld the transgressors, and was *grieved*, because they kept not your word," Psalm 119:158. The word that is here translated *grieved* signifies to loathe, abhor, and contend—I beheld the transgressors, and I loathed them; I beheld the transgressors, and I abhorred them; I beheld the transgressors, and I contended with them—but not so much because they were mine enemies, as because they were yours.

It is just between God and all those who have a precious esteem of him, as it is between two lute-strings that are tuned one to another; no sooner one is struck but the other trembles. A saint cannot see God struck but his heart will tremble, Jer 9:1-4. A father, lying upon his deathbed, called three children to him which he kept, and told them that only one of them was his natural son, and that the other two were only brought up by him; therefore unto his son alone, he gave all his goods; but which of those three was his own son he would not declare. When he was dead, each of the three pleaded his birthright, and the matter being brought to trial, the judge, for the making, if possible, a true discovery, took this course. He caused the dead corpse of the father to be set up against a tree, and commanded the three sons to take bows and arrows to shoot at their father, to see who could come nearest to his heart. The first and second did shoot and hit him—but the third was very much angry and displeased with them both, and through the natural affection of a child to a father, threw away his bow and arrows, and would not shoot at all. This being done, the judge gave this sentence, namely, that the two who shot at their supposed father's heart were no sons—but that the third son, that would not shoot at all, and that was very much displeased with those who did shoot, was the true son, and that he should have the goods.

O Christians! every bitter word is an arrow shot at the heart of God; and every bloody oath is an arrow shot at the heart of God; and every heavy curse is an arrow shot at the heart of God; and every superstitious custom is an arrow shot at the heart of God; and every snare that is laid for the righteous is an arrow shot at the heart of God; and every yoke that is laid upon the people of God is an arrow shot at the heart of God; and every affront that by debauched people is given to God is an arrow shot at the heart of God, etc. And what true bred sons, what sincere sons, can see such arrows every hour in the day shot at the heart of God, and hear of such arrows that are shot a thousand thousand times in a day at the heart of God—and not grieve and mourn, and not be afflicted, troubled, displeased, and astonished to see men and to hear of men who were once made in the image of God—to be turned into such incarnate devils, as thus to deal with God, yes, with such a God as can speak them into hell at his pleasure! But,

[3.] Thirdly, **If God is most precious to you—then you will part with anything for God, then you will let go of anything, that you may hold your God, and enjoy your God.** Phil 3:7-8; Matt 13:46. Then your Isaac shall be made a sacrifice, if God will have it so, Gen 22, and your Benjamin shall be sent into Egypt, if God will have it so, Gen 43; then your Jonah shall be cast overboard, if God will have it so, Jon 1; then out goes the right eye, and off goes the right hand, upon a divine command; then you will never cry out—Oh! this mercy is too near to me to part with for God, and that comfort is too dear to me to part with for God, etc. Oh no! But then you will say, as the king of Sodom said to Abraham, "Give me the people, and take the goods to yourself," Gen 14:21. So you will say, "Give us God, oh give us God, and let who will, take the goods; let who will, take the honors, and the profits, and the pleasures of this world. It is enough that Joseph is alive; it is enough if we may but enjoy our God."

A prince will part with anything—rather than he will part with his crown-jewels; and so will a Christian rather part with anything—rather than to part with his God, whom he values above all the crown jewels in the world. But,

[4.] Fourthly, **If God is most precious to you—then you can never have enough of God.** You can never have enough of communion with God; you can never have enough of the presence of God; you can never have enough of the Spirit of God; you can never have enough of the discoveries of God; you can never have enough of the assistance of God; you can never have enough of the secret influences of God; you can never have enough of the comforts and strong consolations of God, etc. [Psalm 27:4; 84:1-12; 42:1-2; 63:1-8; Song 8:14; Rev 22:20] The grave, the barren womb, the mammonist, the pope, the Turk, the devil, and hell—will be as soon satisfied—as you can be satisfied without clearer, further, and fuller enjoyments of God. "No man," says God to Moses, "can see my face, and live," Exod 33:20; upon which words Austin makes this short but sweet reply, "Then, Lord, let me die, that I may see your face!" It is impossible that ever a man's heart should rest satisfied until he comes to a full and perfect enjoyment of that which he has set up as his grand interest—as his great all. But,

[5.] Fifthly and lastly, **If God is most precious to you—then you will give up yourself wholly to God without any reservation.** Whatever a man sets up as his great interest—to that he devotes himself—to the service of that he wholly gives up himself. So when a man eyes God as his most precious interest, and sets up God as his most precious interest—he cannot but devote himself wholly to God—he cannot but give up himself wholly to God. [Song 2:16; Acts 7:2-4; Acts 13:22; Luke 5:6-7] Psalm 119:94, "I am yours, save me." I am not my own, nor sin's, nor Satan's, nor the world's, nor friends', nor relations'—but I am yours! I am really yours, I am wholly yours, I am only yours, I am always yours! I am your to be sanctified, and I am your to be saved; I am your to be commanded, and I am your to be ruled. Lord, I am your own, and therefore do with your own as you please; and dispose of your own as you please. I am at your foot, willing in some measure to be anything or nothing—as shall seem best in your own eyes.

When the keys of the whole house, and of every room in the house, are given up to the king to be at his disposal, at his service—then he is entertained as a king, and honored as a king, and valued and prized as a king. And so when all the keys of the soul, and every room in the soul, and every faculty of the soul, are given up to God to be at his disposal, at his service—then God is entertained as a God, and honored as a God, and valued and prized as a God—but not until then.

By these five hints, if you will not put a cheat upon your own souls, you may know whether God sits in the uppermost room of your hearts or not; and whether God is set up in your hearts above all; and whether he be indeed your great all, and your all in all. But,

(9.) Ninthly, **If God is your portion—then there is no loss in all the world that lies so hard and so heavy upon you as the loss of your God.** There is no loss under heaven that does so affect and afflict a man who has God for his portion—as the loss of his God. David met with many a loss—but no loss made so sad and so great a breach upon his spirit as the loss of the face of God, the loss of the favor of God. Psalm 30:6-7, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by your favor you have made my mountain to stand strong—you hid your face, and I was troubled." The Hebrew word signifies to be greatly troubled, to

be sorely terrified, as you may see in that 1 Sam 28:21, "And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled." Here is the same Hebrew word. Saul was so terrified with that dreadful news, which the devil in Samuel's likeness told him—that he fell into a swoon. And it was even so with David upon God's hiding of his face. David was like a withered flower that had lost all its sap, life, and vigor, when God had wrapped up himself in a cloud.

The life of some creatures lies in the light and warmth of the sun; and so does the life of the saints lie in the light and warmth of God's countenance. And as in an eclipse of the sun there is a drooping in the whole frame of nature, so when God hides his face, gracious souls cannot but droop and languish, and bow down themselves before him. Many flowers, some by opening and shutting, as marigolds and tulips; others by bowing and inclining the head, as the sun-flower and mallow-flowers—are so sensible of the presence and absence of the sun, that there seems to be such a sympathy between the sun and them, that if the sun is gone or clouded, they wrap up themselves, or hang down their heads, as being unwilling to be seen by any eye but his that fills them. And just thus it was with David when God had hid his face in a cloud.

It is very observable that Job did bear up very sweetly, bravely, patiently, and nobly under all his great losses of children, estate, etc.; but when the arrows of the Almighty were got within him, then he complains that his grief was heavier than the sands of the sea, Job 6:1-5; and when the face of God was hidden from him, how sadly does he lament and bewail the withdrawals of God—"I go east, but he is not there. I go west, but I cannot find him. I do not see him in the north, for he is hidden. I turn to the south, but I cannot find him," Job 23:8-9.

There is no pain more grievous and tormenting than that of *breaking the bones*. Now David again and again pitches upon this, to hint unto you that dreadful smart and pain that his soul was under when he had lost his communion with God, and when his God was withdrawn from him, and had hid his face from him, Psalm 38:8; Psalm 51:8.

The church sadly laments the loss of her beloved in that Solomon's Song 5:6, "I opened for my lover, but my lover had left; he was gone! (or, he

was gone, he was gone) My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him but did not find him. I called him but he did not answer." Now this passionate duplication speaks out her very great grief and trouble. Like a sad widow, she sits down and wrings her hands, and cries out, "He is gone, he is gone!" "My heart sank" or, as the Hebrew has it, "my soul went out of me." I was even as an astonished creature, I was even as a dead creature, to note how greatly and how deeply she was troubled and perplexed upon the account of his withdrawing from her. Oh! the fear, the terror, the horror, the dread, the grief, the sorrow that fell upon the spouse's heart when her beloved had turned his back upon her.

And so it was with Mary. John 20:11-13, "but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?' 'They have taken my Lord away,'" she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.'" Of all losses, Mary was least able to bear the loss of her Lord. The loss was so great, and so heavy the loss, that she was not able to stand under it with dry eyes. Mary's mourning for the loss of her Lord was like that of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon, Zech 12:11. There is no loss that comes so near to a Christian's heart as the loss of his Lord. A Christian can a thousand times better bear the loss of his name—which next to his soul and his grace is the best jewel that he has in all the world, the loss of his estate, the loss of his liberty, the loss of his nearest and dearest relations, yes, the very loss of his life—than he can bear the loss of his God.

You see how sadly Micah takes on for the loss of his wooden gods, in that Judg 18:23-24, "As they shouted after them, the Danites turned and said to Micah, 'What's the matter with you that you called out your men to fight?' He replied, 'You took the gods I made, and my priest, and went away. What else do I have? How can you ask, 'What's the matter with you?'" Now if Micah was so affected and afflicted upon the loss of his idol gods, his wooden gods; what cause then have Christians to be deeply affected and afflicted when they come to lose their God, who is the true God, the living God, the Only God, and the God of gods!

You know that when Samson's locks were cut off, his strength was gone,

Judg 16:19-21. Therefore, though he thought to go out, and do as great things as he had formerly done—yet he found by woeful experience that he could not; for now he had become as weak as other men. And it is just so with the choicest saints—when their God is gone, their locks are cut, and their strength is gone, their doing strength, and their suffering strength, and their bearing strength, and their wrestling strength, and their prevailing strength, etc., is gone when their God is gone. Yes, when God goes, all goes! When the king leaves, all his train follows; when God goes, comforts go; when God goes, joys go; when God goes, peace goes; when God goes, prosperity goes; when God goes, friends go; when God goes, all contentment and satisfaction goes. Therefore it is no wonder to see a Christian better bear any loss than the loss of his God; for in losing of him he loses all. A Christian counts it his only happiness to enjoy his God, and his only unhappiness to be deprived of him. The constant language of a Christian is, "None but God, none but God!" as it was once the language of the martyr, "None but Christ, none but Christ!"

Outward losses to some men have been unsufferably afflictive. One being turned out of his estate runs out of his wits; another hangs himself with the same hands with which he had formerly counted his portion. Menippus of Phoenicia having lost his goods, strangled himself. Dinarcus Phidon, at a certain great loss, cut his own throat. When Henry the Second heard that his city Mentz was taken, he let fall this blasphemous speech—'I shall never love God any more, now that has allowed a city so dear to me to be taken away from me.' And Augustus Caesar, in whose time Christ was born, was so troubled and astonished at the loss and overthrow that Varus gave him, that for months together he let the hair of his head and beard grow without cutting, and sometimes he would run his head against the very doors, and cry out, 'Quintilius Varus, deliver up my legions again; Quintilius Varus, deliver up my legions again!' I might give you many sad instances nearer home—but that I prefer not to harp upon so sad a string.

But certainly no outward losses can lie so heavy upon the spirit of a worldling, as the loss of God lies upon the spirit of a saint. I have read of a pious woman, that having brought forth nine children, professed that she had rather endure all the pains of those nine travails at once, than endure

the misery of the loss of God's presence. A man can better bear any loss than the loss of his box of jewels, and than the loss of his documents and evidences that he has to show for his estate. Therefore, when his house is on fire, he does not cry out, 'Oh save that bed, or that chest, or that dish, or that stool, etc.' But he cries out, 'Oh save my box of jewels! oh save my writings! I care not though all be consumed, so my box of jewels and my documents are but saved!'

Now God is a Christian's box of jewels, he is a Christian's grand evidence that he has to show for another world. Therefore his greatest fear is of losing his God, and his greatest care is of keeping his God. If his box of jewels is safe—then all is safe. But if they are lost—all is lost! How then is it possible for a Christian to bear up bravely under the loss of all? A man may bear up bravely under the loss of his lumber, and under the loss of his household goods, so long as his jewels are safe and his documents are safe; but if his box of jewels should be lost, and his documents should be burnt, why, then, he wrings his hands, and cries out, 'Oh, I am undone! I am undone! I am undone!'

Just so, a Christian can bear up bravely under this worldly loss, and that worldly loss, and the other worldly loss—so long as he enjoys his God; but when he has lost his God, oh then, he cannot but wring his hands, and cry out, 'I am undone! I am undone! I am undone! I have lost my God, and in losing of him, I have lost my life, I have lost my love, I have lost my joy, I have lost my crown, I have lost my heaven, I have lost my happiness, I have lost my all.' O Christians! if God is your portion—it will be thus with you upon the loss of your God. But,

(10.) Tenthly, **If God is your portion—then you will set the highest price, value, and esteem—upon those who have God for their portion**, Psalm 16:3; Prov 12:26, 28:6. A man who has God for his portion, never values men for their arts, parts, gifts, mirthful clothes, gold chains. No, neither by their birth, breeding, high offices, or great places. No, neither by their outward dignities, honors, or riches, etc.—but by their interest and property in God. A man who has God for his portion, prizes a poor ragged Lazarus who has God for his portion, before a rich Dives that has only gold for his portion. If you have God for your portion, then there is no man in court, city, or country—compared to that man

who has God for his portion. Then there is no man in a parish, a country, a kingdom—compared to him who has God for his portion. A man who has God for his portion, has a higher esteem and a greater respect for a Job, though stripped of all, and sitting upon a ash-heap, than he has for a wicked Ahab, though sitting on his royal throne.

Paul set a higher price upon Onesimus, though but a servant, a slave, because he had God for his portion—than he did upon Nero, though he was a great and mighty emperor, Philem 10,12,17; 2 Tim 4:17. And king Ingo valued poor ragged Christians who had God for their portion—above all his glittering pagan nobles who had only the world for their portion, saying, that when all his pagan nobles should, in all their pomp and glory, be turned into hell; those poor Christians, who had God for their portion, should be his consorts and fellow-princes in heaven.

Look! as men who have their portion in this world do value men according to their worldly portions, so that those who have most gold and silver, and rr have most lordships and lands—they are the best men, the happiest men, the only men in their eyes. Just so, a Christian who has God for his portion, sets the highest value upon those who have God for their portion; and there are no men in all the world who are so high in his books as they are. A man who has a saving interest in God loves none, nor likes none, nor honors none, nor delights in none, nor exalts none, nor values none—compared to those who have God for their portion. Though the men, the great men of this world may sit in the uppermost seats at his table—yet those who have God for their portion, sit in the uppermost rooms of his heart. The Jews say that those seventy souls that went with Jacob into Egypt, were as much worth as all the seventy nations in the world. And I may say, that one soul who has God for his portion, is more worth than all the souls in the world, who have only the world for their portion. A man who has God for his portion, cannot but set a very high value upon all those who have God for their portion, though in minor disputable things they may differ from him. A man who has God for his portion, had rather live with those who have God for their portion in a prison, in a dungeon—than live with those who have only the world for their portion in a royal palace. As Algerius, an Italian martyr, was accustomed to say, that he had rather live in prison with Cato—than with

Caesar in the palace. And Doctor Taylor, the martyr, rejoiced exceedingly that ever he came into prison, because he came there to have acquaintance with that angel of God, John Bradford, as he calls him.

A man who has God for his portion, does as it were, tie those who have God for their portion, around his heart. Oh, he is always best when they are most in his eye, and nearest to his heart. It is his happiness on this side happiness to enjoy communion with them; and it is the greatest unhappiness in this world to be separated from them, Psalm 120:5-7. A man who has God for his portion, values the company of those who have God for their portion—above all other company in the world; and he values the favor of such—above all other men's favor in the world; and he values the prayers of such—above all other men's prayers in the world; and he values the counsels of such—above all other men's counsel in the world; and he values the experiences of such—above all other men's experiences in the world; and he values the interest of such—above all other men's interest in the world; and he values the hopes and expectations of such—above all other men's hopes and expectations in the world; and he values the examples of such—above the examples of all other men in the world; and he values the displeasure and anger of such—above all other men's displeasure and anger in the world. But,

[11.] Eleventhly, **If God is your portion—then you are his portion.** If you have a saving interest in God—then God has a saving interest in you; if you have a property in God—then God has a property in you; if God is truly yours—then you are really his. Song 2:16, "My beloved is mine—and I am his." Psalm 119:94, "I am yours—save me!" I am not mine own, I am not sin's, I am not Satan's, I am not the world's, I am not friends', I am not relations'—but I am yours, save me! I am really yours, I am totally yours, I am solely yours, I am everlastingly yours, save me! Ezek 16:8, "I entered into covenant with you—and you became mine!"

Deut 32:9, "For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Though God's people are despised of the world—yet they are dear to God, for they are his portion. In these words, "Jacob is the lot of his inheritance," he alludes to the division of the land of Canaan, as if the sons of Jacob had fallen to him by lot. The Lord's people are as dear to God, and as near to God, and in as great account with God; as earthly

portions and inheritances are or can be among the sons of men. Jer 12:10, "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion (or as the Hebrew has it, 'my portion of desire or of delight') a desolate wilderness." God's people are not only his portion—but they are his pleasant portion, yes, they are his desirable portion, his delightful portion. If the Lord is your portion, then you are his inheritance, Isaiah 19:25; and his peculiar treasure, Exod 19:5; and his glory, Isaiah 46:13; and his ornament, Ezek 7:20; and his throne, Jer 17:12; and his diadem, Isaiah 62:3; and his jewels, Mal 3:17. These scriptures speak out plainly and clearly that great property and interest that God has in all those who have a property and interest in him.

O Christians! Look! that as in all God has—you have an interest; so in all your concerns—God has an interest. And look! as what God is—he is for you; so what you are—you are for God. And look! as God is sincerely for you—so you are sincerely for God; and as God is wholly for you—so you are wholly for God; and as God is only for you—so you are only for God; and as God is in all things for you—so in all things you are for God; and as God is at all times for you—so you are at all times for God.

O Christians! There are none under heaven who have that interest in you—as God has—if indeed he is your portion. Look what interest the head has in the members, the husband in the wife, the father in the child, the Lord in his servant, the general in his soldier, and the prince in his subject—that, all that, and more than that—has God in all those who have a saving interest in him. There is no man in the world who has such an interest in himself, as God has in him—if indeed God is his portion. *Sin* cannot say to a man who has God for his portion, 'You are mine!' Nor *Satan* cannot say to a man who has God for his portion, 'You are mine!' Nor the *world* cannot say to a man who has God for his portion, 'You are mine!' Nor the *creature* cannot say to a man who has God for his portion, 'You are mine!' It is only *God* who can say to such a man, 'You are mine!'

As in marriage, none can say, 'This woman is mine'—but the husband; so none can say to a man who has God for his portion, 'You are mine'—but God alone. Look! as no man can truly say, that 'God is my Lord, and my God, and my father, and my friend, and my wisdom, and my counsel, and

my righteousness, and my consolation, and my salvation, and my portion, and my light, and my life, and my love, and my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, and my strength, and my shield, and my high tower, and my help, and my happiness, and my blessedness, and my all in all—but he who has God for his portion; so none but God can look upon a gracious person, and say, 'This gracious person is mine; he is my bride, my child, my friend, my favorite, my beloved, my darling, my joy, my crown! His heart is set upon me, and his love is inflamed towards me, and his trust and confidence is fixed on me, and his desires and longings are running out after me, and all his joys and delights are terminated in me!' But,

[12.] Twelfthly, **If God is your portion—then certainly the least of God is very dear and precious to you.** Oh then the least *truth* of God will be very precious to you, and the least *command* of God will be very precious to you, and the least *child of God* will be very precious to you, and the least *concern* of God will be very precious to you. Look! as the least beam of light is precious, and as the least drop of honey is precious, and as the least dust of gold is precious, and as the least degree of health and strength is precious, and as the least measure of liberty is precious; so the very least of God is very precious to that man who has God for his portion. Look! as every little piece and parcel of a worldly man's portion is very dear and precious to him, so every little piece and parcel of God—if I may so speak—is very dear and precious to him who has God for his portion.

The least glimpse and manifestations of the love and favor of God, the least taste of the mercies of God, the least anointings of the Spirit of God, the least communications of the grace of God, and the least drops of the consolations of God—are exceedingly sweet and precious to him who has God for his portion. The least good look that a man has from God, and the least good word that a man hears from God, and the least love letter and love token that a man receives from God, is exceedingly precious to that man who has God for his portion. "One *day* in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere," Psalm 84:10. He does not say, One *year* in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere—but "One day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere;" nor does he not say, One *quarter of a year* in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere—but "One day

in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere;" nor he does not say, One *month* in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere—but "One day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere;" to show that the very least of God is exceeding precious to a gracious soul who has God for his portion.

Now by these twelve particulars you may all know whether God is your portion or not, except you are resolved beforehand to put a cheat upon your own immortal souls, and so to make yourselves miserable in both worlds. And let thus much suffice for this use of trial and examination.

Now if, upon trial and examination, any of you shall come to some comfortable satisfaction in your own spirits, that God is your portion, and that you have an undoubted interest and property in God, oh then I would upon the knee of my soul entreat and beseech you, I might say, charge and command you, to evidence and declare to all the world your interest and property in God.

But you will say, **How should we evidence and declare to the world our interest and property in God?** we are willing to do it, if we did but know how we should do it. Why then, thus:

[1.] First, **Evidence and declare your interest and property in God—by your laboring and endeavoring with all your might to draw on others to get a saving interest and property in God.** [Num 10:29; John 1:39-49; John 4:28-30; Acts 10:24-27] O Christians! have you been convinced of the necessity and excellency of interest and property in God? have you experienced the profit, the sweet, the comfort, and the happiness of property and interest in God? How then can you but strive, as for life, to persuade others to look after their interest and property in Christ, as the one thing necessary? When Samson had tasted honey, he gave his father and mother some with him, Judg 14:8-9. O my brethren, property and interest in God is so sweet a morsel, that I cannot see how it is possible for a man to taste of it and not to commend it to others. Those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, cannot but cry out with the psalmist, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!" Psalm 34:8.

Property and interest in God will never make a man a churl; it will never work a man to make a monopoly of so rare a jewel as that is. Oh the fervent prayers! Oh the burning desires! Oh the vehement wishes! Oh the strong endeavors of such who have a saving interest and property in God, to draw on others to seek after a saving interest and property in God! All true property and interest in God is of a diffusive nature; it is like light—which will spread itself over all; it is like leaven—which will permeate through all; it is like Mary's box of sweet ointment—which filled all the house with the sweet scent thereof. If you are a minister, evidence your property in God in doing all you can to provoke those who are under your charge to secure their property in God; other things cannot be secured—but property in God may be secured, Acts 26:29. If you are a magistrate who has a property in God, evidence it by doing all you can, by your commands, and by your counsel, and by your example, and by your prayers, to persuade and win others over to be restless until they have secured their interest and property in God, Josh 24:15. If you are a father who has interest and property in God, oh, then, let your soul be still in travail for your children, until Christ is formed in them, until they are new born, and until they have experienced the power and sweet of property and interest in God. But,

[2.] Secondly, **Evidence your property and interest in God—by keeping far off from all such sinful courses, practices, and compliances, that may any ways put yourselves or others to question the truth of your property and interest in God.** Thus did those worthies, "of whom this world was not worthy," in Hebrews 11. It is very observable that when the holy things belonging to the sanctuary were to be removed, God commanded Aaron and his sons that there should be a special care had to cover them all over, lest in journeying dust should any ways soil them, Num 4:5-13. O beloved! it highly concerns you who have a saving interest and property in God, to look narrowly to your hearts, words, works, and ways, and to see that there be such a covering of grace and holiness, such a covering of care, fear, wisdom, watchfulness, and circumspection over your whole man, that no scandalous sins, pollutions, or defilements be found upon you; according to that exhortation of the apostle, in Phil 2:15, "so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and

depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe." Rev 14:3-5; Rev 3:4.

I have read of the dove, that there is such a native dread of the hawk implanted in her, that she is afraid of every feather that has grown upon a hawk, and that she so detests and abhors the very sight of any such feather that she will fly from it, and keep at the greatest distance imaginable from it. And shall not that divine fear, O Christians! that is planted by the hand of the Spirit in your hearts, be of as great force and prevalence to keep your souls from all those enormities and wicked compliances that may in the least occasion you or others to question your property and interest? You know a copyist may by one great blot at last spoil all that he has done for many days before upon a large patent or lease; so a man may by one foul blot, by one enormous crime, by one wretched act of compliance—dash and obliterate the fairest copy of a virtuous life, and blot out all the visible golden characters of divine graces that once seemed to be printed upon the soul.

Look! as one drop of ink colors a whole glass of water, so one gross sin, one shameful action, one hour's compliance with anything of antichrist—will color and stain all the great things that ever you have suffered, and all the good things that ever you have performed; it will stain and color all the good prayers that you have made, and all the good sermons that ever you have heard, and all the good books that ever you have read, and all the good words that ever you have spoke, and all the good works that ever you have done. And therefore, whatever you do, keep off from sin, and keep off from all sinful compliances—as you would keep off from hell itself! But,

[3.] Thirdly, **Declare and evidence your property and interest in God—by maintaining and keeping up the sense of your interest and property in God, in opposition to all other interest whatever.** Maintain your interest in God in opposition to sin's interest, and in opposition to Satan's interest, and in opposition to the world's interest, and in opposition to antichrist's interest, and in opposition to all carnal and superstitious interests, Psalm 63:1; Rev 14:1-4—as Moses did, and as Joshua and Caleb did, and as Mordecai and Nehemiah did, and as Daniel and the three children did, and as the apostles and the primitive

Christians did. Certainly the heart of a gracious man cannot but rise, and his anger and indignation cannot but swell, against every thing and every interest that threatens to make a breach upon his interest and property in God, Psalm 69:9. A man who has a saving interest and property in God, in the midst of all oppositions, is like a man made up all of fire, walking in stubble and straw—he overcomes and consumes all oppositions, and all difficulties do but increase his fortitude. He encourages his soul in the face of all oppositions and dangers, as Hezekiah once did his soldiers in that 2 Chron 32:7-8, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles." And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said."

He is a fool, we say, that will be laughed out of his coat; but certainly he is a fool in folio that will be laughed out of his skin, nay, out of his soul, out of his profession, out of his eternal salvation; but doubtless such fools as these have never experienced the sweet of property and interest in God. Perhaps there were many broad jests and many bitter scoffs broken upon Noah, while he was a-building of his ark. The people laughed at him, and derided him, and thought the poor old man only dreamed; but yet Noah's property and interest in God being clear, Noah begins his work, and goes on his work, and never ceases until he had finished that work that God had set him about.

Dogs bark most when the moon is at fullest; but let the dogs bark ever so much, the moon will run her course. She will walk her station securely through the heavens, though all the dogs in the town bark ever so fiercely at her. Just so, a man who has a saving interest and property in God, and knows it—he is like the moon, he will hold on his course heavenwards and holiness-wards, though all the lewd and debauched wicked wretches in city and country should bark at him, and deride him, and oppose him, and speak all manner of evil against him. Property and interest in God will make a man set light by all such paper-shot, yes, it will carry him through the shots, not only of evil tongues—but it will also carry him through the most fierce and eager opposition that either Satan himself, or

any of his instruments, can possibly raise against him. But,

[4.] Fourthly, **Declare and evidence your property and interest in God—by your sweet and noble behavior and deportment towards Christians.** Look! as a child behaves it in a different way towards his father, that to what he does towards others, so you must behave a different way towards Christians, to what you do towards those who have no interest nor property at all in God. Though a wife be very kind and courteous to all comers and goers—yet she behaves in a very different way to her husband from what she does to all others; she behaves with a great deal more kindness, and sweetness, and tenderness, and familiarness, and nobleness, etc., towards her husband, than she does towards others, whether they be friends or strangers; and just thus should you behave towards Christians.

I have not faith enough to believe that such men have any interest and property in God, who behave very harshly, and proudly, and churlishly, and scornfully, and deridingly, and tyrannically, and disdainfully, and enviously, and maliciously, and rigorously, and sourly, and bitterly, etc., towards Christians; and yet behave at the same time very fairly, and sweetly, and courteously, etc., towards such wretches that have no interest or property in God at all, yes, to such who blaspheme his name, and who pollute his ordinances, and who trample upon his mercies, and who despise his warnings, and who are given up to their own hearts' lusts, and who live as if there were neither God, nor heaven, nor hell But,

[5.] Fifthly, **Evidence your interest and property in God—by doing such things for God, which such as have no interest in God cannot do, nor will not do, nor have no heart nor mind to do.** Evidence your interest in God, by doing singular things for God, Matt 5:44-48; by doing such things for God that are above their reach that have no interest nor property in God at all; as by denying yourselves—your sinful selves, your natural selves, and your religious selves; and by keeping a singular guard upon your own hearts, words, and ways; and by stepping over the world's crown to take up Christ's cross, as Moses did, Heb 11:24; and by lessening yourselves to greaten Christ, as John did, John 3:30-32; and by lifting up of Christ above your lusts, above yourselves, above the world, above outward privileges, above your

performances, above your arts, parts, and gifts, as Paul did, Phil 3:7-9; and by blessing a *taking God* as well as a *giving God*, as Job did, Job 1; and by rejoicing and glorying in all the afflictions and sufferings that befall you for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake, as the apostles and primitive Christians did; and by choosing to suffer rather than to sin, as those worthies did "of whom this world was not worthy;" and by keeping of yourselves from the defilements, pollutions, and abominations of the times, as some in Sardis did, Rev 3:4; and by following of the Lamb wherever he goes, as those hundred and forty-four thousand did, who had their Father's name written in their foreheads, Rev 14:1-5.

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, **Evidence your interest and property in God —by falling roundly in with the interest of God, in opposition to all carnal interests in the world.** O Christians! the interest of God will by degrees eat out and swallow up all other interests in the world. Look! as Pharaoh's lean cow ate up the fat cows, Gen 41:4; and as Aaron's rod swallowed up the Egyptians' rods, Exod 7:11-12, so the interest of God will in time eat up and swallow up all that superstitious, carnal, worldly, anti-christian, and Satanic interest that men labor now to uphold, with all their might, Isaiah 8:9-10.

Dan 2:35, "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." Dan 2:44, "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever." And so Dan 7:27, "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." Rev 17:12-14, "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because

he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." If these scriptures do not clearly evidence, that the interest of Christ shall swallow up all other interests, I understand nothing.

Now mark, the people of God are the interest of God, and the gospel of God is the interest of God, and the ordinances of God are the interest of God, and the institutions and pure worship of God are the interest of God, etc. And therefore, all you who have a saving interest and property in God, evidence it by your ready and resolute falling in with the interest of God. Believe it, those who fall in with the interest of God, shall fall in with the strongest side, and will be sure to carry it against ten thousand worlds. What is the stubble to the flames? what is weakness to strength? what is impotency to omnipotency? what is folly to wisdom? what is emptiness to fullness? No more are all the carnal interests in the world to the interest of God. Therefore thrice happy is that man who falls timely and cordially in with the interest of God.

But now, if upon trial and examination any of you shall find that yet the Lord is not your portion, and this I believe will be the case of many of you, I would exhort all such people to labor with all their might, yes, to labor as for life, to get the Lord to be their portion. O this is the one thing necessary, this is the sun among the stars, this is the work of works that lies upon your hands; when this is done—all is done; until this be done—there is nothing done which will do you good in another world. O Christians! your lives lie upon it, your souls lie upon it, eternity lies upon it—your all lies upon it. Therefore you had need be restless until you have gained the Lord to be your portion.

### **Incitements to See that God is our Portion**

Now, that I may the more effectually provoke you, and stir you up to this great and glorious, this necessary and weighty work; give me permission to propose these following considerations.

[1.] First, **Consider that your present portion, your present condition—is but miserable and cursed**, Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68. All the earth was cursed upon man's fall, and until fallen man comes to be savingly interested in God, all his earthly enjoyments are cursed unto him; his honors are cursed, and his riches are cursed, and his preferments are cursed, and his pleasures are cursed; the whole portion of his cup is nothing but a little cursed vanity. Job 20:22-29, "In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him. When he has filled his belly, God will vent his burning anger against him and rain down his blows upon him. Though he flees from an iron weapon, a bronze-tipped arrow pierces him. He pulls it out of his back, the gleaming point out of his liver. Terrors will come over him; total darkness lies in wait for his treasures. A fire unfanned will consume him and devour what is left in his tent. The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him. A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God's wrath. Such is the fate God allots the wicked, the heritage appointed for them by God."

Prov 3:33, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." Mal 2:2, "If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name," says the Lord Almighty, "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me." There is a real curse and a secret curse, an invisible curse and an insensible curse, that lies upon all their souls, who have not God for their portion. Gal 3:10, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." And as there is a curse upon all their souls, so there is a curse upon all their comforts, contentments, and enjoyments, who do not enjoy God for their portion. Until a man comes to enjoy God for his portion, all his earthly portions are cursed unto him; but when a man comes to enjoy God for his portion, then all his earthly portions are blessed unto him.

O sirs! there is no mitigating of the curse, there is no reversing of the curse, there is no altering of the curse, nor there is no taking of the curse from off your souls, nor from off your earthly portions—but by gaining God to be your portion. O sirs! you will live accursed, and you will die accursed, and you will appear before God accursed, and you will be

judged and sentenced by God accursed, and you will be sent to hell accursed, and you will remain to all eternity accursed—if God is not your portion! Therefore oh how should this consideration awaken every sinner to give God no rest until he has given himself as a portion to him. But,

[2.] Secondly, Consider this, **that there is yet a possibility of attaining God to be your portion**, Luke 18:27. God may be your portion, even yours! If you are but heartily willing to be divorced from that wicked trinity—the world, the flesh, and the devil, there is no doubt but that God will be your portion. O sirs! why has God laid open so clearly and so fully the nature and incomparable excellency of this portion above all other portions before you—but to persuade your hearts, and to draw out your souls to look after this portion, and to make sure of this portion—as that wherein all your happiness and blessedness lies? Oh that you were wise to consider, that now an opportunity is put into your hands, that may make you blessed forever! You have all the ways, and all the means, and all the helps, and all the advantages imaginable for the obtaining of God to be your portion; so that, if God is not your portion, I shall be so bold to tell you that your destruction is from yourselves, Hos 13:9.

O sirs! though God is a golden mine—yet he is such a mine that may be gained, if you will but dig, and sweat, and take pains to purpose, Prov 2:2-7; though he is a pearl of infinite price—yet Christ can purchase this pearl for you; though he is a matchless and incomparable portion—yet he is such a portion as may be yours, as will be yours, if you are not lacking to your own souls. Why has God sent his ambassadors early and late? 2 Cor 5:18-20; and why has he continued them among you to this very day—but that they should acquaint you with his wonderful readiness and willingness to bestow himself as a portion upon you? O sirs! God is said to be a God of great mercy, and to be rich and plenteous in mercy, and to be abundant in mercy, and to be transcendent and incomparable in mercy; yes, all the mercies of God are sure mercies, they are royal mercies, they are innumerable mercies, they are bottomless mercies, they are unchangeable mercies, and they are everlasting mercies. Therefore there is no reason for any man to despair of obtaining of God for his portion. [Psalm 105:8; Eph 2:4; Psalm 86:15; 1 Pet 1:1,3; Psalm 103:11]

But,

[3.] Thirdly, **Consider that God is a portion-sweetening portion.** God is such a portion as will sweeten all other portions; he is a portion that will make every pleasant portion, more pleasant; and that will make every bitter portion, sweet. Poverty is one man's portion, and sorrow is another man's portion, and crosses and losses are a third man's portion, and reproaches and sufferings are a fourth man's portion, and sickness and diseases are a fifth man's portion, etc. But God is a portion that will sweeten all these portions! You know the tree that Moses cast into the bitter waters of Marah made them sweet, Exod 15:23-25. Now this tree was a type of Christ, who will certainly sweeten all our bitterest potions. The church complained in Lam 3:15, "that God had filled her with bitterness" (or, as the Hebrew has it, "with bitteresses"), "and that he had made her drunken with wormwood." And yet this very consideration, that "the Lord was her portion," Lam 3:24, sweetened all.

If God is your portion—there is no condition that can make you miserable; if God is not your portion—there is no condition that can make you happy. If God is not your portion—in the midst of your sufficiency you will be in straits; if God is your portion—in the midst of all your straits you shall enjoy an all-sufficiency in an all-sufficient God, Job 20:22. Until God is your portion, O sinner, you will never taste anything but death and bitterness in all your comforts, and in all your contentments, and in all your enjoyments. But,

[4.] Fourthly, **Consider that all earthly portions are not of that infinite consequence and concernment to you, as this portion is.** All earthly portions are but the food which perishes, John 6:27; they are but moth-eaten and canker-eaten treasures, Matt 6:19, James 5:3; they are full of uncertainty, yes, they are all over vanity, Eccles 1:2; they reach not beyond the line of this mortal life; they can neither suit the soul, nor fill the soul, nor satisfy the soul, nor save the soul; they can neither change the heart, nor reform the heart, nor in the least better the heart; they can neither arm a man against temptations, nor lead a man out of temptations, nor make a man victorious over temptations; they can neither direct the conscience when it is in straits, nor relieve the conscience when it is under distress, nor support the conscience when it

is under guilt, nor heal the conscience when it is under wounds; they can neither make our peace with God, nor keep our peace with God, nor augment our peace with God; they can neither bring us to Christ, nor unite us to Christ, nor keep us with Christ, nor transform us into the similitude or likeness of Christ; they can neither bring us to heaven, nor fit us for heaven, nor assure us of heaven. In a word, no earthly portion can free us from death, nor in the least avail us in the day of wrath. By all which it is most evident that all earthly portions are of very little consequence and concernment to the souls of men.

Oh—but now God is a portion of infinite consequence and concernment to all the sons and souls of men. No man can hear as he should, nor pray as he should, nor live as he should, nor die as he should—until God is his portion. No man is secure from temporal, spiritual, or eternal judgments—until God is his portion. No man can be happy in this world, or blessed in another world—until God is his portion. O sirs! it is not absolutely necessary that you should have this or that earthly portion—but it is absolutely necessary that you should have God for your portion; for if God is not your portion, all the angels in heaven, nor all the men on earth, cannot prevent your being miserable to all eternity!

[5.] Fifthly, **Consider that until a man comes to have God for his portion, he never comes to be temptation proof.** A man who has God for his portion is temptation-proof; he will say when tempted, as Themistocles did, 'Give those trinkets to slaves.' And as Basil did, who, when he was offered honor, glory, and wealth, etc., answered, 'Give me that glory which abides forever, and give me those riches which will endure forever.' And as he was being tempted with offers of money to desert his religion, gave this excellent answer, 'Let not any think that he will embrace other men's goods to forsake Christ—who has forsaken his own proper goods to follow Christ!'

Do as that martyr did, who, when he had riches and honors offered him, if he would recant, answered, 'Do but offer me something that is better than my Lord Jesus Christ, and I shall recant.' Do as Hormisda, a nobleman in the king of Persia's court, did, who, because he would not deny Christ, he was put into ragged clothes, deprived of his honors, and set to keep the camels; after a long time, the king seeing him in that base

condition, and remembering his former fortunes, he pitied him, and caused him to be brought into the palace, and to be clothed again like a nobleman; and then tempts him afresh to deny Christ, whereupon this noble spirit presently tore his silken clothes, saying, 'If for these you think you can cause me deny my faith—take them back!' And so he was cast out with scorn a second time.

And what was it which made the apostles temptation-proof, and that made those worthies temptation-proof, Heb 11, and which made the primitive Christians temptation-proof, and which made the martyrs in queen Mary's days temptation-proof? Certainly, nothing more than this very consideration—that God was their portion. Ah sinners, sinners, you will certainly fall, you will readily fall, you will easily fall, you will frequently fall, you will dreadfully fall before temptations, until you come to enjoy God for your portion. Every blast and every wind of temptation will upset and overturn that man who has not God for his portion. Such a man may pray a thousand times over and over, "Lord, lead me not into temptation," and yet every day fall before the least temptation, as common experience does abundantly evidence. Whereas a man who has God for his portion will stand fast like a rock in all storms, yes, in the face of all temptations he will be like mount Zion, that cannot be removed.

Luther counsels every Christian to answer all temptations with this short saying, "I am a Christian!" And I would counsel every Christian to answer all temptations with this short saying, "The Lord is my portion!" O Christian, when Satan or the world shall tempt you with **honors**, answer, "The Lord is my portion!" When they shall tempt you with **riches**, answer, "The Lord is my portion!" When they shall tempt you with **preferments**, answer, "The Lord is my portion!" When they shall tempt you with the **favours** of great ones, answer, "The Lord is my portion!" When this persecuting world shall threaten you with the loss of your **estate**, answer, "The Lord is my portion!" When they shall threaten you with the loss of your **liberty**, answer, "The Lord is my portion!" When they shall threaten you with the loss of **friends**, answer, "The Lord is my portion!" When they shall threaten you with the loss of **life**, answer, "The Lord is my portion."

O Christians! If Satan should come to you with an **apple**, as once he did

to Eve, tell him that "The Lord is my portion!" If Satan should come to you with a **grape**, as once he did to Noah, tell him that "The Lord is my portion!" If Satan should come to you with a change of **clothing**, as once he did to Gehazi, tell him that "The Lord is my portion!" If Satan should come to you with a wedge of **gold**, as once he did to Achan, tell him that "The Lord is my portion!" If Satan should come to you with a bag of **money**, as once he did to Judas, tell him that "The Lord is my portion!" If Satan should come to you with a **crown**, a kingdom, as once he did to Moses, tell him that "The Lord is my portion!" But,

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, **If God is not your portion, you will be miserable to all eternity.** If God is not your portion, wrath must be your portion, hell must be your portion, everlasting burnings must be your portion, a devouring fire must be your portion, and a separation forever from the glorious presence of God, must be your portion; as you may clearly see by comparing these Scriptures. [Psalm 11:6; Psalm 9:17; Isaiah 33:14; Matt 24:51; 2 Thess 1:7-10; Heb 12:22-24]

If God is not your portion in this life—you shall never have him for your portion in another life; if God is not your portion here—he will never be your portion hereafter. O sirs! if death should surprise you before God is your portion—you will as certainly go to hell, as God is in heaven. Therefore it infinitely concerns you to get God for your portion. There is no way in the world to make the *king of terrors* to be a *king of desires* to your soul, O man—but by gaining God for your portion. Of all terribles, death will be most terrible and formidable to that man who has not God for his portion. If you should live and die, O man, without having God for your portion—it had been good for you that you had never been born. If the day of your birth had been the day of your death—your hell would not have been so hot as now you will certainly find it.

But now, methinks, I hear some crying out, **O! what shall we do, that we may have God for our portion?** Oh, had we as many worlds at our disposal as there are stars in heaven—we would give them all that we might have God for our portion. Oh we now see that we can never be happy except God is our portion; yes, we now see that we shall be miserable to all eternity, except God is our portion. Therefore what shall we do, that we may have God for our portion?

Well then, if you would indeed have God for your portion, let me thus advise you—

[1.] First, **Labor to be very sensible, that by nature you are without God**; yes, at enmity with God, and alienated from the life and love of God, and that by nature you are children of wrath and disobedience, and in actual war and rebellion against the great God. [Eph 2:12; Rom 8:7; Eph 2:1-2; Eph 4:18] O sirs, never talk of having of God for your portion, until you come to see yourselves without God, and until you come to judge yourselves unworthy of God. Every man in his natural estate is afar off from God. Until a man comes to be sensible of this, he will never desire God to be his portion. But,

[2.] Secondly, If you would have God for your portion, then **you must trample upon all other portions in comparison of God**. Luther protested that God should not put him off with the poor things of this world. Oh, go to God, and say, "Lord, you have given me a portion in money—but this money is not yourself; you have given me a portion in lands—but these lands are not yourself; you have given me a portion in goods—but these goods are not yourself; you have given me a portion in jewels—but these jewels are not yourself. Therefore give me yourself, and I shall say I have enough. Lord, had I all the world for my portion—yet I would be miserable forever in that other world, except you bestow yourself as a portion upon my soul. O Lord, give me but yourself, and take away whatever you please. Oh give me but yourself—and take away all, strip me of all—and I shall with Job sit down and bless a taking God as well as a giving God!"

Oh go to God, and tell him, with an humble boldness, that though he has given you many good things—yet all those good things will do you no good except he bestows himself upon you as the only good. Oh tell him that he is the first good; tell him that he is the original of all good; tell him that he is the greatest good, the noblest good; tell him that he is a superlative good; tell him that he is an universal good; tell him that he is an unchangeable good; tell him that he is an eternal good; and tell him that he is the most soul-suitable and soul-satisfying good. And therefore tell him that you cannot tell how to live one day without him; yes, that

you know not how to be happy one hour without him. But,

[3.] Thirdly, If you would have God for your portion, then **of all precious promises, of all golden promises, plead that most**, Zech 13:9, "They shall call upon my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." O sirs! as ever you would have the great and glorious God for your portion, plead out this noble promise cordially with God; plead it out affectionately, plead it out fervently, plead it out frequently, plead it out believingly, plead it out resolutely, plead it out incessantly. O sirs! this choice promise is *a hive full of heavenly honey*, it is a paradise full of sweet flowers, it is a breast which is full of the milk of consolation. Therefore be still a-sucking at this breast, be still a-pleading of this promise. Follow God with this promise early and late, follow him with this promise day and night, follow him with this promise as the importunate widow followed the unjust judge, Luke 18:1, and give him no rest until he has made it good to your souls that he is your God, and that he is your portion, and that he is your salvation, and that he is your all in all.

Oh tell him that above all things in this world your hearts are set on this—to have God to be your God, to have God to be your portion. Oh tell him that you **cannot**, tell him that you **dare** not, tell him that you **may** not, and tell him that you **shall** not—be satisfied with anything without God, with anything below God, with anything on this side God, with anything but God. Therefore humbly entreat him, and earnestly beseech him, to be your God, and to be your portion. But,

[4.] Fourthly, If you would have God for your portion, then **you must be willing to be his portion**. [Deut 32:9; Jer 12:10; Zech 2:12] God is resolved upon this, that he will be no man's portion, who is not willing to be his. You must make a resignation of yourselves to God—if ever you would enjoy a saving interest in God. You must be as willing to be his people—as you are willing to have him to be your God. You must be as much at God's disposal—as earthly portions are at your dispose—or else there will be no enjoying of God to be your God. God will engage himself to none who are not willing to engage themselves to him. He who will not give his hand and his heart to God—shall never have any part or portion in God. O sirs! as ever you would have God for your portion, it highly

concerns you to give up yourselves to God with highest estimations, and with most vigorous affections, and with utmost endeavors, according to that precious promise, Isaiah 44:5, "One will say, 'I belong to the Lord'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's,' and will take the name Israel." God stands upon nothing so much as the giving up of yourselves to him, nor is he taken with anything so much as the giving up of yourselves to him.

I have read of Aeschines, who, seeing his fellow-scholars give great gifts, namely, gold, silver, and jewels, to his master Socrates, and he being poor, and having nothing else to bestow, he gave himself, which the philosopher most kindly accepted, esteeming this present above all those rich and costly presents that his scholars had presented to him, and accordingly in love and sweetness he behaved toward him. So there is nothing that God accepts, loves, likes, and esteems—like the giving up of a man's self unto him. This is a present that God prefers above all the gold, silver, and sparkling jewels in the world. Well, sirs, remember this, such as are not as willing to say, 'Lord, we are yours', as they are to say, 'Lord, you are ours.' Such shall never have God for their portion. But,

[5.] Fifthly, If you would have God for your portions, then **you must take up Christ in your arms, and deal with God upon the righteousness of Christ.** There is no acquaintance with God, there is no reconciliation to God, there is no union nor communion with God, there is no readmission into the presence and favor of God, without a mediator. [Eph 2:16; Heb 2:17; Col 1:20; Eph 1:6-7] God outside of Christ, is incomprehensible, God outside of Christ, is exceeding dreadful. An absolute God is a consuming fire, Heb 12:9. Therefore says Luther, 'let me have nothing to do with God himself.' The blood of Christ, the blood of the covenant, is that, and only that, which can cement, reunite, and knit God and man together.

Themistocles, understanding that king Admetus was highly displeased with him, took up his young son into his arms, and dealt with the father, holding that his darling in his bosom, and thereby appeased the king's wrath. O sirs! the King of kings is offended with you, and upon the account of your sins he has a very great controversy with you. Now, there is no way under heaven to pacify his wrath, and turn away his displeasure

from you—but by taking up Christ in your arms, and by presenting all your suits in his name. There is no angel in heaven, nor any saint on earth, who can, or who dares, to interpose between an angry God and poor sinners. It is only Christ, the prince of peace, who can make up a sinner's peace with God, Isaiah 9:6.

John 14:6, "Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me." There is no way to the Father but by the meritorious blood of the Son; there are none who can stand between everlasting burnings and us but Christ, Isaiah 33:14. "You shall not see my face except you bring your brother Benjamin with you," said Joseph to his brethren, Gen 43:3,5. So says God, Sinners, sinners, you shall not see my face except you bring Jesus with you, except you bring Christ in your arms; you shall never see my face with joy, you shall never see my face and live. There is a writ of vengeance that is issued out of the court of heaven against all sinners, and except Christ steps in, they will certainly fall under an eternal arrest, and be thrown into everlasting perdition and destruction. But,

[6.] Sixthly, If you would have God for your portion, then **you must break your league with sin**. You must fall out with sin—if ever you fall in with God. Sin and you must be two—or God and you can never be one. There is no property to be had in God, except your hearts rise against that which first disunited and disjointed you from God. Sin and you must part—or God and you can never meet. You shall as soon make a marriage between light and darkness, heaven and hell, noon and midnight—as ever you shall be able to make a marriage between God and sin. So long as sin remains ours—God will be none of ours. No prince will be one with that subject who lives in the practice of treason and rebellion against him. No prince will be one with him who has killed his only son and heir, and who daringly continues to hold up those bloody weapons in his hands with which he has committed the horrid murders. There is no adulteress that can be so shamelessly impudent, or so vainly confident, as to desire pardon of her jealous husband, or to expect a oneness and a sweetness with him—while she continues to hold her wanton lovers still in her arms, and is fully resolved to hold on in her wanton dalliances as in times past.

O sirs! God is that prince who will never admit of peace or union with you

—until you cease practicing of treason against him, and until you come to lay down your weapons of rebellion at his feet; he is that jealous husband who will never take you into a oneness, into a nearness and dearness with himself—until you come to abandon all your wanton lovers, and thoroughly to resolve against all wanton dalliances for time to come. If ever you would have God for your portion, you must say to all your wanton lovers, and to all those idols of jealousy that you have set up in your souls, as Ephraim once said to his, "Get you hence, for what have I any more to do with you?" Hos 14:8. But,

[7.] Seventhly and lastly, If you would have God for your portion, then **you must wait upon him in the use of all holy means.** In the use of holy means, God makes the clearest, the fullest, and the choicest discoveries of himself; in the use of holy means, poor sinners come to be acquainted with the excellency of God, and with the necessity of having God for their portion; in the use of holy means, poor sinners come to understand the fullness of God, the goodness of God, the graciousness of God, the sweetness of God, and the wonderful freeness, readiness, and willingness of God to give himself as a portion to all such as see their need of him, and who are heartily willing to receive him as their God and portion; and in the use of holy means God works in poor sinners a readiness, a forwardness, and a blessed willingness to choose God for their portion, to close with God for their portion, to embrace God for their portion, to accept of God for their portion, and to own God for their portion.

If this question should be put to all the saints in heaven, namely, How did God come to be their portion? they would all answer, By waiting upon him in the use of all those holy ways and means that he had appointed for that purpose. And if the same question were put to all the saints on earth who have God for their portion, they would all give the same answer. O sirs! as ever you would have God for your portion, it highly concerns you to wait patiently upon him in the use of all holy means. He who is in the use of holy means is in the way of obtaining God for his portion. But he who casts off the use of the means, he says in effect, "I will not have God for my portion, I care not to have God for my portion; let me but have the world for my portion, and let who will, take God for their portion."

To prevent mistakes, before I close up this direction, remember that by the use of holy means, I only mean such means that God himself has appointed, commanded, instituted, and ordained. As for those means that are of men's inventing, devising, prescribing, commanding, and ordaining; a man may wait until doomsday in the use of them, before ever he will gain God for his portion. Therefore they are rather to be declined, yes, detested and abhorred, than any way to be owned, minded, or used by any who would have God for their portion. Look! as all the worshipers of Baal got nothing by all their wailing and crying out from morning to night, "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!" 1 Kings 18, so those who wait upon God in humanly invented and devised worship, will never get anything by all their waiting. No, though they should wait from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, and cut and lance themselves until the blood gushes out, as those foolish worshipers of Baal did. And therefore, as ever you would have God for your portion, be sure that you wait upon him only in his own ways, and in the use of his own means. And thus I am done with the use and application of the point. So that I have now nothing to do but these two things:

First, To answer a few **objections** which poor sinners are apt to make against their own souls, and against their enjoying of God for their portion; and,

Secondly, To lay down a few **principles** which may be of singular use to all such that have God for their portion. I shall begin with the objections.

## **OBJECTIONS**

I wish to answer a few **objections** that poor sinners are apt to make against their own souls, and against their enjoying of God for their portion.

**Objection 1.** Methinks I hear some poor sinners ready to object and say, O sir! you have pressed us by many motives to get God for our portion,

and we stand convinced in some measure by what you have said, that God is a most excellent, transcendent, glorious portion; but we very much question whether ever God will bestow himself as a portion—upon such great, such grievous, such notorious, and such wicked sinners as we are.

Now to this objection, I shall return these **answers**:

[1.] First, God is a free agent, and therefore he may give himself as a portion to whom he pleases. Men may do with their own as they please, and so may God do with himself as he pleases. Look! as men may give earthly portions to whom they please, so God may give himself as a portion to what sinners he pleases. God is as free to bestow himself upon the greatest of sinners, as he is to bestow himself upon the least of sinners. But,

[2.] Secondly, I answer, That the Lord has bestowed himself as a portion upon as great and as grievous sinners as you are, Psalm 68:18. Adam, you know, fell from the highest pinnacle of glory into the greatest gulf of misery, and yet God bestowed himself as a portion upon him, Gen 3:15. And Manasseh was a sinner of the greatest magnitude, 2 Kings 21, his sins were of a scarlet dye, they reached as high as heaven, and they made his soul as black as hell; for witchcraft, sorcery, cruelty, idolatry, and murder, he was a beast, 2 Chron 33; he sold himself to work all kinds of wickedness with greediness; he did more wickedly than the very heathen, whom the Lord abhorred; in all his actings he seemed to be the firstborn of Satan's strength; and yet the Lord freely bestowed himself as a portion upon him.

And so, Ezek 16:5,6,8, "No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine."

And so, Isaiah 46:12-13, "Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel." Solomon, Mary Magdalene, Matthew, Zaccheus, the jailor, and the murderers of Christ, were all very great and grievous sinners—and yet the Lord bestowed himself as a portion upon them. And so God bestowed himself as a portion upon those monstrous and prodigious sinners that are mentioned in 1 Cor 6:9-11, whose souls were red with guilt, and as black as hell with filth. God has been very good to those who have been very bad. Therefore do not despair, O sinner, though your sins are very great.

I have read a story concerning a great rebel, who had made a great revolt against one of the Roman emperors, and proclamation being sent abroad, that whoever could bring in the rebel, dead or alive, he should have a great sum of money for his reward; the rebel hearing of it, comes, and presenting himself before the emperor, demands the sum of money proposed—the emperor, bethinking himself, concludes, that if he should put him to death, all the world would be ready to say that he did it to save his money; and so he freely pardoned the rebel, and gave him the money. Here now was light in a dark lantern, here was rare mercy and pity in a very heathen. And shall an heathen do thus, and shall not the great God, who is made up of all loves, of all mercies, of all compassions, of all goodnesses, and of all sweetnesses, do much more? Certainly he will.

If the greatest rebels, if the greatest sinners will but come in while the white flag of grace and mercy is held forth, they shall find a marvelous readiness and forwardness in God, not only to pardon them—but also to bestow, not merely money—but himself as a portion upon them. The greatest sinners should do well to make that great Scripture their greatest companion. Psalm 68:18, "You have ascended on high," speaking of Christ, "you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also." But to what purpose has Christ received gifts, spiritual gifts, gracious gifts, glorious gifts for men, for the rebellious? Why, it is "that the Lord God may dwell among them." But,

[3.] Thirdly, I answer, That God has given out an express promise, that he will make such to be his people, who were not his people. Hos 2:23, "I will

have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to those who were not my people, You are my people; and they shall say, You are my God." In this precious promise God has engaged himself to have a most sweet harmony, and a most intimate union and communion with such a people as were not his people. But,

[4.] Fourthly, I answer, That God gains the greatest glory by bestowing of himself as a portion upon the greatest sinners. There is nothing that makes so much for the glory of free grace, and for the exaltation of rich mercy, and for the praise of divine goodness, and for the honor of infinite fullness—as God's bestowing himself upon the greatest of sinners! O sirs! grace never appears so rich, nor ever so excellent, nor ever so glorious—as when it triumphs over the greatest sins, and when it falls upon the greatest sinners. Grace never shines, nor ever sparkles, nor ever becomes so exceeding glorious—as it does when it lights upon the hearts of the greatest sinners. The greatest sins do most and best set off the freeness and the riches of God's grace. There is nothing which makes heaven and earth to ring and to sound out his praises, so much as the fixing of his love upon those who are most unlovely and ungodly!

And it is further observable, that the greatest sinners, when once they are converted, do commonly prove the choicest saints, and the rarest instruments of promoting the honor and glory of God in the world. The Canaanites were a wicked and a cursed generation; they were of the race of cursed Ham; they were given over to all whoredom, witchcraft, and cruelty; they offered their sons and daughters to devils; they were the very worst of sinners; they were without God and without the covenant, and counted dogs among the Israelites; and such an one was the **Canaanite woman**, that you read of in that Matt 15:21-29, until the Lord made it the day of his power upon her soul. But when the Lord had brought her in to himself, ah, what a rare Christian did she prove, for wisdom, zeal, humility, self-denial, love, courage, patience, faith, etc.

And so **Mary Magdalene** was a notorious strumpet, a common whore, among all the harlots none to Mary Magdalene, and she was one out of whom Christ cast seven devils, Mark 16:9; and yet when she was changed and converted, oh, with what an inflamed love did she love the Lord Jesus Christ! and with what a burning zeal did she follow after the Lord

Jesus! and how abundant was she in her lamenting and mourning after the Lord Jesus Christ! Some report, that after our Savior's resurrection, she spent thirty years in weeping for her sins.

And **Paul**, you know, was a very grievous sinner—but after his conversion, oh what a rare, what an eminent, what a glorious instrument was he in bringing of souls to Christ, and of building up of souls in Christ! Oh what a noble drudge was he for Christ! Oh how frequent! Oh how fervent! Oh how abundant was he in the work of the Lord, etc. And indeed, in all ages, the greatest sinners, when once they have been converted, they have commonly proved the choicest saints, and the rarest instruments in the hand of God for the advancement of his glory, and the carrying on of his work in the world. I might instance in Luther, and divers others—but that I hasten to a close. And therefore,

[5.] Fifthly, I answer, that of all sinners the greatest sinners do undoubtedly stand in the greatest need of having of God for their portion.

Look! as those who are most wounded stand in most need of a surgeon, and as those who are most sick stand in most need of a physician, and as those who are in most danger of robbing stand in most need of assistance, and as those who are in most peril of drowning stand in most need of a boat, and as those who are most impoverished stand in most need of relief, so those who are the greatest sinners stand in most need of having God for their portion. For no tongue can express, nor any heart can conceive the greatness of that wrath, of that indignation, of that desolation, of that destruction, and of that damnation which attends and waits upon those great sinners who have not God for their portion, 2 Thess 2:7-9. Therefore the greater sinner you are, the greater obligation lies upon you to get God to be your God and portion; for until that be done, all your sins, in their full number, weight, guilt, and aggravating circumstances—will abide upon your soul. But,

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, I answer, that God is a great God, and he loves to do like himself. Now, there are no works, no actions that are so suitable to God, and so pleasing to God, and so delightful to God—as those who are great; and what greater work, what greater action can the great God do, than to bestow himself as a portion upon the greatest of sinners? It was a

great work for God to create the world, and it is a great work for God to govern the world, and it will be a great work for God to dissolve the world, and to raise the dead; and yet doubtless it is a greater work for the great God freely to bestow himself upon the greatest sinners. The love of God is a great love, and the mercies of God are great mercies, and the compassions of God are great compassions, and accordingly God loves to act. Therefore there is ground for the greatest sinners to hope that the Lord may bestow himself as a portion upon them. But,

**Objection 2.** Secondly, Others may object and say, Hereafter we will look after this portion; for the present we are for living in the world, We are for a portion in hand, we are for laying up portions for ourselves, and providing portions for our posterity. We are first for laying up of earthly treasures, and when we have done that work to purpose, then we will do what we can to obtain this excellent and glorious portion that you have been so long a-discoursing on, etc. Now, to this objection I shall thus **answer**,

[1.] First, Thus to act is to run counter-cross to Christ's express commands. Matt 6:33, "But seek *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." And so Matt 6:19-20, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." And so in that John 6:27, "Labor not for the food which perishes—but for the food which endures for everlasting life." O sirs! to act or run cross to God's express commands, though under pretense of revelation from God, will cost you your life—as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings 13:24.

O sirs! it is a dangerous thing to neglect one of *his* commands, who by another command is able to command your bodies into the grave, and your souls into hell at his pleasure. Shall the wife make conscience of obeying the commands of her husband? and shall a child make conscience of obeying the commands of his father? and shall the servant make conscience of obeying the commands of his master? and shall the soldier make conscience of obeying the commands of his general? and shall the subject make conscience of obeying the commands of his

prince? And will not you make conscience of obeying his commands that is the prince of the kings of the earth? Rev 1:5. But,

[2.] Secondly, Who but children, madmen, and fools—will pitch upon a less good, when a greater good is offered to them? What madness and folly is it for men to pitch upon bags of pennies—when bags of gold are laid before them! or for men to choose a pittance—when rich inheritances and great lordships are freely offered to be made over to them forever? What were this but, Esau-like, to prefer a mess of pottage before the birthright? and yet this is the present case of these objectors. God is that rich, that great, that glorious, and that matchless portion that is held out, and freely offered and tendered in the gospel to poor sinners; and they neglect, slight, and reject this blessed offer—and fix their choice, their love, their hearts, their affections, upon the perishing vanities of this world. Oh the folly of such, that at a feast feed upon a crust, and never taste of those substantial dishes that are for nourishment! Oh the madness of such that prefer the fleshpots of Egypt before the dainties of Canaan! Would not such a merchant, such a tradesman be pointed at, as he goes along the streets, for a fool or a madman—who should neglect such a season, such an opportunity, such an advantage, wherein he may be made rich forever—and all because he is resolved first to secure such a bargain of rags, or such a bargain of old shoes, which will turn out but little to his advantage when he has bought them? Surely yes!

Now this is the very case of the objectors, for they neglect the present seasons, the present opportunities of grace and mercy, and of being made happy forever, by enjoying of God for their portion; and all because they are resolved first to secure the treasures, the rags of this world. Certainly, in the great day of account, those will be found the greatest fools that have fooled away such golden opportunities, that were more worth than all the world, and all to secure the rags of the world. But,

[3.] Thirdly and lastly, How many thousands are now in, hell! How many thousands have now their part and their portion in that burning lake, which burns with fire and brimstone forever and ever! Who thought when they were on earth, that after they had laid up goods for many years, like the fool in the Gospel, that then they would look after heavenly treasures, and secure God for their portion; but before they could find

time or hearts to set about so noble a work, divine vengeance has overtaken them, and justice has cut the thread of their lives, and given them their portion among hypocrites, Matt 7:22,26-27; Rev 21:8. Ah! how many are there who have died in the time of their earthly projects and designs, before ever they have set about that great work of securing God for their portion, Luke 12:15,22; and how many thousands be there, that God in his just judgment has given up to insatiable desires of earthly things, Phil 3:18-19, and to a cursed endless covetousness all their days!

Some write of the crocodile, that it always grows, that it has never done growing; and just so it is with the desires of worldly men, they always grow, they have never done growing. Now they are for one thousand, then for ten, then for twenty, then for forty, then for a hundred thousand; now they are for this lordship, and then they are for that; now they are for this good bargain, and then they are for that; their hearts grow every day fuller and fuller with new desires of further and greater measures of earthly things. They please themselves with golden dreams, until they awake with everlasting flames about their ears, and then they fall cursing themselves that they have made gold their confidence, and that they have neglected those golden seasons and opportunities wherein they might have secured God for their portion. But,

**Objection 3.** Thirdly, Others may object and say, We would gladly have God for our portion, and we would willingly apply ourselves to all those ways and means whereby we might obtain the Lord to be our portion; but we are poor unworthy wretches. Surely the Lord will never bestow himself as a portion upon such miserable unworthy ones as we are! We are worthy of death, we are worthy of wrath, we are worthy of hell, we are worthy of damnation—but we are in no way worthy of having God for our portion. Did ever the Lord cast an eye of love upon such unlovely and such unworthy sinners, lepers as we are? etc.

Now to this objection I shall return these **answers**:

[1.] First, Though you have no merits—yet God is rich and abundant in mercy. [2 Cor 4:15; 1 Tim 1:14; 1 Pet 1:3] Your sins, your unworthiness can but reach as high as heaven—but the mercies of God reach above the heavens. Psalm 103:11, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so

great is his mercy toward those who fear him." Psalm 108:4, "For your mercy is great above the heavens, and your truth reaches unto the clouds." The highest comparisons which the world will afford, are not sufficient to express the greatness of God's mercy to poor sinners. Though the heavens are exceeding high above the earth—yet the mercies of God to his poor people are above the heavens. But,

[2.] Secondly, I answer, that the Lord has never bestowed himself as a portion upon any yet but unworthy ones. David was as unworthy as Saul, and Job as Joab, and Peter as Judas, and Paul as Simon Magus; and the publicans and harlots who entered into the kingdom of heaven, were as unworthy as the publicans and harlots who were shut out of the kingdom of heaven, Matt 21:31-32; and the thief who went to paradise, was as unworthy as the thief who went to hell. All the saints in heaven, and all the saints on earth, are ready with one joint consent to declare that they were as unworthy as the most unworthiest, when God first bestowed himself as a portion upon them. This objection, 'I am unworthy,' is a very unworthy objection, and therefore away with it. But,

[3.] Thirdly, I answer, That God has nowhere in all the Scripture required any personal worthiness to be in the creature, before he will bestow himself upon the creature. O sirs! it never came into the thoughts of God, it never entered into the heart of God, to require of men that they should be first worthy of his **love** before they should enjoy his love; and that they should be first worthy of his **mercy** before they should taste of his mercy; and that they should be first worthy of his **goodness** before they should be partakers of his goodness; and that they should be first worthy of **himself**, before he would bestow himself as a portion upon them. If we should never enjoy God for our portion until we are worthy to enjoy him for our portion—we would never enjoy him. If a man had as many eyes as Argus to search into the Scripture, and as many hands as Briareus to turn over the leaves of Scripture—yet he would never be able to find out one text, one line, yes, one word, wherein God requires a personal worthiness in the creature before he gives away himself to the creature. Should God stand upon a personal worthiness to be in the creature before he would look upon the creature, or before he would let out his love to the creature, or before he would extend mercy or pity to the creature, or before he

would, in a covenant of free grace, give himself to the creature—no sinner could ever be saved; man would be forever undone, and it would have been good for him that he had never been born. But,

[4.] Fourthly, I answer, it is not men's unworthiness—but men's unwillingness, which hinders them from having God to be their portion. Though most men pretend their unworthiness—yet there is in them a secret unwillingness to have God for their God. When they look upon God as a gracious God, then they are willing to have him to be their God; but when they look upon God as a holy God, then their hearts fly back. When they look upon God as a merciful God, and as a bountiful God, oh then they wish that he were their God; but when they look upon God as a commanding God, and as a ruling and an overruling God, oh then their hearts do secretly rise against God. There is a real unwillingness in the hearts of sinners in all respects to close with God, and to have God to be their God. "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isaiah 53:1. "I spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people who walk in the wrong path, following their own thoughts. These people continually provoke Me to My face." Isaiah 65:2-3. "How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you." Proverbs 1:22-27

"This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it." Isaiah 30:15. O sirs! men shall be damned at last, not for *cannots*—but for *will nots*! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but *you were not willing*." Matt 23:37. No man shall be damned because he could not do better—but because he would

not do better, Luke 13:34. If there were no will, there would be no hell. At last sinners will find this to be their greatest hell—that they have wilfully destroyed themselves. This is that which will damn with a witness, and this will be that never-dying worm—I might have had Christ and grace—but I would not; I might have been sanctified and saved—but I would not; I might have been holy and happy—but I would not; life and death has been often set before me, and I have chosen death rather than life, Deut 30:15,19; heaven and hell has been often set before me, and I have chosen hell rather than heaven; glory and misery has been often set before me, and I have chosen misery rather than glory. Therefore it is but just that I should be miserable to all eternity.

No man, no devil, can undo you, O sinner, without yourself; no man can be undone in both worlds but by himself; no man shall be damned for his unworthiness—but for his unwillingness. Therefore never more plead this objection.

But, [5.] Fifthly and lastly, I answer, that if you will not seek after the Lord to be your portion until you are worthy to enjoy him as your portion—then you will never seek after him, then you will never enjoy him for your God and portion. **Personal worthiness is no flower that grows in nature's garden.** No man is born with a worthiness in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. It is not the full—but the empty; it is not the rich—but the poor in spirit; it is not the righteous—but the sinner; it is not the worthy—but the unworthy soul—who is the proper object of God's mercy and pity. The poor publican that cried out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," Luke 18:10-15, went home justified; when the self-righteous pharisee returned as proud as he came. The centurion, when he came to Christ, fared well, notwithstanding his personal unworthiness, Matt 8:5-13. And the prodigal son fared well when he returned to his father, notwithstanding his personal unworthiness; for he was readily accepted, greatly pitied, sweetly embraced, courteously received, and very joyfully and nobly entertained. Witness the best robe which was put upon his back, and the gold ring which was put on his finger, and the shoes which were put on his feet, and the fatted calf which was killed to make the company merry, Luke 15:11-32.

O sirs! if in the face of all your unworthiness you will go to God, and tell him that you are sinners, that you are vile sinners, that you are wretched sinners, that you are very great sinners, yes, that you are the greatest of sinners, and that you have deserved a thousand deaths, a thousand hells, a thousand destructions, and a thousand damnations, and earnestly beseech him to look upon you, and to bestow himself upon you, though not for your worthiness's sake—yet for his name's sake, for his mercy's sake, for his promise's sake, for his covenant's sake, for his oath's sake, and for his Son's sake. Certainly if you shall thus plead with God, all the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth, cannot tell to the contrary—but that you may speed as well as ever the centurion or the prodigal did. I have taken the more pains to answer this objection, that so it may never more have a resurrection in any of your hearts, into whose hands this treatise may fall.

I know other objections might be raised—but because I have spoken largely so much in my former writings, I shall pass on to the last thing proposed, and that is, to lay down some PRINCIPLES which may, by the blessing of God, be of singular use to the Christian reader.

## CONCLUDING PRINCIPLES

I shall pass on to the last thing proposed, and that is, to lay down some PRINCIPLES that may, by the blessing of God, be of singular use to the Christian reader.

**First principle.** As, first, That it is one thing for a man to have God for his portion, and it is another thing for a man to have an assurance in his own soul that God is his portion. There are many who have God for their portion, who yet are full of fears and doubts whether God is their portion. Thus it was with Asaph in Psalm 77, and thus it was with Heman in Psalm 88, and thus it is with very many Christians in these days. Sometimes

God exercises his children with such changeable and such terrible dispensations, as raises many fears and doubts in them about their interest and property in God. And sometimes their secret indulging of some bosom idol, their entertainment of some predominant lust, raises strange fears and jealousies in their souls about their interest in God. And sometimes their not closing with the Lord so closely, so fully, so faithfully, so universally, and so sincerely as they should, without any secret reservation, raises many doubts and questions in them whether God is their portion or not.

The graces of many Christians are so weak, and their corruptions are so strong; and Satan is so busy with them; and their duties and performances are so weak, so flat, so dull, so sapless, so lifeless, so fruitless, and so inconstant—that they are ready at every turn to say, "If God is our God, why is it thus with us? If God is our portion, why are our hearts in no better a frame? Why have our duties no more spirit, life, and fire in them?" Look! as the sun may shine, and yet I not see it; and as the husband may be in the house, and yet the wife not know it; and as the child may have a very great portion, a very fair estate settled upon him, and yet he not understand it; so a Christian may have God for his portion, and yet for the present he may not see it, nor know it, nor understand it.

1 John 5:13, "These things have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may *know* that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God." These precious souls had God and Christ for their portion, and they did believe, and they had eternal life in the seeds and beginnings of it, and in the promise, and in Christ their head, who, as a public person, had taken possession of it in their steads—and yet they had not the assurance of these things in their own souls, Eph 2:6. Look! as the babe that has passed the pangs of the first birth does not presently cry out, 'My father, my father,' so the babe of grace, the newborn Christian, does not presently cry out, 'My God, my God.'

It is one mercy for God to be my God, and it is another mercy for God to tell me that he is my God; it is one act of grace for God to be my portion, and it is another act of grace for God to tell me that he is my portion. Look! as fire may be hidden under ashes for a time, and as bits of gold

may be hidden in an heap of dust for a time, and as stars may be hidden in a dark night for a time, and as a pearl may be hidden in a puddle for a time—so God may be a man's portion, and yet this may be hidden from him for a time.

**Second principle.** The second principle is this, That it is one thing for a man to have God for his portion, and another thing for a man clearly and convincingly to make it out to himself or others, that God is his portion. Doubtless there are many thousands who have God for their portion, who yet, if you would give them a thousand worlds—are not able to make it out to their own or others' satisfaction, that God is their portion.

Most Christians attain to but *small measures of grace*. Now small things, little things are hardly discerned, they are hardly made out. A little faith is next to no faith, and a little love is next to no love, and a little repentance is next to no repentance, and a little zeal is next to no zeal, and a little hope is next to no hope, and a little holiness is next to no holiness, and a little communion with God is next to no communion with God, and a little conformity to God is next to no conformity to God. Now where there is but a little grace, there it is very difficult for a man to make out the truth of his grace, and so by consequence to make out the truth of his interest and property in the God of grace. It is not grace in truth—but grace in strength, which will enable a man to make it out to himself, and to make it out to others, that God is his portion. It is not grace in its sincerity—but grace in its thriving—in its high and eminent actings—which will enable a man to make it out to himself and others, that God is indeed his God.

Besides, many precious hearts have such weak heads, and such bad logic, and such shallow natural parts, that they are not able rationally nor divinely to argue the case with their own souls, nor to make an improvement of those rules, helps, ways, and means, whereby they might be enabled to make it out to themselves and others, that God is their portion. Look! as many people have often a good title to such and such lands, and to such and such estates and inheritances, though they are not able for the present to clear up their title either to themselves or others; so many of the dear children of God have a good title to God, and a real interest and property in God, and yet for the present they are not able to

clear up their title to God, nor to clear up their interest and property in God, either to themselves or others. And this is so great a truth, that all the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ who deal with poor souls, and who are conversant about souls—are ready from their daily experience to affirm it before all the world. He who shall say, that such have not God for their portion, will certainly condemn the generation of the just.

**Third principle.** The third principle is this, That where there is a hearty willingness in any man to accept of God to be his God, to own God for his God, and to close with God as his God—there God is certainly that man's God, Isaiah 55:1-2; John 7:37-38. If there is a cordial willingness in you to take God to be your God, then without all question, God is your God. A sincere willingness to accept of God to be your God is accepted of God, and is sufficient to enter into a gracious covenant with God. O sirs! a sincere willingness to accept of God to be your God, flows from nothing below the good will and pleasure of God. No power below that glorious power which made the world, and which raised Christ from the grave—is able to raise a sincere, an hearty willingness in man to accept of God to be his God, and to take God for his God. Psalm 110:3, "Your people shall be willing, in the day of your power, in the beauties of holiness." There is no power below the power of the Lord Almighty, which can raise up a willingness in the hearts of sinners. It is not in the power of all the angels in heaven, nor of all the men on earth, to beget a sincere willingness in the heart of man to accept of God to be his God. This is work that can only be effected by an omnipotent hand.

Though an emperor may force a woman who is his slave, to marry him because she is his purchase—yet he cannot by all his power force her will; he may force her body to the action—but he cannot force her will to the action. The will is always free, and cannot be forced. But God is that great emperor that has not only a power to marry the soul, which he has redeemed from being Satan's bondsman—but also a power to make the soul that is unready ready, and that is unwilling willing—to marry him, and to bestow itself freely upon him. If there be in you, O man, O woman, a sincere willingness to take God upon his own terms to be your God, that is, to take him as a holy God, and as a ruling God, and as a commanding God, in one thing as well as another; then he is certainly your God. Rev

22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him who hears say, Come; and let him who is athirst, come; and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

**Fourth principle.** The fourth principle is this, That it may so happen, that such a Christian who has God for his portion, who has a saving interest and a property in God—may lose the sight, the sense, the feeling and the evidence of his interest and property in God; and this is evident by comparing these scriptures. [Psalm 30:6-7; Psalm 51:13; Job 16:9; Job 19:10; and 2 Chron 30:20; Psalm 77:6; Psalm 88:6; Isaiah 8:17; Lam 3:18] Doubtless it is very rare to find a Christian who has had the knowledge, and experience, and evidence of his interest and property in God—but that Christian also has experienced what it is to have his interest and property in God clouded and darkened. Such Christians that have experienced what the warm beams of the Sun of righteousness means, have likewise experienced what it is to have their sun set in a cloud; and this truth I might make good, by producing of a cloud of witnesses, both from among the martyrs and from among the saints of all ages. But what do I talk of a cloud of witnesses, when the tears which daily drop from many of your eyes, and the sad complaints, and sighs, and groans of many of your souls, do sufficiently evidence this sad truth.

Therefore let no man conclude that God is not his God, because he has lost the sight and sense of his interest and property in God; let no man say, that God is not his portion, because he has lost those evidences, at the present, by which he has formerly proved God to be his portion. Though a man should lose his documents and evidences that he has to show for such or such an estate—yet his documents and evidences being enrolled in a court of record—his estate remains good, and his title is still good in law. Therefore there is no reason why such a man should sit down, and wring his hands, and cry out, 'I am undone, I am undone!' Though a Christian should lose his documents, his evidences that once he had to show, that once he had to prove God to be his God and portion, and that he had a real interest and property in God—yet his documents, his evidences being enrolled in the court of heaven—his title to God, his interest in God remains good. Therefore there is no reason why such a person should sit down dejected, and wring his hands, and cry out, 'Oh I

am undone, I am forever undone!

**Fifth principle.** The fifth principle is this, That such who have not, for the present, God for their portion, ought not decidedly to conclude that they shall never have God for their portion. Such a person who cannot yet truly say that the Lord is his portion, ought not to despair of ever having of God for his portion. The time of a man's life is but a day, and God may bestow himself as a portion upon man in whatever hour of that day he pleases. In the parable, he bestowed himself as a portion upon some at the first hour, upon others at the third hour, upon others at the sixth hour, upon others at the ninth hour, and upon others at the eleventh hour, Matt 20:1-17. God is a free agent, and may bestow himself upon **whom** he pleases, and **as** he pleases, and **when** he pleases. There is no sinner, no, not the greatest sinner living under the gospel, who can infallibly determine that God will never be his God. No sinner can conclude that God has decidedly and absolutely excluded him from mercy, and shut him out among those who he is resolved never to bestow himself upon. For,

1. God never took any sinner one of his secret council.
2. In the gospel of grace, God has revealed no such thing.
3. Secret things belong only to the Lord, Deut 29:29.
4. God has bestowed himself as a portion upon as great sinners as any of those, who yet do not have God for their portion.
5. All the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth, cannot tell to the contrary—but that God may have thoughts of mercy towards you, and that your lot may fall within the purpose of his grace, and that he may bestow himself as a portion upon you before you are cut off from the land of the living. Although a sinner may certainly know at the present that God is not his God, that God is not his portion—yet he does not certainly know that God will never be his God, that God will never be his portion. Therefore no sinner may decidedly conclude that God will never be his God, because for the present he cannot, he dares not say he is his God.

God gave himself as a portion to Abraham when he was old, when he was a white-headed sinner, Gen 12:4. And Manasseh was old when he was converted and changed, and when God bestowed himself upon him, 2 Chron 33:1,12-14. And Zaccheus and Nicodemus were called and converted in their old age. When there were but a few steps between them and the grave, between them and eternity, between them and everlasting burnings—then the Lord graciously revealed himself, and bestowed himself as a portion upon them.

Dionysius tells us that Mary Magdalene, who was so loose and dissolute in her youth, being converted in her old age, she sequestered herself from all worldly pleasures, and lived a most solitary life in the mountains of Gallia, where she spent full thirty years in meditation, fasting, and prayer. And old godly Similes said that he had been in the world sixty years—but had lived but seven, counting his life, not from his first birth—but from his new birth. And Augustine repented that he had begun to seek, serve, and love God no sooner. By all these instances it is most evident that God may bestow himself as a portion upon sinners, upon very great sinners, yes, upon the greatest of sinners, and that at very last—when they are stricken in years, and when they are even ready to go out of this world. Therefore let no man despair of having of God for his portion, even though for the present his soul cannot say, 'The Lord is my portion.'

O sirs! despair is a sin, a very heinous sin, yes, it is that sin that damns with a witness. Despairing Judas perished and was damned, whereas the very murderers of Christ, believing on Christ, were saved. Acts 2. Despair thrusts God from his mercy-seat; it throws disgrace upon the throne of grace; it gives the lie to all the precious promises; it casts reproach upon the nature of God; it tramples under feet the blood of the covenant; it cuts the throat of faith, hope, and repentance; it renders all the means of grace useless and fruitless; it embitters all a man's comforts; it gives a sting to all a man's troubles; it proclaims Satan a conqueror; it raises a hell in the conscience; it makes a man a terror to himself and an astonishment to others.

In Daniel 7 there is mention made of four beasts—the first a lion, the second a bear, the third a leopard—but the fourth, without distinction either of kind, or gender, or name, is said to be very fearful, and terrible,

and strong; and such a thing as this fourth beast was, is *desperation*, as all have found that ever have been under it. Desperation is a complicated sin; it is a mother sin; it is a breeding sin; it is the combination of all sins. Therefore above all take heed of this sin. O sirs! as you love your souls, and as you would be happy to all eternity, do not despair, nor do not be peremptory in your conclusions, that God will never be your portion, because for the present he is not your portion. Remember the gracious invitations of God, and remember the glorious riches of mercy, and remember the overflowings of infinite grace—and then despond and despair if you can.

**Sixth principle.** The sixth and last principle is this, That such is the love, care, goodness, and kindness of God to his people, that few or none of them die without some assurance that God is their portion, and that they have a saving interest and property in him. That here and there a particular Christian, in cases not ordinary, may die doubting, and ascend to heaven in a cloud, as Christ did, Acts 1:9, will, I suppose, be readily granted. And that the generality of Christians shall, first or last, more or less, mediately or immediately, have some comfortable assurance, that God is their God, and that he is their portion, and that they have a real interest and property in him, may I suppose be thus evinced.

[1.] First, Several precious promises that are scattered up and down the Scripture seems to speak out such a thing as this is. Take these for a taste. Psalm 9:18, "For the needy shall not always be forgotten—the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever." Psalm 22:26, "The humble will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise Him." Psalm 84:11, "For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly." Hos 2:23, "And I will have mercy upon her that has not obtained mercy; and I will say to them who were not my people, You are my people; and they shall say, You are my God." Psalm 5:12, "For you, Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor will you compass him as with a shield." John 14:21,23, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If any man loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and

make our abode with him."

[2.] Secondly, The common experiences of the saints, both in the Old and New Testaments, does evidence as much. Solomon's Song 2:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Song 6:3, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Song 7:10, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me." Isaiah 63:16, "But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name." Isaiah 64:8-9, "But now, O Lord, you are our Father—behold, see, we beseech you, we are all your people." Jer 3:22-23, "Behold, we come unto you—for you are the Lord our God. Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." Isaiah 25:9, "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." I might produce a cloud of witnesses from among the patriarchs and prophets, further to evince this truth; but thus much is as good as a feast.

And as the church of God in the Old Testament, so the church of God in the New Testament attained to the same assurance. The believers in Corinth were sealed, and had the pledge of the Spirit in their hearts. 2 Cor 1:22, "Who has also sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts." And 2 Cor 5:1,5, "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." And so the believing Ephesians had the like. Eph 1:13-14, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." And so Eph 4:30, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." And the believing Thessalonians had the same. 1 Thess 1:4-5, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only—but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." I might give you many particular instances out of the New Testament to confirm this truth—but these general instances are more convincing and

satisfying.

[3.] Thirdly, If God should not, first or last, sooner or later, mediately or immediately, give his people some comfortable assurance that he is their portion, and that they have a real interest and property in him, the spirits, the souls of his people would certainly faint and fail. But this God will never allow, this God by promise has engaged himself to prevent, as you may see in that Isaiah 57:16,18-19, "I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me--the breath of man that I have created. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the Lord. "And I will heal them."

Now, seeing that God has so graciously undertaken for his people, that their spirits shall not faint nor fail, there is no doubt but that, sooner or later, more or less, God will assure his people that he is their portion, and that they have a real interest and property in him.

[4.] Fourthly, The Lord's supper is a sealing ordinance, and was ordained, instituted, and appointed for that very purpose and to that very end, namely, to seal up the believer's property in God, and to assure him of his interest in God, in Christ, in the everlasting covenant, and in all the benefits of Christ's death, namely—the favor of God, reconciliation, redemption, and the remission of sins. [Matt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 11:23-24; Rom 4:11] Now, how can it possibly be imagined, that so glorious an ordinance should be instituted to so great and so glorious an end as to assure believers of their interest and property in God, and yet this end should never be effected in them all their days, for whose sake the ordinance was instituted and appointed? Certainly God never appointed any ordinance to accomplish any end—but sooner or later, that ordinance did accomplish that end for which it was appointed and instituted, Isaiah 55:10-11, and Isaiah 45:23.

Cyprian shows how the martyrs in the primitive church, when they were to appear before the cruel persecuting tyrants, were accustomed to receive the Lord's supper, and thereby they were so assured of their interest and property in God, and so fired with zeal and fervor, and filled

with faith and fortitude, etc., that they made nothing of the greatest torments that those bloody tyrants could inflict upon them. And says Chrysostom, by the sacrament of the Lord's supper we are so armed against Satan's temptations, that he flees from us—as if we were so many lions that spat fire.

The Jews in the celebration of the Passover did sing Psalm 113, with the five following Psalms, which they called the great Hallelujah, and it was always after that cup of wine, which they called the cup of praise; and thus it should be with the saints. At all times, upon all occasions, in all places, they should sing Hallelujahs to God. Oh, but when they are at the Lord's supper, then they should sing the great Hallelujah; but how they will be ever able to sing this great Hallelujah, except sooner or later, more or less, God gives them some assurance of their interest and property in himself, I cannot for my life discern. But,

[5.] Fifthly, There is in all believers the choice and precious springs of assurance, as

(1.) Union and communion with the Father and Son. 1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us—and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Now, that union which is between the foundation and the building, the head and the members, the husband and the wife, the father and the child, the subject and the prince, the body and the soul—are not so close a union as that which is between a believer and God. Besides, that union that a Christian has with God is an honorable union, and it is an inseparable union, it is an invincible union, and it is an everlasting union, 1 Cor 6:16-17. Now, how is it possible for a man to have such a near and such a glorious union and fellowship with God from the day of his conversion to the day of his death—and yet never come to any assurance of his interest and property in God—is a thing not easily imaginable.

(2.) Precious faith is another spring of assurance. 1 Pet 1:8, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not—yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Now, this spring is in all the saints, 2 Pet 1:1. The faith of expectance will in time

rise up into a faith of reliance, and the faith of reliance will in time advance itself into a faith of assurance.

(3.) Hope is another spring of assurance. Col 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" Heb 6:19, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain."

(4.) A good conscience is another spring of assurance, 2 Cor 1:12.

(5.) Real love to the saints is another spring of assurance, 1 John 3:14.

(6.) And lastly, the Spirit of God is another spring of assurance, Rom 8. Now, that a Christian should have all these choice springs of assurance in his soul, from his new birth to the day of his death, and yet in all that time never come to assurance of his interest and property in God, is a thing, I had almost said, beyond all belief. But,

[6.] Sixthly, There is nothing in all the world that the hearts of the saints are more frequently, more fervently, and more abundantly desire, in all their prayers and supplications, than this—that God would tell them that he is their portion, and that he would clear up their interest and property in himself, Psalm 4:6-7. The constant language of their souls is this—'Lord, do but tell us that you are our portion, and then bestow earthly portions upon whom you please; do but clear up our interest and property in yourself; and then we shall say—Our lot is fallen in a pleasant place, and verily we have a goodly heritage.' Psalm 16:5-6. Believers who know that God is their portion, and that they have a saving interest and property in him—will be eased them of all their sinful cares, fears, terrors, horrors, jealousies, suspicions, and sad apprehensions, which makes living a very hell. They know that assurance of their interest and property in God will make ever bitter sweet, and every sweet more sweet; it will turn a wilderness into a paradise, an Egypt into a Canaan. They know that assurance that God is theirs, will raise the truest comforts, the purest comforts, the greatest comforts, the surest comforts, the strongest comforts, the rarest comforts, the sweetest comforts, and the most lasting comforts in their souls, Isaiah 40:1-2. They know that assurance of their interest in God will fit them for the highest duties in Christianity, and for the hardest duties in Christianity, and for the costliest duties in

Christianity, and for the most neglected, scorned, and despised duties in Christianity. They know that assurance of their property in God will most quicken their graces, and act their graces, and raise their graces, and strengthen their graces, and brighten their graces, and put a luster and a beauty upon their graces. They know that assurance of their interest in God will wonderfully weaken sin, and effectually crucify their hearts to the world, and sweetly moderate their affections to their nearest and dearest relations, and powerfully arm them both against the world's oppositions and Satan's temptations.

To conclude—they know that assurance of their property in God will make death more desirable than terrible, yes, it will make the thoughts of death sweet, and the approaches of death easy, and all the warnings of death pleasant to their souls; and therefore they follow God hard day and night, with strong cries, prayers, tears, sighs, and groans, that he would make it evident to them that he is their portion, and that he would clear up their interest and property in him. Now, how can any man who is in his wits imagine that God should always turn a deaf ear to the prayers of his people in this thing especially, considering that their prayers, cries, tears, sighs, and groans are but the products of his own Spirit in them, Rom 8:26-27; and considering likewise the several promises, whereby he has engaged himself to answer to the prayers of his people?

I might tire both you and myself in turning to those particular promises—but that I am resolved against, and therefore take that for all. John 16:23-24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." This double asseveration, "Verily, verily," is never used but in matters of greatest weight and importance; and this "Verily, verily," is a vehement confirmation of the truth of what Christ speaks. Now, from this gracious promise I may safely and clearly infer, that if God the Father will give to believers whatever they ask in the name of Christ, then certainly, at first or last, sooner or later—he will give them assurance that he is their portion, and that they have an undoubted interest and property in him; for this is one of the great requests that they are still a-putting up in the name of Christ, and upon the grant of this request depends the fullness of a Christian's joy. But,

[7.] Seventhly and lastly, If God should not sooner or later, more or less, assure his people that he is their portion, and that they have a saving interest and a property in him; then he would be a very great loser, if I may so speak. He would lose many praises, and many thanksgivings; he would lose much of that love, of that honor, and of that delight, and of that admiration, which otherwise he might have from among his children. And it is very observable, that of all the duties of piety, there are none that are pressed so closely, so frequently, and so strongly upon Christians, as those of praising of God, and rejoicing in God, etc., as all know, who know anything of the Scriptures. Now, how it will stand with the holiness of God, and with the wisdom of God, and with the care of God, to be so great a loser in the very things which he has so roundly and earnestly pressed upon his people; whereas by one sweet word of his mouth he might so easily and so happily prevent it, I cannot easily discern.

All believers know that there is no such ready, no such effectual way under heaven to draw out their love, their joy, their delight, their praises, and their thanksgiving to God—as God's assuring of them that he is their portion, and that they have an unquestionable interest and property in him. Certainly that God who loves the praises of his people, and who delights in the rejoicings of his people, and who is so infinitely pleased with the thanksgivings of his people—that God will not always hide himself from his people, that God will sooner or later so manifest himself to his people, that they shall be able to see their interest and property in God, and rejoicing to say, "The Lord is our portion!"

Now, oh you who are the people of the Lord, and that to this very day lie under many fears and doubts about your interest and property in God—be not discouraged, do not hang down the head, do not despond, do not despair—for certainly sooner or later God will assure you that he is your portion, and that you have a saving interest and a property in him.

# **THE PRIVY KEY OF HEAVEN**

**by Thomas Brooks**

(A Discourse of Closet Prayer)

by Thomas Brooks, published during  
the awful plague of London in 1665.

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your  
Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret,  
will reward you." Matthew 6:6

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**EPISTLE DEDICATORY**

Beloved in Our Dear Lord Jesus,

The Lord at several times, and in several ways, has exercised you all in the furnace of affliction. This book may reach you all, and speak to you all —when I *can* not, or when I *may* not, or which is more, when I *am* not.

Dear friends, many and great have been the breaches that the Lord has made upon your persons, upon your near and dear relations, and upon your sweetest comforts and contentments. There is not one of you but may truly say with Job, "He breaks me with breach upon breach," Job 16:14. God has chastised you all round with various rods; and oh that the Lord would help you all to "hear the rod, and him who has appointed it," Micah 6:9.

Now that you may give me leave a little to open and apply to your particulars, that

"The Lord's voice cries unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall hear your name: **hear the rod, and him who has appointed it.**" Micah 6:9

The matter that I shall offer to your consideration from this scripture, will be not only of special concernment to yourselves, but also of high concernment to all sorts and ranks of men and women, in this sad day, when the sword devours on the one hand, and the pestilence rages on the other hand.

*"The Lord's voice cries unto the city."* Tremellius turns it thus, "The voice of the Lord does preach unto this city, for what the matter is, you see: hear you the rod," etc. This city, namely, Jerusalem, and so consequently to all the Israelites; for in this city all offices and duties of godliness and humanity were more religiously performed, or to be performed, than in any other place, because of the presence and majesty of God that was among them. "But your Majesty sees what wickedness is practiced among them," as is evident in the verses following.

*"Cries."* The word is from *kara*, which signifies,

First, "To cry aloud," or "to make a noise," Isa 58:1; "cry aloud" there is

kara. The word signifies, to cry so loud as that all may hear that have ears to hear.

Secondly, The word signifies, "openly to proclaim, preach, or publish a thing." Exod 33:19, "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you." Here is the word kara.

Thirdly, The word signifies, "to cry out." Gen 39:15, "I lifted up my voice and cried." Here is kara.

*"And the man of wisdom shall see your name." Vethushiia properly signifies essence; and, therefore, according to the Hebrew, the words should be read thus, "And the man of essence shall see your name," etc., that is, he who is a man indeed, he who is not a sot, a stock, a stone. Most men are men of folly, and so not worthy of the name of men; but as for such as are truly wise, they "shall see your name." There is a great measure of spiritual art, of holy and heavenly wisdom required, both to enable a man to hear the voice of the rod and to understand the language of the rod. This wisdom is too high for a fool, Prov 24:7.*

*"Shall see your name."* Now the Hebrew word here used, signifies to fear; and so the words will run smoothly thus, "The man of wisdom, or of essence, shall fear your name," considering that, it is majesty itself that cries, and that he is immediately to deal with God himself, and not with a poor, weak, mortal worm.

*"Hear the rod."* The word hear signifies,

First, "To mark, observe, and attend to what is said." Gen 29:33, "The Lord has heard that I was hated;" that is, "he has marked it, he has observed it." So here, Oh mark the rod! Oh observe the rod! Oh attend to what is spoken by the rod!

Secondly, The word signifies, "to understand what is spoken;" so Gen 42:23, "They knew not that Joseph understood them." In the Hebrew it is, "that Joseph heard them." Now to hear the rod, is to understand what is spoken to us by the rod.

Thirdly, The word signifies, "to believe a thing reported to be true;" so Exod 6:9, "They hearkened not unto Moses," that is, "they did not believe the report that Moses made." "Hear the rod," that is, "believe the report the rod makes." The rod reports, that of all evils sin is the greatest evil; and that of all bitters, sin is the greatest bitter. Oh believe the report of the rod! The rod reports, that God is angry, that God is displeased. Oh believe its report! The rod reports the creatures to be mere vanity and vexation of spirit. Oh believe its report! The rod reports our nearest and dearest comforts, contentments, and enjoyments to be mixed, mutable, and momentary. Oh believe its report! The rod reports sin to be vile, and the world to be vain, and heaven to be glorious, and Christ to be most precious. Oh believe its report!

*"The rod."* The Hebrew word *matte*, that is here rendered rod, has three significations:

First, It denotes "power and strength:" Psalm 2:9, "a rod of iron."

Secondly, It denotes "rigid and harsh government:" Isa 14:5, "The Lord has broken the staff," or rod, "of the wicked;" that is, "their rigorous and cruel government." Nebuchadnezzar had sorely afflicted the children of Judah; he was a rod, that broke them in pieces, and ruled over them with much rigor in Babylon.

Thirdly, It denotes "sore afflictions and heavy judgments:" Psalm 89:32, "I will visit your transgressions with a rod." And thus you are to understand the word rod in the text.

*"And him who has appointed it."* It is God who appoints the rod, and ordains it for the revenge of the quarrel of his covenant. The Hebrew word signifies properly "to appoint" or "constitute." It is God who appoints the rod, and who constitutes it to do what service he pleases. It is God who has not only a permissive—but also an active, hand, in all the afflictions that come upon his people.

And let thus much suffice for the opening of the words.

Now, though this choice garden affords many sweet flowers—yet I shall

only present you with one, which is this, namely,

**That all the afflictions, troubles, and trials which God lays upon His people, are his rod. It is their highest and greatest concernment to hear the voice of the rod, and to learn those lessons that God would have them learn by the rod.**

For the opening and clearing up of this important point, I shall endeavor these two things:

First, To show you in what respects afflictions are like unto a rod.

Secondly, To show you what those special lessons are, that you are to learn by the rod.

Dear friends,

The following discourse on closet prayer I heartily recommend to your serious perusal. I have many reasons to hope, that when you have once read it over, you will be more in love with closet prayer than ever, and that you will set a higher price upon closet prayer than ever, and that you will make a better and fuller improvement of closet prayer than ever yet you have done. Consider what I say in my epistle to the reader, and labor so to manage this little treatise, which now I put into your hands, that God may be glorified, your own souls edified, comforted, and encouraged in the ways of the Lord, and that you may be "my crown and joy, in the great day of our Lord Jesus," 1 Thes. 2:19-20.

Christian Reader—The epistle dedicatory being so large, I shall do little more than give you **the grounds and reasons of sending forth this little piece into the world**, especially in such a day as this is. Now, my reasons are these:

1. First, Because God by his present dispensations calls more loudly for closet prayer now, than he has done in those last twenty years that are now passed over our heads. See more of this in the 16th argument for closet prayer.

2. Secondly, Because I have several reasons to fear that many Christians

do not clearly nor fully understand the necessity, excellency, and usefulness of this subject, and that many, oh that I could not say any, live in too great a neglect of this indispensable duty; and that more than a few, for lack of light, err in the very practice of it.

3. Thirdly, For the refreshing, support, and encouragement of all those churches of Christ that walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Spirit, etc., especially that particular church to whom I stand related.

4. Fourthly, To preserve and keep up the power of religion and godliness both in men's houses, hearts, and lives. The power of religion and godliness lives, thrives, or dies, as closet prayer lives, thrives, or dies. Godliness never rises to a higher pitch than when men keep closest to their closets, etc.

5. Fifthly, Because closet prayer is a most sovereign remedy, a most precious antidote of God's own prescribing, against the plague that now rages in the midst of us, 1 Kings 8:37-39, etc.

6. Sixthly, Because **every man is that really which he is secretly**. Never tell me, how handsomely, how neatly, how bravely, this or that man acts his part before others; but tell me, if you can, how he acts his part before God in his closet; for the man is that certainly, which he is secretly. There are many who sweat upon the stage that are cold in their closets.

7. Seventhly, Though many worthies have done worthily upon all other parts of prayer—yet there are none either of a former or later date, that have fallen under my eye, who have written any treatise on this subject. I have not a little wondered that so many eminent writers should pass over this great and princely duty of closet-prayer, either with a few brief touches, or else in a very great silence. If several Bodies of Divinity are consulted, you will find that all they say clearly and distinctly as to closet-prayer, may be brought into a very narrow compass, if not into a nutshell. I have also inquired of several old disciples, whether among all the thousand sermons that they have *heard* in their days, that ever they have heard one sermon on closet-prayer? and they have answered, No. I have

also inquired of them, whether ever they had *read* any treatise on that subject? and they have answered, No. And truly this has been no small encouragement to me, to make an offer of my mite; and if this small attempt of mine shall be so blessed, as to provoke others who have better heads, and hearts, and hands, than any I have, to do Christ and his people more service, in the handling of this choice point in a more copious way than what I have been able to reach unto, I shall therein rejoice.

8. Eighthly, and lastly, That favor, that good acceptance and fair quarter that my other poor labors have found, not only in this nation—but in other countries also, has put me upon putting pen to paper once more; and I hope that the good will of him who "dwelt in the bush," will rest upon this, as it has to the glory of free grace rested upon my former endeavors. I could add other reasons—but let these suffice.

Good reader, when you are in your closet, pray hard for a poor, weak, worthless worm, that I may be found faithful and fruitful to the death, that so at last I may receive a crown of life. So wishing you all happiness both in this lower and in that upper world, I rest,  
Yours in our dear Lord Jesus,  
Thomas Brooks.

### **In what respects are afflictions like a rod?**

"The Lord's voice cries unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall hear your name: **hear the rod, and him who has appointed it.**" Micah 6:9

I answer, In these seven respects afflictions are like unto a rod.

(1.) First, **The rod is never made use of—but when no other means will prevail with the child.** It is so here; God never takes up the rod, he never afflicts his people, until he has tried all fair ways and means to humble them and reform them, 2 Chron 36:15, seq., Matt

23:37-38. And when none of the offers of grace, the tenders of mercy, the wooings of Christ, the strivings of the Spirit, nor the smart debates of conscience, will awaken them, nor work upon them, then God takes up the rod, and sometimes whips them until the blood comes. But,

(2.) Secondly, **Parents choose whatever rods they please, to correct their children with.** The child shall not choose what rod he pleases to be corrected with. Oh, no! It is the prerogative of the father to choose the rod. The father may choose and use either a great rod or a little rod, a long rod or a short rod, a rod made of rosemary branches or a rod made up of a green birch. It is so here; God chooses what rod—whatever affliction he pleases, to exercise his people with, Lev 26; Deut 28; Lam 3:9-18. You read in the Scriptures of very many rods—but they are all of God's choosing: Amos 3:6, "Is there any evil in the city, and has not the Lord done it?" Though there be many rods to be found in the city—yet there is not one of them but is of God's choosing. Ruth 1:13, "It grieves me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me." Ruth 1:21, "I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty; why then call you me Naomi, seeing the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?" Isa 45:7, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things." Mic 1:12, "For the inhabitants of Maroth waited carefully for good—but evil came down from the Lord unto the gates of Jerusalem." David was whipped with many rods—but they were all of God's own choosing, Psalm 39:9; and Job was whipped with many rods—but they were all of God's own choosing, Job 1. But,

(3.) Thirdly, **Parents take no pleasure, they take no delight, to use the rod.** Every lash the father gives the child, fetches blood from his own heart. The father corrects the child, and sighs over the child; he whips the child, and at the same time weeps over the child. Nothing goes more against the parents' heart, than the bringing of their children under the rod of correction. It is so here, Lam 3:33, "For he does not afflict willingly," or, as the Hebrew runs, "he does not afflict from his heart, nor grieve the children of men." You often read that God delights in mercy, Mic 7:15; but where do you once read that God delights in severity, or in dealing roughly with his people? God very rarely takes up the rod but

when our sins have put a force upon him, 2 Chron 36:16; Jer 5:19. It is grievous to God to be a-grieving his people; it is a pain unto him to be a-punishing of them: Hos 11:8, "*How* can I give you up, Ephraim? *How* can I hand you over, Israel? *How* can I treat you like Admah? *How* can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused."

My justice, says God, calls upon me to rain hell out of heaven upon you, as once I did upon Sodom and Gomorrah; but then mercy interposes her four several *hows*: how? how? how? how? how shall I give you up? God puts these four piteous interrogations to himself, because none else in heaven or earth could answer them. The prophet brings in God speaking after the manner of men, who, being provoked a thousand thousand ways by the vanities and follies of their children, think to give them up to take their own courses, and to look no more after them; but then their affections begin to work, and their hearts begin to melt, and they begin to interrogate themselves thus: "How shall we give up these children? for though they be disobedient children—yet they are our children; how can we turn them out of doors? how can we disown them? how can we disinherit them? for though they are rebellious children—yet they are our children, etc.

Afflictions are called God's work, yes, his "strange work;" his act, yes, "his strange act;" as if God were out of his element when he is afflicting or chastising his people, Isa 28:21. But,

(4.) Fourthly, **The rod is smarting, grievous, and troublesome; and so are afflictions to our natures.** Heb 12:11, "Now, no chastening for the present seems to be joyous—but grievous." Flesh and blood startles and is troubled at the least trouble. Affliction is a sort of remedy which makes most sick. Some write that tigers will grow mad, and tear their own flesh, and rend themselves in pieces, if they do but hear drums sound about them. Were not Job and Jeremiah such tigers, who, in the day of their afflictions, did more than curse the day of their birth? Job 3; Jer 20. Oh what a bitter cup, what a heavy burden was affliction to them! Job 10:1, "My soul is weary of my life." Job 7:15, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than life." Psalm 6:6, "I am weary with my groaning." Psalm 69:1-3, "Save me, O God, for the waters

have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God." Doubtless many good men have sat under Elijah his juniper, 1 Kings 19:4, wishing themselves out of the world, if it might stand with divine pleasure, that they might rest from their sins and sorrows, and be rid of their many burdens and bondages, looking upon life as little better than a hell, were it not for the hopes of a heaven hereafter. But,

(5.) Fifthly, **When parents take up the rod into their hands, they will not lay it down until they have subdued the spirits of their children, and brought them to submit and to kiss the rod, and to sit still and quiet before them.** It is so here: when God takes up the rod, he will not lay it down until he has brought us to lie quietly at his feet: Lev 26:40-42, "But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers--their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land." When God takes up the rod, his children must either bow or break; they must say, the Lord is righteous; they must kiss the rod of correction—or else destruction will come like a whirlwind upon them, Isa 5:3,6.

It is reported of the lion, that he spares those creatures that fall down before him, and submit unto him; but as for those that endeavor to run from him, or to contend with him, those he tears in pieces. It is just so with the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as you may see in Hos 5:14-15. "For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them. Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."

King Edward riding furiously after a servant of his that had highly displeased him, with a drawn sword in his hand as purposing to kill him, seeing him submit, and on bended knee pleading for his life, did not only put up his sword—but also spared him, and received him into his favor.

The King of kings will never put up his sword when once he has drawn it—until his people fall on their knees, and submit unto him. God never left chastising of Ephraim until he had brought him to his bow, until he had made him submit, and kiss the rod, Jer 31:18-20. But,

(6.) Sixthly, **Afflictions are called a rod, in respect to the hand which lays them on.** Though affliction be a rod, it is a rod in a Father's hand. The sword is in the judge's hand, John 18:11, and the cudgel is in the master's hand; but the rod is in the father's hand, Heb 12:6-9. When Balaam's donkey offended him, he wished for a sword to slay him, Num 22:29; but so does not God. When we do most highly provoke him, he does not take up a sword to slay us—but only a rod to scourge us and chastise us, as kind fathers do their dearest children. But,

(7.) Seventhly and lastly, **Afflictions are called a rod, in regard of the ends to which they serve.** A rod is not to kill—but to cure; it is not for destruction—but for correction. When David gave a full commission to his soldiers against Absalom, it was not to slay him—but to restrain him; it was not to ruin him—but to reduce him to his former obedience. The application is easy. We can as well live without our daily bread—as without our daily rod.

### **God's Purpose and End of Taking Up the Rod**

"The Lord's voice cries unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall hear your name: **hear the rod, and him who has appointed it.**" Micah 6:9

Now, God's purpose and end of taking up the rod are these:

[1.] First and more generally, **It is for the good of the child, and not for his hurt.** It is so here. God takes up the rod—but it is for the good of his people: Gen 50:20, "But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many

people alive." Divine goodness did so overmaster the plotted malignity of Joseph's brethren as that it made a blessed medicine of a most deadly poison. Jer 24:5, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." When Israel was dismissed out of Egypt, Exod 40, it was with gold and earrings; and when Judah was dismissed out of Babylon, it was with great gifts, jewels, and all necessary utensils, Ezra 1. So Rom 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose." This text, like Moses's tree cast into the bitter waters of affliction, may make them sweet and wholesome to drink of. But,

[2.] Secondly, and more particularly, **The rod is to make the child sensible of his folly and vanity.** Prov 10:13, "In the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found; but the rod is for the back of him who is void of understanding." So it is here: God takes up the rod—but it is to make his people sensible of their folly and vanity; it is to make them look up to him, and to look into conscience, and to look out to their lives. **God's house of correction is his school of instruction.** His lashes are our lessons, his scourges are our schoolmasters, and his chastisements are our corrections. Hence both the Hebrews and Greeks express *chastening* and *teaching* by one and the same word, because *teaching* is the true end of *chastening*, according to that in the proverb, "Pain makes wit, and vexation gives understanding." [Isa 26:9; Psalm 94:12; Prov 3:12-13; Job 36:8-10]

Afflictions are a Christian's looking-glass, by which he may see how to dress his own soul, and to mend whatever is amiss. They are pills made up by a heavenly hand on purpose to clear our eyesight; 1 Kings 17:18, "And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with you, O you man of God? Have you come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" If God had not taken away her son, her sin had not been brought to remembrance. It was the speech of a holy man in his sickness: "In this disease," said he, "I have learned how great God is, and what the evil of sin is. I never knew to purpose what God was before, nor what sin was before." The cross of affliction opens men's eyes, as the tasting of

honey did Jonathan's. "Here," as that martyr phrased it, "we are still a-learning our A, B, Cs, and our lesson is never past Christ's cross, and our walking is still home by weeping-cross." But,

[3.] Thirdly, **The rod is used to prevent further folly, mischief, and misery.** Prov 23:13-14, "Withhold not correction from the child, for if you beat him with the rod, he shall not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell." It is said of the ape, that she hugs her young ones to death; so many fond parents, by not correcting their children, they come to slay their children. The best way to prevent their being scourged with scorpions in hell, is to chastise them with the rod here. So God takes up the rod; he afflicts and chastises his dearest children—but it is to prevent soul-mischief and misery; it is to prevent pride, self-love, worldliness, etc.

Paul was one of the holiest men who ever lived on earth; he was called by some an earthly angel, and yet he needed the rod, he needed a thorn in the flesh, to prevent pride; witness the doubling of those words in one verse, "lest I should be exalted above measure, lest I should be exalted above measure," 2 Cor 12:7-9. If Paul had not been buffeted, who knows how highly he might have been exalted in his own pride? Prudent physicians often give their patients medicines to prevent diseases; and so does the physician of souls to his dearest servants, Job 40:4-5; Hos 2:6-7; Job 33:17,19; "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man."

**Afflictions are the Lord's drawing-plasters, by which he draws out the core of pride, earthliness, self-love, covetousness, etc. Pride was one of man's first sins, and is still the root and source of all other sins.** Now, to prevent it, God many times chastens man with pain, yes, with strong pain, upon his bed: Job 34:31-32, "I have endured my punishment; I will no longer act wickedly. Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I won't do it again." The burnt child dreads the fire. Sin is but a bitter sweet; it is an evil worse than hell itself. Look, as salt brine preserves things from putrefying, and as salt marshes keep the sheep from rotting, so sanctified rods, sanctified afflictions, preserves and keeps the people of God from sinning. But,

[4.] Fourthly, **The rod is to purge out that vanity and folly that is bound up in the heart of the child.** Prov 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child—but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." The rod is an ordinance, as well as the word; and such parents that use it as an ordinance, praying and weeping over it, shall find it effectual for the chasing away of evil out of their children's heart. Eli and David were two very choice men, and yet, by their fondness on one hand, and neglect of this ordinance on the other hand, they ruined their sons; and whether they did not undo their souls, I shall not at this time stand to inquire. When Moses cast away his rod, it became a serpent, Exod 4:3; and so, when parents cast away the rod of correction, it is ten to one but that their children become the brood of the serpent: Prov 13:24, "He who spares his rod hates his son; but he who loves him chastens him betimes." Not only the care—but also the cure of the child, so far as the rod will reach, lies upon the hands of the parent.

Now afflictions are like a rod in this respect also, for, as they are sanctified, **they cleanse and purge away the dross, the filth, and the scum of the Christian:** Isa 1:25, "And I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin;" Isa 27:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin;" Dan 11:35, "And some of them of understanding shall fall" (that is, "into great afflictions"), "to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white, even to the time of the end." All the harm the fire did to the three children, or rather the three champions, was to burn off their cords, Dan 3:23-24. Our lusts are cords of vanity—but the fire of affliction shall burn them up: Zech 13:9, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Sharp afflictions are a fire—to purge out our dross, and to make our graces shine; they are a potion—to carry away ill humours; they are cold frosts—to destroy the vermin; they are a tempestuous sea—to purge the wine from its dregs; they are like the north wind—which dries up the vapors, that purges the blood, and quickens the spirits; they are a sharp corrosive—to eat out the dead flesh. Afflictions are compared to washing

—which takes away the filth of the soul, as water does the filth of the body, Matt 10:38-39. God would not rub so hard, were it not to fetch out the dirt and spots that are in his people's hearts.

[5.] Fifthly, **The rod serves to improve that good that is in the child:** Prov 29:15, "The rod and reproof gives wisdom—but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame." So afflictions serve to improve our graces: Heb 12:10, "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure—but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness;" that is, that we might more and more be partakers of his holiness. Heb 12:11, "Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous—but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby." Hence it is that the saints glory in tribulation: Rom 5:3-4, "And not only so—but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." **Grace always thrives most when saints are under the rod.** When Christians are under the rod, then their graces do not only bud—but blossom and bring forth fruit, as Aaron's rod did, Num 17:8. The snuffing of the candle makes it burn the brighter. God beats and bruises his children, to make them burn the brighter; he bruises his spices, to make them send forth the greater aromatic fragrance.

Bernard compares afflictions to the teale, which, though it be sharp and scratching, is to make the cloth more pure and fine. The Jews were always best when they were in an afflicted condition. Well-waters arising from deep springs are hotter in the winter than they are in the summer. Stars shine brightest in the darkest nights. Vines grow the better for bleeding, and gold shines the better for scouring. Juniper smells sweetest when in the fire; camomile, the more you tread it, the more you spread it. O sirs! this is a real and a rare truth—but seldom thought on, namely, that God will sometimes more carry on the growth and improvement of grace by a cross, by an affliction, than by an ordinance, James 1:3-4; James 4:8-9. Afflictions ripen the saint's graces, 2 Cor 1:5. Sooner or later, God will make every rod, yes, every twig in every rod, to be an ordinance to every afflicted saint.

By afflictions, God many times revives, quickens, and recovers the

decayed graces of his people. By afflictions, God many times inflames that love which is cold, and he strengthens that faith which is failing, and he puts life into those hopes which are languishing, and new spirits into those joys and comforts which are withering and dying. Musk, say some, when it has lost its sweetness, if it be put into the sink among filth, it recovers its sweetness again. So does sharp afflictions recover and revive our decayed graces.

I have read a story of a sexton, who went into the church at night to rob a woman who had been buried the day before with a gold ring upon her finger. Now, when he had opened the grave and coffin, and loosed the sheet, he fell a-rubbing and chafing her finger to get off the gold ring; and with rubbing and chafing of it, her spirits returned, she having been but in a swoon before, and she revived, and lived many years after. Sharp afflictions are but the rubbing and chafing of our graces. The smarting rod abases the loveliness of the world, which entices us; it abates the lustiness of the flesh within, which incites us to vanity and folly; all which tend much to the recovering and reviving of decayed graces. But,

[6.] The sixth end to which the rod serves, and that is, **To try the child, to make a discovery of the spirit of the child.** Some parents never see so much of the badness of the hearts of their children, as they do when they bring them under the rod; and other parents never see so much of the goodness of the hearts of their children as they do when they chastise them with the rod. It is so here. When God afflicts some, oh the pride! the stoutness! the crossness! the hardness! the peevishness and stubbornness of spirit, that they discover! Isa 1:5; Jer 5:3; Exod 5:2; Jer 44:15-19. When he afflicts others, oh the murmuring! the roaring! the complaining! the howling! the fretting! the vexing! and the quarreling spirit that they discover! Amos 4:6-13; Num 14:27,29,36; Deut 1:27; Isa 58:3-4; Isa 59:11; Hos 7:14-15; Jon 4:1-5,8-9.

Sometimes when God afflicts his dearest people, oh what a spirit of faith! what a spirit of prayer! what a spirit of love! what a spirit of patience! what a spirit of meekness! what a spirit of humbleness! what a spirit of submissiveness do they discover! Job 13:15; 2 Chron 16:12; Isa 26:16-17; Hos 5:14-15; Job 1:20-22; Lev 10:1-3; 1 Sam 3:18; 2 Kings 20:16-19. And at other times, when God afflicts his poor people, oh what a spirit of

unbelief! what a spirit of slavish fear! what a spirit of impatience! what a spirit of displeasement, etc., do they discover! Gen 15:2-3; Gen 12:13,19; Gen 20:2,5; Gen 26:7-11; Psalm 31:22; Psalm 116:11; 1 Sam 21:10-15; Job 3:3-13; Jer 20:14-18. By sharp afflictions, God tries the graces of his people, and discovers what is in the hearts of his people, Deut 8:2; Psalm 66:10-11; Rev 3:18; 1 Pet 1:6-7. The fire tries the gold as well as the touchstone. Diseases try the skill of the physician, and tempests try the skill of the pilot. Every smarting rod is a touchstone, both to try our graces and to discover our spirits. Prudent fathers will sometimes cross their children, to try to discover the dispositions of their children, Heb 12:5-21. And so does the Father of spirits deal sometimes with his children.

The manner of the Psylli, which are a kind of people of that temper and constitution that no venom will hurt them, is this—if they suspect any child to be none of their own, they set an adder upon it to sting it; and if the child cries, and the flesh swells, they cast it away as a spurious child; but if it does not cry, nor is never the worse for it, then they account it for their own, and make very much of it. The application is easy. But,

[7.] The seventh and last end of the rod, is **to prepare and fit the chastised for greater services, favors, and mercies**. Many a child and many a servant had never been so fit for eminent services as they are, had they not been under a smarting rod. It is very usual with God to cast them into very great afflictions, and to lay them under grievous smarting rods, that so he may prepare and fit them for some high and eminent services in this world. **Joseph** would never have been so fit to be governor of Egypt, and to preserve the visible church of God alive in the world—if he had not been sold into Egypt, Gen 41:40-44; if his feet had not been hurt in the stocks, and if the irons had not entered into his soul, Gen 45:7-8. **Moses** would never have been so fit to be a leader and a deliverer of Israel as he was—if he had not been banished forty years in the wilderness before, Exod 2:15. Nor would **David's** crown have fit so well, nor so close, nor so long on his head as it did—had he not for some years before been hunted as a partridge in the wilderness, 1 Sam 26:20. Nor would the **three children**, or rather the three champions, have been fit for so high a rule—had they not been first cast into the fiery

furnace, Dan 3:29-30. Nor would **Daniel** have been so fit for that exceeding high honor, and glory, and greatness to which he was exalted— had he not been first cast among the lions, Dan 6:25, et seq. And so if **Esther** had never been a poor captive maid, she would never have been a queen, and so would never have been instrumental in the preservation of the church of God in her day. **Heman** was one of the best and wisest men in the world in his day, 1 Kings 4:31; and this God brought him to by training of him up in the school of affliction, as you may evidently see in Psalm 88.

That verse of the apostle in 2 Cor 1:4, deserves to be written in letters of gold, "Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be *able* to comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God." Mark that word *able*. Oh, it is one of the hardest and noblest works in all Christianity to be able divinely to comfort others that are in troubles; and yet by sufferings God fits and prepares his people for this noble and difficult service.

Luther was of opinion that to *comfort a distressed conscience* was a greater work than to raise the dead to life. And yet by inward and outward sufferings, God fits his people for this great work.

And thus you see in what respects afflictions are compared to a rod.

### **Twenty Special Lessons Which You are to Learn by the Rod**

"The Lord's voice cries unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall hear your name: **hear the rod, and him who has appointed it.**" Micah 6:9

The second thing I am to do, is to show you **those special lessons that you are to learn by the rod**, or if you please, by the raging pestilence which is now in England. Now they are these,

(1.) The first lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging

pestilence, is, **to know what the particular message or errand is, which the rod has to deliver to you in the day of your distress and trouble.** Your first work is to do as David did, in 2 Sam 21:1. He humbly inquires of the Lord to know the particular reason why he sent a famine among them. You must do as Job does: Job 10:2, "Show me, O Lord, why you contend with me." Job would sincerely know the reason of the controversy between God and him. One well observes on the text, "that Job was very desirous to know whether God afflicted him for sin or for trial—not to satisfy his curiosity—but his conscience." Elihu's counsel to Job must here take place: Job 34:31-32, "Surely it is fit to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." Job it seems was yet in the dark as to the particular cause or reason why the Lord had so grievously afflicted him; and therefore he is very importunate with God that he would graciously point out the sin for which he had so sorely smitten him. Your proceedings, says Job, to my understanding seem to be very strange and severe. I am more afflicted than others, and yet I do not know wherein I have sinned more than others; why I should be so condemned; why you are so hot against me, and why you have multiplied so many unheard of miseries against me; and why you have so greatly subjected me to the saddest and sourest censures of others—as if I were the worst of sinners and the basest of hypocrites. I know not; and therefore, O Lord! I humbly desire that you would not deal with me according to your absolute power—but let me know the true grounds and causes of all my heavy sorrows and miseries.

And so he is at it again, in that Job 13:23, "How many are my iniquities and sins! make me to know my transgression and my sin." My plagues, O Lord! are unparalleled; if my sins are such, let me know it, says Job. My calamities transcend the calamities of all others; if my sins do so, let them not be hidden from my eyes, O Lord! My load, O Lord! is heavier than others; and therefore if my sins are greater than others, let me see them, let me understand them. Infirmities and weaknesses, I confess, do hang upon me; they are inherent in me, and they do too often issue and flow from me. But as for enormities or wickednesses, neither my censorious friends, nor yet my worst enemies, no, nor yet my own conscience, will ever be able to make any just or clear proof against me. O Lord! I have

many spots upon me—but if there are any upon me which are not the spots of your people, let me see them, let me know them, that I may abhor myself, and justify you, and that I may say my friends are righteous in their censures, and I have done wickedly before the Lord.

Sometimes afflictions are sent only for trial and instruction, and not at all for sin. This is evident in the case of Job, and in the case of the blind man, whose afflictions, though they were very great and grievous—yet were they not for sin but for trial, John 9:1, et seq.

Now, though this is true—yet it must be granted that commonly sin is the meritorious cause, the procuring cause, of all afflictions, Mic 1:5-10, Amos 2:4-6. Sin ordinarily is the original foundation of all our troubles and chastisements: "If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness." Psalm 89:30-33. "Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of me," declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty." Jeremiah 2:19. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Amos 3:2

**Question. But what course must we take? what means must we use, to find out that particular sin, for which God corrects us, or which has brought the rod upon us?**

**Answer 1. Observe what that sin is—which your conscience does most upbraid you with, and check you for.** Conscience is God's preacher in the bosom, Gen 42:21; Gen 50:15-17. Now, observe what that particular sin is, which conscience does most sharply and roundly correct and chastise you for; for it is ten to one—but that is the sin which has brought the rod upon you. The voice of conscience, and the voice of the rod, do usually echo one to another. It is very rare to find a difference between the language of conscience and the language of the rod. Conscience is God's deputy, God's spy, God's secretary, God's viceroy; and therefore do not despise the voice of conscience, do not turn off conscience, as Felix turned off Paul, Acts 24:25. If the secret cry of

conscience is, "Oh, this is for your pride, or this is for your lust, or this is for your self-love, or this is for your earthliness, or this is for your carnalness, or this is for your hypocrisy, or this is for your formality, etc.," it will be your wisdom to apply to the secret cry of conscience. But,

Answer 2. Secondly, **Seriously observe what that sin is—which your soul would have spared above all, which your soul is most unwilling to leave, and bid an everlasting farewell to.** Observe what your right hand sin, your bosom sin, your constitutional sin, your complexion sin, is; for it is a hundred to one but that God has sent the rod for the subduing of that very sin, Mic 6:6-7; Esther 5:13. Commonly by the rod God points at the mortifying of that particular sin to which the heart stands most strongly inclined. But,

Answer 3. Thirdly, **Observe what that sin is, which does most maim and mar your confidence and boldness in all your addresses and approaches to God.** 1 John 3:20-21; for doubtless that is the sin which God would subdue and bring under by the rod. But,

Answer 4. Fourthly, **Observe what the affliction, what the pain, what the disease, what the punishment is—which you are under; for sometimes a person may run and read his sin in his very punishment.** Judg 1:7, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off have picked up scraps under my table. Now God has paid me back for what I did to them." Now shall Adonibezek, a heathen prince, run and read his sin in his punishment; and shall not a Christian much more? Shall not grace do as much as blind human nature? Look, as a man may sometimes guess at the disease of the patient, by the prudent observing of the physician's bill; so may he sometimes guess at the particular sin that God would have destroyed, by the punishment which is inflicted. God usually, sooner or later, meets with men, and pays them home in their own coin.

Is the judgment shame? Then the sin was pride, Hos 2:8-9. Is the judgment poverty, famine? Then the sin was abuse of abundance. Is the judgment oppression? Then the sin was unmercifulness. Is the judgment loss of children? Then the sin was inordinate love to them. Eli and David were too indulgent to their children; and therefore they were punished in

them and by them. Is the judgment sickness or lack of health? Then the sin was either the abuse of health, or the non-improvement of health. Is the judgment a famine of the word? Then the sin was slighting and loathing of the word. Is the judgment war? Then the sin was abuse of peace. Is the judgment a blind, carnal, profane, formal, selfish, superstitious clergy? Then the sin has been slighting, neglecting, undervaluing, and despising an able, knowing, zealous, spiritual, and powerful ministry. Is the judgment a worshiping of God in a lazy, dry, dull, dead, formal, customary way, according to the inventions and traditions of men? Then the sin has been men's not worshiping of God in spirit and in truth, and with that zeal, spirit, life, warmth, and fervency as he requires, John 4:23-24; Rom 12:11. Is the judgment the breaking of the communion of God's people, and scattering of them into holes and corners, as it was in Ahab's, and Jezebel's, and Gideon's days? Judg 6:1-5. Then doubtless the sin has been a slighting, undervaluing, neglecting, or forsaking of Christian communion, or else a non-improvement of Christian communion. But,

Answer 5. Fifthly, **Observe whether you have not been very faulty towards others, in the very things which you now suffer yourselves.** Do others wrong you in your names, estates, relations, callings, dealings, etc.? Lay your hands upon your hearts, and ask them whether you have never wronged others, as others now wrong you, Isa 33:1; Rev 13:10; James 2:10; Gen 50:15-17. Do others rashly judge you, and bitterly censure you, and falsely accuse you, and unjustly condemn you? If they do, reflect upon your former behavior towards others. And if you must plead guilty, throw the first stone at yourselves, and say with Adonibezek, "As I have done, so God has requited me." Let every lash of God upon you, put you in mind of your deportment towards others, when God has given them gall and wormwood to drink, Matt 7:1-2. But,

Answer 6. Sixthly, **Observe what that sin is—which you cannot endure should be touched, or reproved, or spoken against.** Prov 1:25,30; Prov 12:1; Prov 17:10; Prov 9:8; Prov 15:12. Ah! how proud, how impatient, how passionate, how mad are many—when you come to touch their right-eye sin. When you come to touch them in the tender part, oh! then they fume, and swell, and rage, and carry on like men and women

out of their wits; as you may see in the scribes and pharisees, who were so angry and mad with Christ that they sought his death; and all because he was still a-pointing at the toads in their bosoms; namely, pride, vainglory, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness. Oh! they could not endure that the sharp razor of reproof should come near their sorest part.

Certainly that Christian must be under a very high distemper, who cannot but smite a righteous man with reproach for smiting him with a reproof. Though gracious reproofs are choice remedy—yet few stomachs can bear them. Most Christians are for lenitives, few are for corrosives. David was glad of a healing reproof—but there are but few Davids alive, Psalm 141:5. Who is angry with the physician for prescribing a bitter medicine? And yet, ah! how angry are many Christians when they come to fall under holy reproofs, especially if there is any of that sharpness and cuttingness in them, which the apostle exhorts to in that Titus 1:13. Now, doubtless, the voice of the rod is this, 'Soul! take heed of that sin which you cannot endure should be touched. Labor mightily with God to get that particular sin mortified, which you cannot endure should be reprov'd.'" But,

Answer 7. Seventhly, **Observe what sin that is—which most hinders you from living upon precious promises**, and from improving of precious promises, and from treasuring up of precious promises, and from appropriating of precious promises to your own soul, Psalm 50:16-17. And it is very probable that, for the subduing of that particular sin, the Lord has visited you with his fatherly rod. But,

Answer 8. Eighthly, **Observe what sin that is—which did most sting and terrify you in an evil day, as when you past been under some loathsome disease or tormenting pain**, Gen 42:21; be it stone, gout, or burning fever, or when you have been in some imminent danger, or when you have had a sentence of death upon you, and there has been but a short step between you and eternity. Doubtless that sin, which has lain as a heavy load upon your conscience in the days of your former distress—that is the sin which God would have conquered and brought under by his present rod. But,

Answer 9. Ninthly, **Observe what particular sin is—which does most hinder you in holy duties and services, and which does**

**most interrupt you in your communion with God.** Inquire what particular sin that is, which your heart is most apt to run after, when you are on the mount of holy duties, Ezek 33:31. While the disciples were healing diseases and casting out demons, *the proud white devil* was stirring in their own souls, as is evident by that gentle rebuke which our Savior gives them in Luke 10:20, "Don't rejoice that the spirits submit to you." There is no pious duty which a Christian performs—but one white devil or another—one lust or another—will be still dogging and following of him to that duty. There is no public duty, there is no family duty, there is no private duty which a Christian performs—but either that white devil pride, or that white devil hypocrisy, or that white devil vainglory, or else some one or another white devil will follow the soul, near at heel to it. Now, mark what that particular sin is that most haunts your soul when you are in pious duties and services; and it perhaps that is the very sin which God would have subdued by the rod. But,

Answer 10. Tenthly, **Observe what sin that is—which the rest of your corruptions are most serviceable to, and which they most attend upon.** Mark what sin that is, which all other sins do most bow the knee to. Mark that sin which has a commanding power over all other sins; which says to one 'Go' and he goes, and to another 'Come' and he comes. Mark what sin that is, which is still uppermost, and which all other sins do most serve. You know when a man has a great wound in his body, all the ill humours will run there. Observe what sin that is, which all the ill humours of the soul do most run after; for it is very likely that that is the very sin that God would have brought under by the rod. But,

Answer 11. Eleventhly, **Observe what that sin is—which your hearts are most apt to hide and cloak, and cover over with the most specious and fair pretenses.** Saul had a covetous desire, and he covers it over with the fair pretenses that *the people* would have it so; and that what was spared, was for *sacrifice* to God, 1 Sam 15:20-21. *Caesar's favor* was the great darling in Pilate's eyes—but he covers all over with washing his hands, Matt 27:24. The scribes and pharisees were exceeding covetous—but their long prayers, as a cloak, must cover all, Matt 23. Judas also was a man of the same mind and mettle with them: "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages

and the money given to the poor." This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and kept the money bag, and stole what was put therein. Matt 26:8-9; John 12:5-6. Judas, as Tertullian thinks, was pretty honest until he carried the bag; but no sooner was he in office—but he puts conscience out of office—but all must be covered over with a cloak of charity. Observe what sin that is, which you are most apt to cast *the silk or the satin mantle* over; and it is ten to one but that is the sin that God would have brought under by the rod. But,

Answer 12. Twelfthly and lastly, **Observe what that sin is—which you are most easily overcome by.** Samson was easily overcome by Delilah; when all the world besides could make no conquest upon him. The apostle bids us "lay aside the sin that does so easily beset us," Heb 12:1. There are some sins that find more easy approaches to us, and more easy acceptance with us, and accordingly they do more easily captivate us. Observe what that sin is, which you do most readily and easily open the door to; and doubtless that is the sin that God would have mortified and subdued by the rod.

(2.) The second lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—**deeply to judge yourselves and greatly to humble your souls, for those particular sins which have brought the rod upon you.** Thus David did in that 2 Sam 24:10,17. When you have found out the Achan which has brought the rod upon you, *stone him to death!* and lie humble and low under the rod, and then the Almighty will be graciously pacified and sweetly reconciled unto you.

(3.) The third lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **view the rod on every side.** If there are briars on one side of the rod, there is rosemary on the other side of the rod; if there be wormwood and gall at one end of the rod, there is sweet honey at the other end of the rod—as there was at the top of Jonathan's rod, 1 Sam 14:43.

If we should come into a painter's shop, and see a picture half drawn, it might trouble us and startle us, if it did not fright us and amaze us; but yet, when the picture is perfected, completed, and finished—it may prove a very beautiful, lovely, breath-taking piece. The application is easy. Look! as every judgment, every affliction, every rod, has its black, dark side; so every judgment, every affliction, has its bright side too. Now, it is the wisdom of a Christian to look on the bright side of the rod, as well as it is his work to look on the dark side of the rod. When a Christian looks upon the dark side of the cloud, he should be humbled and abased; but when he looks upon the bright side of the cloud, he should be comforted and cheered, James 5:11. He who is still a-looking on the briary side of the rod, will be very apt to fret and faint under the rod; but he who looks

on the rosemary side of the rod, as well as the briary side of the rod—he will bear up patiently, gallantly, and cheerfully under the rod. The voice of the rod is, "Look on both sides, look on both sides!" But,

(4.) The fourth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **look on the rod in conjunction with the HAND which holds it**. Thus Hezekiah did, 2 Kings 20:16-19; thus Aaron did, Lev 10:1-3; thus Eli did, 1 Sam 3:11-19; thus David did, Psalm 39:9; thus Job did, Job 1:20-22; yes, and thus Jesus did, John 18:11, "Shall I not drink the cup that **my Father** has given me to drink?" Though the cup was a bitter cup, a bloody cup—yet seeing it was put into his hand by his Father, he drinks it off, with a "Father, I thank you." The rod in itself brings nothing but pain to the child; but the rod in the hand of a Father brings nothing but love, kindness, and sweetness. Rev 3:19, "Whom he loves, he chastens." You should never look upon the rod of affliction, but as it is in the hand of your heavenly Father, and then you will kiss it, rather than murmur under it! But,

(5.) The fifth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is to **cleave and cling close to God under the rod**. Oh how does the child cling and hang upon his father when he takes up the rod. Let such a child-like spirit be found in you, when the Father of spirits takes up the rod. When the rod was upon David's back, oh how does he cleave to God, even as the wife cleaves to her husband; "My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me." Psalm 63:8. So when Job was under the rod, oh how does he cling about God! Job 13:15, "Though he slays me—yet will I trust in him." Job will hang upon a killing God; so the church in that Psalm 80:15-18, etc.; so those hundred forty and four thousand who had their fathers' names written in their foreheads, Rev 14:1-6. O friends! you never show so much child-like love, nor so much child-like sincerity, nor so much child-like integrity—as you show when, under the smarting rod, you are found clinging close to the Lord, and hanging upon the Lord by an exercise of grace.

When Antisthenes held up his staff, as if he intended to beat one of his scholars out of his school, the scholar told him "that he might strike him if he pleased—but he would never find a staff of so hard wood as should ever be able to beat him away." When no staff, no rod, no affliction, can

drive us from Christ—it is a sure argument that we have profited much in the school of Christ. But,

(6.) The sixth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **PREPARE to meet the Lord while the rod is in his hand**: Amos 4:12, "Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel: and because I will do this unto you—prepare to meet your God, O Israel." Now there is a TWOFOLD PREPARATION.

[1.] The first is a **negative** preparation: and this lies in taking heed of sinning against light and conscience; for those sins which are against a clear light and an awakened conscience, are most wounding, devastating, terrifying, and damning.

[2.] Secondly, There is a **positive** preparation: and that consists in repentance and returning to the Lord, and in abasing and humbling yourselves before the Almighty, 2 Chron 7:14. As there is no running from God, so there is no contending with God; for what is the chaff to the whirlwind, or the stubble to a consuming fire? and therefore the voice of the rod is, "Prepare to meet the Lord in a way of faith and repentance; prepare to meet the Lord in an exercise of grace; prepare to meet the Lord with prayers, and tears, and strong cries." But,

(7.) The seventh lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **acknowledge God's sovereign power and authority over the rod—to break it, or burn it, or take it off, or lay it on--as He pleases.**, Mic 6:13, Deut 28:58-61. "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand." Deuteronomy 32:39. All diseases and sicknesses are under the command of God; they are all his sergeants, his servants, to execute his pleasure.

"When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself

am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." Matthew 8:5-10. But wherein did the greatness of the centurion's faith appear? Why, in this very acknowledgment, that all diseases were to Christ as servants, and that they were as much under the command of Jesus Christ, as any servant is under the command of his master. When Christ bids diseases—"go and afflict such a man," they go; 'go and torment such a man,' they go; 'go and kill such a man,' they go. When He calls them off--they come off at His call. Dear friends, it is a very great point of faith to believe these five things.

[1.] First, That **God is the author of all the diseases, maladies, and sicknesses that are in the world; and that he sets them on and calls them off at his own good will and pleasure:** Amos 3:6, "When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?" He speaks of the evil of punishment, and not of the evil of sin. It was a mad principle among the Manichees, who referred all calamities to the devil for their author, as if there could be evil in the city, and the Lord have no hand in it.

[2.] Secondly, It is a great point of faith to believe that **all diseases and sicknesses are limited by God, in respect of PLACES.** God sent diseases of all sorts into Egypt—but he forbade them Goshen, Exod 8:20-23; Exod 9:23-26. Ponder seriously upon these scriptures. God's shooting his arrows into one town and not into another, into one city and not into another, into one kingdom and not into another, into one family and not into another—does sufficiently evidence that all diseases and sicknesses are limited by the Holy One of Israel in respect of places.

[3.] Thirdly, It is a very great point of faith to believe that **all sicknesses and diseases are limited by God in respect of PERSONS.** That they are so, is evident in that Psalm 91:3-8; Isa 65:12. But who lives in the faith of this truth? Sometimes in the same house one is infected, and the other is not; sometimes in the same bed the one is smitten, and the other is not; sometimes at the same table the one is taken away, and the other is

left, etc.; and this does soundly evidence and witness that all sicknesses and diseases are limited by God in respect of persons as well as in respect of places. But,

[4.] Fourthly, It is a great point of faith to believe that **all diseases and sicknesses are limited by God in respect of the DEGREES to which they shall arise**. That God that sets bounds to the raging sea, and that says unto it, "Thus far shall you go, and no farther," that God sets bounds to all raging diseases and sicknesses, and says unto them, Thus far you shall go, and no farther. He sets bounds to the **fever**; he says to it, Go and scorch and burn up such a body so much, and no more; and to the **disease**, Go and devastate such a body so much, and no more; and to the raging **pestilence**, Go and weaken such a body so much, and no more; and to the **stone**, Go and torment such a body so much, and no more. But,

[5.] Fifthly, It is a very great point of faith to believe that **all diseases and sicknesses are limited by God as to their CONTINUANCE**. God says to one disease, Go, hang upon such a man so *many years*; to another, Go, hang upon such a man but *a few years*; and to another, Go, hang upon such a man but *a year*; and to another, Go, hang upon such a man but *a few months*; and to another, Go, hang upon such a man but *a few weeks*; and to another, go, hang upon such a man but *a few days*; and to another, go, hang upon such a man but *a few hours*, etc. And accordingly it comes to pass. But,

(8.) The eighth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **get more weaned and more mortified affections to all worldly comforts, contentments, and enjoyments**. [Gal 5:24; 1 Cor 7:29-81; Eccles 1:2; Prov 23:5; Jer 45:4-5] A man never comes to experience so much of the emptiness, the nothingness, the uselessness, the vanity, the mutability, the impotency, the insufficiency, and the uncertainty of all worldly comforts and enjoyments—as when he comes to fall under the rod. The constant cry of the rod is, "Be dead to the profits, pleasures, honors, and applauses of the world; be dead to relations, be dead to friends, be dead to everything below a living Jesus!" But,

(9.) The ninth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging

pestilence is—to **get assurance of greater and better things than any this world does afford**, Heb 10:33-34. That saying is as true as it is old, namely, that the assurance of an eternal life is the life of this temporal life. But having spoke so much of this particular in my treatise on assurance, which is now in your hands, I shall satisfy myself with this hint at present. But,

(10.) The tenth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—**not to despise the rod**. Heb 12:5, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord." The Greek word which is translated *despise*, signifies *the littling of a thing*. Oh! do not little the rod, do not lessen it, do not slight it, do not make a tush at it, do not set light by it, do not say, 'I will not regard it!' He who does, shows himself more of Stoic, than a Christian. Now, because there is such a desperate aptness and proneness in many to make light of the rod, it will be your wisdom **seriously to lay to heart these four particulars**:

[1.] First, That **it is the DIRECT hand of God**, Amos 3:6; Deut 28:58-61, and therefore not to be despised. It is a sad and sinful thing to despise the indirect hand of God; but it is more sad and sinful to despise the direct hand of God. But,

[2.] Secondly, **It is a MIGHTY hand of God**: 1 Pet 5:6, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Certainly that heart must be mightily wicked, which dares despise the mighty hand of God, Amos 4:10; Ezra 38:22-23.

[3.] Thirdly, **It is an ANGRY hand of God**, and therefore do not despise it: Psalm 90:7, "For we are consumed by your anger, and by your wrath are we troubled." Psalm 90:11, "Who knows the power of your anger? even according to your fear, so is your wrath." Shall devils tremble under his angry hand? yes, shall they roar as the sea under his wrathful hand, (as the Greek word signifies in James 2:19,) and will you presume to despise his angry hand? The Lord forbid, Num 16:46; Ezra 33:27-29; Deut 29:22-25. But,

[4.] Fourthly and lastly, Consider that **it is a HOLY hand, it is a JUST and RIGHTEOUS hand, it is a FAITHFUL hand of God**; and

therefore do not despise it; Jer 29:17-19; Lev 26:25; Jer 14:12-16; Psalm 119:75, "I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right, or righteousness, and that you in faithfulness have afflicted me." Psalm 119:137, "Righteous are you, O Lord, and upright are your judgments." Certainly none but unholy people will be so impudent as to despise God's holy hand. Well,

(11.) The eleventh lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is— **not to be discouraged under the rod**, Jer 27:13; 2 Sam 24:10,17; Heb 12:5, "Nor faint when you are rebuked of him."

First, It is a rod in a Father's hand; and therefore do not faint under it.

Secondly, God will do much good by the rod, and therefore do not faint under the rod.

Thirdly, You could not have been without the rod; and therefore do not faint under the rod.

Fourthly, The rod which is now upon you, is not according to the greatness of God's **anger**, nor according to the greatness of his **power**, nor according to the strictness of his **justice**, nor according to the demerits of your **sins**, nor according to the malicious desires of **Satan**, nor according to the designs, plots, and contrivances of wicked and unreasonable men, nor according to the extensiveness of your **fears**—for you have feared worse things than you feel—nor according to that sharp rod which has been upon the primitive saints, nor according to that sharp rod which many thousands of the precious sons and daughters of Zion are under in other parts of the world. Therefore do not faint under the rod, do not be discouraged under the rod.

Fifthly, by fainting under the rod, you will gratify Satan, reproach religion, render yourselves unserviceable, and make work for future repentance; and therefore do not faint under the rod. But,

(12.) The twelfth lesson that you are to learn under the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—**humbly to kiss the rod, and patiently and quietly to lie under the rod, until the Lord shall either give you a gracious, or a glorious, deliverance from it.** [2 Chron 32:25-26;

Lev 26:40-42; Mic 7:9; Lam 3:30] What is the rod, and what is the raging pestilence, compared to the horrors of conscience, and to the flames of hell, or to an everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power? 2 Thess 1:8-9. And therefore put your mouths in the dust, and be silent before the Lord. He who has deserved a hanging, if he escapes with a whipping, has no cause to murmur or complain. We who have deserved a damning—have little cause to murmur or complain of a whipping, yes, though it should be with a pestilential rod. But,

(13.) The thirteenth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—**highly, fully, freely, and signally to justify the Lord, and to think well of the Lord, and to speak well of the Lord under the rod.** To that purpose, consult these scriptures, Psalm 119:75,137; Neh 9:33; Ezra 9:13; Lam 1:3,5,7-8,10; Lam 4:15,18; Dan 9:12,14; 2 Kings 20:16-19; Jer 12:1-2; Psalm 119:17-22; Psalm 22:1-3; Psalm 97:2. But,

(14.) The fourteenth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—**personal reformation.** When the rod smarts, and the pestilence rages—God expects that every man should smite upon his thigh, and turn from the evil of his doings. 2 Chron 7:13-14, "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land;" that is, "I will remove the judgments that are upon the land, and I will confer upon my reforming people all those favors and blessings that they stand in need of." Consult these scriptures, Ezra 10:14,19; 2 Chron 30:8-9; and 2 Chron 29:8,10,15-16. But,

(15.) The fifteenth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **make God your habitation, your shelter, your refuge.** Ponder seriously upon those scriptures, Psalm 91:2,9-10; Psalm 90:1; Psalm 71:3; Psalm 57:1. They dwell most safely, most securely, most nobly, who dwell in God, who live under the shadow of the Almighty, and who every day lodge their souls in the bosom of eternal loves. But,

(16.) The sixteenth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or the raging pestilence, is—to **set up God as the great object of your fear**: Psalm 119:119-120; Isa 8:7-8,13-14, compared. When the judgments of God are either threatened or executed, feared or felt—it highly concerns us to lift up God as the main object of our fear. **We should fear that hand which lays on the rod—more than the rod itself!** Job 13:11; Jer 36:24. When God takes up the rod, when he draws his sword, and when he shoots his pestilential arrows among us—oh how highly does it concern us to fear before him with a child-like fear, with a reverential fear, with a fear which fortifies the heart against sin, and with a fear which fits the soul for duty, and which draws, yes, drives the soul to duty. But.

(17.) The seventeenth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **expect God's singular presence with you, and his admirable protection over you**. Consult these scriptures, Isa 43:2; Dan 3:24-25; Gen 39:39-40; Psalm 23:4-5; Psalm 91; Isa 63:9; Isa 26:20-21; Ezek 9:4,6. God is above his people and beneath them, Deut 33:25-27. He is under them and over them, Song 2:6. He is before them and behind them, Isa 52:12, and Isa 58:8. He is on the right hand of his people, and he is on the left hand of his people, Psalm 16:8; Psalm 121:5; Psalm 118:15-16; Exod 14:22,29. God is round about his people, Psalm 34:7; Psalm 125:2. And God is in the midst of his people, Zech 2:5; Psalm 46:5; Psalm 12:6. Oh, the safety, the security of the poor people of God—for God is above his people and beneath them, he is under them and over them, he is before them and behind them, he is in the front and in the rear, and he is round about them and in the midst of them. But,

(18.) The eighteenth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **live every day in a fresh, choice, and frequent exercise of grace**. Consult these scriptures, Psalm 91:2-4; Jer 39:17-18; Mic 7:7-9; Psalm 40:1-2; Hab 2:1-4; Jer 30:21. That man who lives daily in an exercise of grace—that man lives every day in heaven on this side heaven, whatever affliction or judgment he is under.

(19.) The nineteenth lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—to **quicken up your hearts to seek the Lord by**

**extraordinary ways and means, namely, by fasting and prayer.** Consult these scriptures, Num 16:46, seq.; Psalm 106:23,29-30; Isa 22:2-5,12-13; Jon 3:5, seq.; 2 Chron 12:2-7; 1 Kings 21:21, seq.; Joel 2:12-17. But,

(20.) The twentieth, and so the last, lesson that you are to learn by the rod, or by the raging pestilence, is—**to prepare for death**; it is to be in actual readiness to die. Ah, friends! every ache, every pain, every disease—is one of death's warning pieces. There is not a headache, not a toothache, not a fever, not a grief, not a fall, not a wrench, not a plague-sore—but is a divine warning to man to prepare to die. It is a solemn work to die; and therefore we had need prepare to die. It is a work that is to be done but once; and therefore we had need prepare to do that work well, which is to be done but once.

In this world we hear often, and pray often, and read often, and meditate often, and eat often, and drink often, and that which is worst, we sin often; but we must die but once, Job 14:14; Heb 9:27. Death will try all our graces, and all our experiences, and all our evidences, and all our comforts, and all our attainments, and all our enjoyments; and therefore we had need to prepare to die. Though there is nothing more certain than death—yet there is nothing more uncertain than:

- (1.) the **time** when we shall die;
- (2.) the **place** where we shall die;
- (3.) the **manner** how we shall die.

As whether we shall die a sudden death, or a lingering death, or a violent death; or whether we shall fall by the sword abroad, or by famine or pestilence at home; or whether we shall fall by this disease or that illness; and therefore we had need be always in an actual readiness to die. No man shall die the sooner—but much the easier and the better, for preparing to die; and therefore let us always have our loins girt and our lamps burning. **As death leaves us—so judgment will find us!** Therefore we have very great cause to secure our saving interest in Christ, a changed nature, and a pardon in our bosoms, that so we might have

nothing to do but to die. Except we prepare to die, all other preparations will do us no good. In a word—death is a change, a great change; it is the last change until the resurrection; it is lasting, yes, an everlasting change; for it puts a man into an eternal condition of happiness or misery; it is a universal change; all people must pass under this flaming sword. That statute law, "Dust you are—and unto dust you shall return," will sooner or later take hold on all mortals, Gen 3:18; and therefore it highly concerns us to prepare for death.

And thus I have shown you these lessons which you are to learn by the rod. The Lord grant that your souls may fall under those fresh, those choice, those full, and those constant influences and communications of his Holy Spirit, as may enable you to take out those twenty lessons that I have laid open before you. I confess the epistle is large—but do but consider your own conditions, and the present dispensations under which we are cast—and then I suppose you will not call it by the name of a tedious epistle.

### **Twenty Arguments to Persuade you to Closet Prayer**

These words of our Savior are plain, and to be taken literally, and not allegorically, for he speaks of 'shutting the door' of the chamber. In this chapter there is a manifest opposition between the Pharisees praying in the synagogues and corners of the streets, and others praying in secret.

In the text you have a positive precept for every Christian to pray alone: "But you, when you pray, enter into your closet," etc., as speaking not so much of a joint duty of many praying together, as of a duty which each person is to do alone. The command in the text sends us as well to the closet as to the church; and he is a pious hypocrite, who chooses the one and neglects the other. He who puts on a religious demeanor abroad to gain himself a great name among men, and at the same time lives like an atheist at home, shall at the last be unmasked by God, and presented before all the world for a most detestable hypocrite.

Bellarmino and some others turn the text into an allegory. They say that in these words there are two allegories. First, the chamber door is the sense, "shut the door," that is, say they, your sense, lest vain imaginations and worldly thoughts distract your mind in praying. Secondly, the door, say they, is our mouth, "shut your door," that is, your lips, say they, and let your prayer be like the prayer of Hannah, conceived in your mind—but not uttered with your mouth. It is usual with papists and other monkish men who lie in wait to deceive, to turn the blessed Scriptures into a nose of wax, under pretense of allegories and mysteries. Origen was a great admirer of allegories. By the strength of his mental abilities and wanton wit, he turned most of the Scriptures into allegories; and by the just judgment of God upon him, he foolishly understood and absurdly applied that Matt 19:12 literally, "Some have made themselves chaste for the kingdom of heaven," and so castrated himself. And indeed he might as well have plucked out one of his eyes upon the same account, because Christ says, "It is better to go to heaven with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire," Matt 18:9.

In all ages heretics have commonly defended their heresies by translating of scriptures into allegories. The apostle speaks of such as, denying the resurrection of the body, turn all the testimonies of the resurrection into an allegory, meaning thereby only the spiritual resurrection of the soul from sin, of which sort was Hymenaeus and Philetus, who destroyed the faith of some, saying "the resurrection was past already," 2 Tim 2:17-18. And are there not many among us who turn the whole history of the Bible into an allegory, and who turn Christ, and sin, and death, and the soul, and hell, and heaven, and all into an allegory? Many have and many do miserably pervert the Scriptures by turning them into vain and groundless allegories. Some wanton wits have expounded paradise to be the soul, man to be the mind, the woman to be the sense, the serpent to be delight, the tree of knowledge of good and evil to be wisdom, and the rest of the trees to be the virtues and endowments of the mind. O friends! *it is dangerous to bring in allegories where the Scripture does not clearly and plainly warrant them, and to take those words figuratively which should be taken properly.*

The word which in the text is rendered *closet*, has only three most usual

significations among Greek authors. First, it may be taken for a secret chamber, or close and locked parlor; secondly, for a safe or cupboard to lay victuals in; thirdly, for a locked chest or cupboard wherein treasure usually is reserved.

The best and most judicious interpreters that I have cast my eye upon, both of a former and later date, do all expound my text of private prayer in retired places; and with them I close; and so the main doctrine that I shall gather from the words is this:

Doctrine. That **closet prayer or private prayer is an indispensable duty**, which Christ himself has laid upon all who are not willing to lie under the woeful brand of being hypocrites.

**I beseech you seriously to lay to heart these five things:**

1. First, If any prayer is a duty, then secret prayer must needs be a duty; for secret prayer is as much prayer as any other prayer is prayer; and secret prayer prepares and fits the soul for family prayer, and for public prayer. Secret prayer sweetly inclines and strongly disposes a Christian to all other religious duties and services. But,

2. Secondly, If secret prayer is not an indispensable duty which lies upon you, by what authority does conscience so upbraid you, and so accuse you, and so condemn you, and so terrify you—as it often does for the neglect of this duty? But,

3. Thirdly, Was it ever the way or method of God to promise again and again a reward, an open reward for that work or service which himself never commanded? Surely not. Now, to this duty of secret prayer, the Lord has again and again promised an open reward, Matt 6:6,18. And therefore without question, this is a duty incumbent upon all Christians.

4. Fourthly, Our Savior in the text takes it for granted that every child of God will be frequent in praying to his heavenly Father; and therefore he encourages them so much the more in the work of secret prayer. "When you pray;" as if he had said, I know you can as well hear without ears, and live without food, and fight without hands, and walk without feet, as you

are able to live without prayer. And therefore when you go to wait on God, or to give your heavenly Father a visit, "Enter into your closet, and shut your doors," etc.

5. Fifthly, If closet prayer is not an indispensable duty that Christ has laid upon all his people, why does Satan so much oppose it? why does he so industriously and so unweariedly labor to discourage Christians in it, and to take off Christians from it? Certainly, Satan would never make such a fierce and constant war as he does upon private prayer, were it not a necessary duty, a real duty, and a soul-enriching duty. But more of this you will find in the following discourse; and therefore let this touch suffice for the present, etc.

Now, these five things do very clearly and evidently demonstrate that *secretly and solitarily to hold fellowship with God is the undoubted duty of every Christian*. But for a more full opening and confirmation of this great and important point, I shall lay down **these twenty arguments or considerations to persuade you to closet prayer**.

[1.] First, **The most eminent saints, both in the Old and New Testament, have applied themselves to private prayer**. Moses was alone in the mount with God forty days and forty nights, Exod 34:28. So **Abraham** fills his mouth with arguments, and reasons the case out alone with God in prayer, to prevent Sodom's desolation and destruction, and never leaves off pleading and praying until he had brought God down from fifty to ten, Gen 18:22-32; and in Gen 21:33, you have Abraham again at his private prayers: "And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God." Why did Abraham plant a grove—but that he might have a most private place to pray and pour out his soul before the Lord in?

So **Isaac**: Gen 24:63, "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide." The Hebrew word that is here rendered *meditate*, signifies to pray as well as to meditate, and so it is often used. It is a comprehensive word, that takes in both prayer and meditation. So you shall find **Jacob** at his private prayer: Gen 32:24-28, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." When Jacob was all alone, and in a dark night, and when his joints were out of joint, he so

wrestles and weeps, and weeps and wrestles in private prayer, that as a prince at last he prevails with God, Hos 12:3-4. So **David**, Psalm 55:16-17, "As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice."

So **Daniel** was three times a day in private prayer: Dan 6:10, "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." Daniel had accustomed himself to private prayer; he went to his closet before he went to his public employment and state affairs; and at his return to dinner, he turned first into his chamber to serve his God and refresh his soul before he sat down to feast his body; and at the end of the day, when he had dispatched his business with men, he made it his business to wait upon God in his chamber. So **Jonah** keeps up private prayer when he was in the fish's belly, yes, when he was in the belly of hell, Jon 2:1-2, etc. So we have **Elijah** at prayer under the juniper tree, 1 Kings 19:4; so **Hannah**, 1 Sam 1:13. Now, Hannah she speaks in her heart; only her lips moved—but her voice was not heard. **The very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of the soul before God**, as Hannah did, 1 Sam 1:15. Neither was **Rebekah** a stranger to this duty, who, upon the babe's struggling in her womb, went to inquire of the Lord, Gen 25:22; that is, she went to some secret place to pray, says Calvin, Musculus, Mercerus, and others.

So **Saul** is no sooner converted—but presently he falls upon private prayer: Acts 9:11, "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus for, behold, he prays." Though he was a strict Pharisee—yet he never prayed to purpose before, nor never prayed in private before. The Pharisees used to pray in the corners of the streets, and not in the corners of their houses. And after his conversion he was frequently in private prayer, as you may see by comparing of these scriptures together, Rom 1:9; Eph 1:15-16; Phil 1:3-4; 2 Tim 1:3. So **Epaphras** was a warm man in closet prayer, Phil 4:12-13; so **Cornelius** had devoted himself to private prayer, Acts 10:2,4; and so **Peter** gets up

to the housetop to pray: Acts 10:9, "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew near unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour." Peter got up upon the housetop, not only to avoid distraction—but that he might be the more secret in his private devotion.

Eusebius tells us of James called Justus, that his knees were grown hard and brawny with kneeling so much in private prayer. And Nazianzen reports of his sister Gorgonia, that her knees seemed to cleave to the earth by her often praying in private. And Gregory with of his aunt Trucilla, that her elbows became hard by often leaning upon her desk at private prayer. I have read of a devout person, who, when the set time for his private devotion was come, whatever company he was in, he would break from them with this neat and handsome come off, "I have a friend that waits for me; farewell." And there was once a great lady of this land, who would frequently withdraw from the company of lords and ladies of great nobility, who came to visit her, rather than she would lose her set times of waiting upon God in her closet; she would, as they called it, rudely take her leave of them, that so she might in private attend the Lord of lords. She would spare what time she could to express her favors, civilities, and courtesies among her relations and friends; but she would never allow them to rob God of his time, nor her soul of that comfort and communion which she used to enjoy when she was with God in her closet.

Indeed, **one hour's communion with God in one's closet, is to be preferred before the greatest and best company in the world.** And there was a child of a Christian gentlewoman, that was so given to prayer from its infancy, that before it could well speak, it would use to get alone and go to prayer; and as it grew, it was more frequent in prayer and retiring of itself from company; and he would ask his mother very strange questions, far above the capacity of one of his years; but at last, when this child was but five years old, and whipping of his top, on a sudden he flung away his top, and ran to his mother, and with great joy said unto her, "Mother, I must go to God; will you go with me?" She answered, "My dear child, how do you know you shall go to God?" He answered, "God has told me so, for I love God, and God loves me." She answered, "Dear child, I must go when God pleases. But why will you not stay with me?" The child

answered, "I will not stay; I must go to God." And the child did not live above a month after—but never cared for play anymore; but falling sick, he would always be saying that he must go to God, he must go to God; and thus sometimes "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God has perfected praise," Matt 21:16. Certainly such people will be ripe for heaven early who begin early to seek God in a closet, in a corner.

And Eusebius reports of Constantine the emperor, that every day he used to shut up himself in some secret place in his palace, and there, on bended knees, did make his devout prayers and soliloquies to God. "My God and I are good company," said famous Dr Sibbes. **A man whose soul is conversant with God in a closet, in a hole, behind the door, or in a desert, a den, a dungeon, shall find more real pleasure, more choice delight, and more full contentment, than in the palace of a prince.** By all these famous instances, you see that the people of God in all ages have addicted themselves to private prayer. O friends these pious examples should be very awakening, very convincing, and very encouraging to you. Certainly it is as much your duty as it is your glory, to follow these pious patterns which are now set before you.

Witness these following scriptures: Prov 2:20, "That you may walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous;" 1 Cor 11:1, "Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ; Phil 3:17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark those who walk so, as you have us for an example;" Phil 4:9, "Those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you;" 1 Thess 1:6, "And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction;" Heb 6:12, "That you be not slothful—but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." So 2 Tim 3:10-12,14; Titus 2:7.

It was an excellent law that the Ephesians made, namely, that men should propound to themselves the best patterns, and ever bear in mind some eminent man. Bad men are wonderful in love with bad examples, Jer 44:16-17. The Indian, hearing that his ancestors were gone to hell, said that then he would go there too. Some men have a mind to go to hell for company's sake. Oh that we were as much in love with the examples of

good men as others are in love with the examples of bad men; and then we would be oftener in our closets than now we are! Oh that our eyes were more fixed on the pious examples of all that have in them 'anything of Christ,' as Bucer spoke! Shall we love to look upon the pictures of our friends; and shall we not love to look upon the pious examples of those who are the lively and lovely picture of Christ? The pious examples of others should be the looking-glasses by which we should dress ourselves. He is the best and wisest Christian, who writes after the fairest Scripture copy, that imitates those Christians that are most eminent in grace, and that have been most exercised in closet prayer, and in the most secret duties of religion.

Jerome having read the life and death of Hilarion, one who lived most Christianly, and died most comfortably, folded up the book, saying, Well, Hilarion shall be the champion that I will follow; his good life shall be my example, and his godly death my precedent. It is brave to live and die by the examples of the most eminent saints. But,

[2.] Secondly. **Consider, when Christ was on earth, he did much exercise himself in secret prayer;** he was often with God alone, as you may see in these famous scriptures: Matt 14:23, "And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, he was there alone." Christ's choosing solitudes for private prayer, does not only hint to us the danger of distraction and deviation of thoughts in prayer—but how necessary it is for us to choose the most convenient places we can for private prayers. Our own fickleness and Satan's restlessness calls upon us to get into such corners, where we may most freely pour out our souls into the bosom of God: Mark 1:35, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." **As the morning time is the fittest time for prayer, so solitary places are the fittest places for prayer:** Mark 6:46, "And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray." He who would pray to purpose, had need be quiet when he is alone: Luke 5:16, "And he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed." (Greek, He was departing and praying) to give us to understand that he did thus often. When Christ was neither exercised in teaching nor in working of

miracles, he was then very intent on private prayer: Luke 6:12, "And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Did Christ spend whole nights in private prayer to save our souls; and shall we think it much to spend an hour or two in the day for the furtherance of the internal and eternal welfare of our souls?

Luke 21:37, "And in the daytime he was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives." Christ frequently joins praying and preaching together, and that which Christ has joined together, let no man presume to put asunder: Luke 22:39,41,44-45, "And he came out, and went as he was accustomed to the mount of Olives, and his disciples also followed him. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood" (clotted or congealed blood) "falling down to the ground" (never was garden watered before or since with blood as this was). "And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow." Ah! what sad pieces of vanity are the best of men in an hour of trial and temptation! These very men, who a little before did stoutly profess and promise that they would never leave him nor forsake him, and that they would go to prison for Christ, and die for Christ—yet when the day of trial came, they could not so much as watch with him one hour; they had neither eyes to see, nor hands to wipe off Christ's bloody sweat; so John 6:15-17. Thus you see, by all these famous instances, that Christ was frequent in private prayer.

Oh that we would daily propound to ourselves this noble pattern for our imitation, and make it our business, our work, our heaven, to write after this blessed copy that Christ has set us, namely, to be much with God alone. Certainly Christianity is nothing else but an imitation of the divine nature, a reducing of a man's self to the image of God, in which he was created "in righteousness and true holiness." **A Christian's whole life should be nothing but a visible representation of Christ.** The heathens had this notion among them, as Lactantius reports, that the way to honor their gods was to be like them. Sure I am that the highest way of honoring Christ is to be like to Christ: 1 John 2:6, "He who says he abides

in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." 1 Peter 2:21, "Leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps." Oh that this blessed Scripture might always lie warm upon our hearts. Christ is the sun, and all the watches of our lives should be set by the dial of his motion. Christ is a pattern of patterns; his example should be to us instead of a thousand examples. It is not only our liberty—but our duty and glory, to follow Christ inviolably in all his moral virtues. Other patterns be imperfect and defective—but Christ is a perfect pattern; and of all his children, they are the happiest, who come nearest to this perfect pattern.

Heliogabalus loved his children the better for resembling him in sin. But Christ loves his children the more for resembling him in sanctity. I have read of some springs that change the color of the cattle that drink of them into the color of their own waters. Certainly, Jesus Christ is such a fountain, in which whoever bathes, and of which whoever drinks, shall be changed into the same likeness, 2 Cor 3:18.

**Question. But why was our Lord Jesus so much in private prayer? Why was he so often with God alone?**

Answer 1. First, **It was to put a very high honor and value upon private prayer**; it was to enhance and raise the price of this duty. Men naturally are very apt and prone to have low and undervaluing thoughts of secret prayer. But Christ, by exercising himself so frequently in it, has put an everlasting honor and an inestimable value upon it. But,

Answer 2. Secondly, He was much in private prayer, he was often with God alone, **that he might not be seen of men, and that he might avoid all shows and appearances of ostentation and popular applause**. He who has commanded us to abstain from all appearances of evil, 1 Thess 5:22, would not himself, when he was in this world, venture upon the least appearance of evil. Christ was very shy of everything that did but look like sin; he was very shy of the very show and shadow of pride or vainglory.

Answer 3. Thirdly, **To avoid interruptions in the duty**. Secrecy is no small advantage to the serious and lively carrying on of a private duty.

Interruptions and disturbances from without are oftentimes quenching to private prayer. The best Christians do but bungle when they meet with interruptions in their private devotions.

Answer 4. Fourthly, **To set us such a blessed pattern and gracious example**, that we should never please nor content ourselves with public prayers only, nor with family prayers only—but that we should also apply ourselves to secret prayer, to closet prayer. Christ was not always in public, nor always in his family—but he was often in private with God alone, that by his own example he might encourage us to be often with God in secret; and happy are those who tread in his steps, and that write after his copy.

Answer 5. Fifthly, That he might approve himself to our understandings and consciences **to be a most just and faithful High Priest**, Heb 2:17; John 17. Christ was wonderful faithful and careful in both parts of his priestly office, namely, redemption and intercession; he was his people's only spokesman. Ah! how earnest, how frequent was he in pouring out prayers, and tears, and sighs, and groans for his people in secret, when he was in this world, Heb 5:7. And now he is in heaven, be is still a-making intercession for them, Heb 7:25.

Answer 6. Sixthly, To convince us that his **Father hears and observes our private prayers**, and bottles up all our secret tears, and that he is not a stranger to our closet desires, wrestlings, breathings, hungerings, and thirstings.

[3.] Thirdly, **Consider that the ordinary exercising of yourselves in secret prayer, is that which will distinguish you from hypocrites**, who do all they do to be seen of men: Matt 6:1-2, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." SELF is the only oil which makes the chariot-wheels of the hypocrite move in all religious concernments. Matt 6:5, "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the

street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." Matt 6:16, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." Thus you see that these hypocrites look more at men than at God in all their duties. When they give alms, the trumpet must sound; when they pray, it must be in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets; and when they fasted, they disfigured their faces that they might appear unto men to fast. **Hypocrites live upon the praises and applauses of men.**

Naturalists report of the Chelydonian stone, that it will retain its virtue no longer than it is enclosed in gold. So hypocrites will keep up their duties no longer than they are fed, and encouraged, and enclosed with the golden praises and applauses of men. Hypocrites are like blazing stars, which, so long as they are fed with vapors, shine as if they were fixed stars; but let the vapors dry up, and presently they vanish and disappear.

Closet duty speaks out most sincerity. He prays with a witness, who prays without a witness. **The more sincere the soul is, the more in closet duty the soul will be,** Job 31:33. Where do you read in all the Scripture, that Pharaoh, or Saul, or Judas, or Demas, or Simon Magus, or the scribes and pharisees, were accustomed to pour out their souls before the Lord in secret? Secret prayer is not the hypocrite's ordinary walk, his ordinary work or trade. There is great cause to fear that his heart was never right with God, whose whole devotion is spent among men, or among many; or else our Savior, in drawing the hypocrite's picture, would never have made this to be the very cast of his countenance, as he does in Matt 6:5. It is very observable, that Christ commands his disciples, that they should not be as the hypocrites. It is one thing to be hypocrites, and it is another thing to be *as* the hypocrites. Christ would not have his people to look like hypocrites, nor to be like to hypocrites. It is only sincerity that will enable a man to make a practice of private prayer. In praying with many, there are many things that may bribe and provoke a carnal heart—as pride, vainglory, love of applause, or to get a name. An hypocrite, in all his duties, trades more for a good name than for a good life, for a good report than for a good conscience; like fiddlers, who are more careful in tuning their instruments, than in composing

their lives. But in private prayer there is no such trade to be driven. But,

[4.] Fourthly, Consider that **in secret we may more freely, and fully, and safely unbosom our souls to God than we can in the presence of others.** Hence the husband is to mourn apart, and the wife apart, Zech 12:12-14, not only to show the soundness of their sorrow—but also to show their sincerity by their secrecy. They must mourn apart, that their sins may not be disclosed nor discovered one to another. Here they are severed to show that they wept not for company's sake—but for their own particular sins, by which they had pierced and crucified the Lord of glory. In secret, a Christian may descend into such particulars, as in public or before others he will not, he may not, he ought not, to mention. Ah! how many Christians are there who would blush and be ashamed to walk in the streets, and to converse with sinners or saints, should but those infirmities, enormities, and wickednesses be written in their foreheads, or known to others, which they freely and fully lay open to God in secret. There are many sins which many men have fallen into before conversion and since conversion, which, should they be known to the world, would make themselves to stench, and religion to stench, and their profession to stench in the nostrils of all who know them. Yes, should those weaknesses and wickednesses be published upon the housetops, which many are guilty of before grace received, or since grace received, how would weak Christians be staggered, young corners on in the ways of God discouraged, and many mouths of blasphemy opened, and many sinners' hearts hardened against the Lord, his ways, reproofs, and the things of their own peace; yes, how would Satan's banner be displayed, and his kingdom strengthened, and himself infinitely pleased and delighted! It is an infinite mercy and condescension in God to lay a law of restraint upon Satan, who else would be the greatest blab in all the world. It would be mirth and music to him to be still a-laying open the follies and weaknesses of the saints.

Ambrose brings in the devil boasting against Christ, and challenging Judas as his own. "He is not yours, Lord Jesus, he is mine: his thoughts beat for me; he eats with you—but is fed by me; he takes bread from you—but money from me; he drinks with you, and sells your blood to me." There is not a sin that a saint commits—but Satan would trumpet it out to

all the world, if God would but give him permission. No man who is in his right wits, will lay open to everyone his bodily infirmities, weaknesses, diseases, ailments, griefs, etc.—but to some near relation, or bosom friend, or able physician. So no man who is in his right wits will lay open to everyone his soul-infirmities, weaknesses, diseases, ailments, griefs, etc.—but to the Lord, or to some particular person who is wise, faithful, and able to contribute something to his soul's relief. Should a Christian but lay open or exposing all his follies and vanities to the world, how sadly would some deride him and scorn him! and how severely and bitterly would others censure him and judge him! etc. When David was alone in the cave, then he poured out his complaint to God, and showed before him his trouble, Psalm 142:2. And when Job was all alone, then his eyes poured out tears to God, Job 16:20. There is no hazard, no danger, in exposing of all before God in private—but there may be a great deal of hazard and danger in exposing of all before men.

[5.] Fifthly, **Secret duties shall have open rewards.** [Eccles 12:14; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 22:12; Psalm 126:5; Luke 14:14; Matt 25:34,37] Matt 6:6, "And your Father, who sees in secret, shall reward you openly." So, Matt 6:18, God will reward his people here in part, and hereafter in all perfection. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him in secret. Those who sow in tears secretly, shall reap in joy openly. Private prayer shall be rewarded before men and angels publicly. How openly did God reward Daniel for his secret prayer! Dan 6:10,23-28. Mordecai privately discovered a plot of treason against the person of king Ahasuerus, and he is rewarded openly, Esther 2:21-23, with Esther 6. Darius, before he came to the kingdom, received privately a gift from one Syloson; and when he came to be a king, he rewarded him openly with the command of his country Samus. God, in the great day, will recompense his people before all the world, for every secret prayer, and secret tear, and secret sigh, and secret groan that has come from their heart. God, in the great day, will declare to men and angels, how often his people have been in pouring out their souls before him in such and such holes, corners, and secret places; and accordingly he will reward them.

Ah, Christians! did you really believe this, and seriously dwell on this, you would,

- (1.) Walk more thankfully.
- (2.) Work more cheerfully.
- (3.) Suffer more patiently.
- (4.) Fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, more courageously.
- (5.) Lay out yourselves for God, his interest and glory, more freely.
- (6.) Live with whatever providence has cut out for your portion, more quietly and contentedly. And,
- (7.) You would be in private prayer more frequently, more abundantly.

[6.] Sixthly, Consider that **God has usually manifested himself most to his people when they have been in secret**, when they have been alone at the throne of grace. Oh the sweet meltings, the heavenly warmings, the blessed cheerings, the glorious manifestations, and the choice communion with God—that Christians have found when they have been alone with God in a corner, in a closet, behind the door!

When did **Daniel** have that vision and comfortable message, that blessed news, by the angel, that he was "greatly beloved"—but when he was all alone at prayer? Dan 9:20-23, "While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill—while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision." While Daniel was at private prayer, God, by the angel Gabriel, reveals to him the secret of his counsel, concerning the restoration of Jerusalem, and the duration thereof, even to the Messiah; and while Daniel was at private prayer, the Lord appears to him, and in an extraordinary way assures him that he was "a man greatly beloved," or as the Hebrew has it, "a man of desires," that is, a man whom God's

desires are towards, a man singularly beloved of God, and highly in favor with God, a man who are very pleasing and delightful to God.

God loves to lade the wings of private prayer with the sweetest, choicest, and chief blessings. Ah! how often has God kissed a poor Christian at the beginning of private prayer, and spoke peace to him in the midst of private prayer, and filled him with light and joy and assurance upon the close of private prayer?

And so **Cornelius** is highly commended and graciously rewarded upon the account of his private prayer: Acts 10:1-4, "At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God."

Acts 10:30-31, "Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor.'" Mark, as he was praying in his house, namely, by himself alone, a man in bright clothing—that was an angel in man's shape, Acts 10:3—appeared to him, and said, "Cornelius, your prayer is heard." [Acts 10:31] He does not mean only that prayer which he made when he fasted and humbled himself before the Lord, Acts 10:30-31; but, as Acts 10:2-4 show—his prayers which he made alone. For it seems none else were with him then, for he only saw that man in bright clothing; and to him alone the angel addressed his present speech, saying, "Cornelius, your prayers are heard, Acts 10:4,31. Here you see that Cornelius' private prayers are not only heard—but kindly remembered, and graciously accepted, and gloriously rewarded. Praying Cornelius is not only remembered by God—but he is also visited, sensibly and evidently, by an angel, and assured that his private prayers and good deeds are an odor, a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God.

And so when had **Peter** his vision but when he was praying alone on the housetop? Acts 10:9-13, "About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." When Peter was upon the housetop at prayer alone, then he fell into a trance, and he saw heaven opened; and then he had his spirit raised, his mind elevated, and all the faculties of his soul filled with a divine revelation.

And so when **Paul** was at prayer alone, Acts 9:12, he saw in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Paul had not been long at private prayer before it was revealed to him that he was a chosen vessel, and before he was filled with the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Holy Spirit.

And when **John** was alone in the isle of Patmos, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"—where he was banished by Domitian, a most cruel emperor—then he had a glorious sight of the Son of man, and then the Lord discovered to him most deep and profound mysteries, both concerning the present and future state of the church, to the end of the world. And when John was weeping, in private prayer doubtless, then the sealed book was opened to him.

So when **Daniel** was at private prayer, God dispatches a heavenly messenger to him, and his errand was to open more clearly and fully the blessed Scripture to him. Some comfortable and encouraging knowledge this holy man of God had attained unto before by his frequent and constant study in the word, and this eggs him on to private prayer, and private prayer sends an angel from heaven to give him a clearer and fuller light. **Private prayer is a golden key to unlock the mysteries of the word unto us.** The knowledge of many choice and blessed truths, are but the returns of private prayer. The word most dwells richly in their hearts who are most in pouring out their hearts before God in their closets.

When Bonaventura, that seraphic doctor, as some call him, was asked by Aquinas from what books and helps he derived such holy and divine expressions and contemplations, he pointed to a crucifix, and said, "Prostrate in prayer at the feet of this image, my soul receives greater light from heaven than from all study and disputation." Though this be a monkish tradition and superstitious fiction—yet some improvement may be made of it. **Certainly that Christian, who in private prayer lies most at the feet of Jesus Christ, he shall understand most of the mind of Christ in the gospel, and he shall have most of heaven and the things of his own peace brought down into his heart.**

There is no service wherein Christians have such a near, familiar, and friendly fellowship with God as in this of private prayer; neither is there any service wherein God does more delight to make known his truth and faithfulness, his grace and goodness, his mercy and bounty, his beauty and glory to poor souls, than this of private prayer. Luther professes, "That he profited more in the knowledge of the Scripture by private prayer in a short space, than he did by study in a longer space," as John by weeping in in seclusion, got the sealed book opened.

Private prayer crowns God with the honor and glory that is due to his name; and God crowns private prayer with a discovery of those blessed weighty truths to his servants, that are a sealed book to others. **Certainly the soul usually enjoys most communion with God in secret.** When a Christian is in a wilderness, which is a very solitary place, then God delights to speak friendly and comfortably to him: Hos 2:14, "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak friendly or comfortably to her," or as the Hebrew has it, "I will speak to her heart." When I have her alone, says God, in a solitary wilderness, I will speak such things to her heart, as shall exceedingly cheer her, and comfort her, and even make her heart leap and dance within her.

A husband imparts his mind most freely and fully to his wife when she is alone; and so does Christ to the believing soul. Oh the secret kisses, the secret embraces, the secret visits, the secret whispers, the secret cheerings, the secret sealings, the secret discoveries, etc., that God gives

to his people when alone, when in a hole, when under the stairs, when behind the door, when in a dungeon! When Jeremiah was calling upon God alone in his dark dungeon, he had great and wonderful things showed him that he knew not of, Jer 33:1-3.

Ambrose was accustomed to say, "I am never less alone, than when I am alone; for then I can enjoy the presence of my God most freely, fully, and sweetly, without interruption." And it was a most sweet and divine saying of Bernard, "O saint, know you not," says he, "that your husband Christ is bashful, and will not be intimate in company? Retire yourself therefore by prayer and meditation into your closet or the fields, and there you shall have Christ's embraces."

A gentlewoman being at private prayer and meditation in her parlor, had such sweet, choice, and full enjoyments of God, that she cried out, "Oh that I might always enjoy this sweet communion with God!" etc.

Christ loves to embrace his spouse, not so much in the open street, as in secret; and certainly the gracious soul has never sweeter views of glory, than when it is most out of the view of the world. Wise men give their best, their choicest, and their richest gifts in secret; and so does Christ give his the best of the best, when they are in a corner, when they are all alone. But as for such as cannot spare time to seek God in a closet, to commune with him in secret—they sufficiently manifest that they have little fellowship or friendship with God, whom they so seldom come at.

[7.] Seventhly, **Consider the time of this life is the only time for private prayer.** Heaven will admit of no secret prayer. In heaven there will be no secret **sins** to trouble us, nor no secret **needs** to pinch us, nor no secret **temptations** to betray us, nor no secret **snare**s to entangle us, nor no secret **enemies** to supplant us. We had need live much in the practice of that duty here on earth, that we shall never be exercised in after death. Some duties that are incumbent upon us now, as praising of God, admiring of God, exalting and lifting up of God, joying and delighting in God, etc., will be forever incumbent upon us in heaven; but this duty of private prayer, we must take our leave of, when we come to lay our heads in the dust.

[8.] Eighthly, **Consider the great prevalency of secret prayer. Private prayer is the gate of heaven, a key to let us into paradise.** Oh the great things that private prayer has done with God! Psalm 31:22. Oh the great mercies that have been obtained by private prayer! Psalm 38:8-9. And oh the great threatenings that have been diverted by private prayer! And oh the great judgments that have been removed by private prayer! And oh the great judgments that have been prevented by private prayer!

I have read of a malicious woman who gave herself to the devil, provided that he would do harm to such a neighbor, whom she mortally hated: the devil went again and again to do his errand—but at last he returns and tells her, that he could do no devilry to that man, for whenever he came, he found him either reading the Scriptures, or at private prayer.

Private prayers pierces the heavens, and are commonly blessed and loaded with gracious and glorious returns from thence. While Hezekiah was praying and weeping in private, God sent the prophet Isaiah to him, to assure him that his prayer was heard, and that his tears were seen, and that he would add unto his days fifteen years, Isa 38:5. So when Isaac was all alone meditating and praying, and asking God for a good wife in the fields, he meets Rebekah, Gen 24:63-64.

So Jacob: Gen 32:24-28, "So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." In this scripture we have an elegant description of a duel fought between the Almighty and Jacob; and in it there are these things most observable:

(1.) First, We have the combatants or **duelists**, Jacob and God, who appeared in the shape or appearance of a man. He who is here said to be a man was the Son of God in human shape, as it appears by the whole narration, and by Hos 12:3-5. Now, that this man who wrestled with

Jacob was indeed God, and not really man, is most evident by these reasons

[1.] First, Jacob desires a blessing from him, Gen 32:26. Now, it is God's prerogative-royal to bless, and not angels' nor men's. Consequently,

[2.] Secondly, He calls him by the name of God; "you have power with God," Gen 32:28. And says Jacob, "I have seen God face to face," Gen 32:30. Not that he saw the majesty and essence of God: for no man can see the essential glory of God and live, Exod 33:20,23; but he saw God more apparently, more manifestly, more gloriously than ever he had done before. Some created shape, some glimpse of glory, Jacob saw, whereby God was pleased for the present to testify his more immediate presence—but not himself.

[3.] Thirdly, The same person who here Jacob wrestles with is he whom Jacob remembers in his benediction as his deliverer from all evil, Gen 48:16. It was that God that appeared to him at Bethel when he fled from the face of his brother, Gen 35:7. Consequently,

[4.] Fourthly, Jacob is reprov'd for his curious inquiring or asking after the angel's name, Gen 32:29, which is a clear argument or demonstration of his majesty and glory, God being above all notion and name. God is a super-substantial substance—an understanding not to be understood, a word never to be spoken. One being asked what God was, answered, "That he must be God himself, before he could know God fully." We are as well able to comprehend the sea in a cockle-shell, as we are able to comprehend the Almighty. "In searching after God," says Chrysostom, "I am like a man digging in a deep spring: I stand here, and the water rises upon me; and I stand there, and still the water rises upon me."

In this conflict you have not one man wrestling with another, nor one man wrestling with a created angel—but a poor, weak, mortal man wrestling with an immortal God; weakness wrestling with strength, and a finite being with an infinite being. Though Jacob was greatly overmatched—yet he wrestles and keeps his hold, and all in the strength of him, with whom he wrestles.

(2.) Secondly, You have the **place** where they combated, and that was beside the ford Jabbok, Gen 32:22. This is the name of a brook or river springing by Rabbah, the metropolis of the Ammonites, and flowing into Jordan beneath the Sea of Galilee, Num 21:24; Deut 2:37; Judg 11:13,15; Deut 3:16. Jacob did never enjoy so much of the presence of God, as when he had left the company of men. Oh! the sweet communion that Jacob had with God when he was retired from his family, and was all alone with his God by the ford Jabbok! Certainly Jacob was never less alone than at this time, when he was so alone. **Saints often meet with the best wine and with the strongest cordials—when they are all alone with God.**

(3.) Thirdly, You have the **time** of the combat, and that was the night. At what time of the night this wrestling, this duel began, we nowhere read; but it lasted until break of day, it lasted until Jacob had the better of the angel. How many hours of the night this conflict lasted, no mortal man can tell. God's design was that none should be spectators nor witnesses of this combat but Jacob only; and therefore Jacob must be wrestling when others were sleeping.

(4.) Fourthly, You have the **ground** of the quarrel, and that was Jacob's fear of Esau, and his importunate desire for a blessing. Jacob flies to God, that he might not fall before man; he flies to God, that he might not fly before men. In a storm, there is no shelter like to the wing of God. **He is safest, and happiest, and wisest, who lays himself under divine protection.** This Jacob knew, and therefore he runs to God, as to his only city of refuge. In this conflict God would have given out: "Let me go, for the day breaks," Gen 32:26; but Jacob keeps his hold, and tells him boldly to his very face that he would not let him go unless he would bless him. **Oh the power of private prayer!** It has a kind of omnipotency in it; it takes God captive; it holds him as a prisoner; it binds the hands of the Almighty; yes, it will wrench a mercy, a blessing, out of the hand of heaven itself! Oh the power of that prayer which makes a man victorious over the greatest, the highest power! Jacob, though a man, a single man, a traveling man, a tired man, yes, though a worm, which is easily crushed and trodden under foot, and no man, Isa 41:14—yet in private prayer he is so potent, that he overcomes the omnipotent God; he is so mighty, that

he overcomes the Almighty!

(5.) Fifthly, You have the nature or **manner** of the combat, and that was both outward and inward, both physical and spiritual. It was as well by the strength of his body as it was by the force of his faith. He wrestled not only with spiritual strugglings, tears, and prayers, Hos 12:4—but with physical also, wherein God assailed him with one hand, and upheld him with the other. In this, conflict, Jacob and the angel of the covenant did really wrestle arm to arm, and shoulder to shoulder, and foot to foot, and used all other sleights and ways as men do, who wrestle one with another. The Hebrew word which is here rendered *wrestled*, signifies the raising of the dust; because they cast dust one upon another, that so they might take more sure hold one of another. Some conclude that Jacob and the angel did tug, and strive, and turn each other, until they sweat again; for so much the word imports. Jacob and the angel did not wrestle in jest—but in good earnest; they wrestled with their might, as it were, for the garland; they strove for victory as for life.

But as this wrestling was physical, so it was spiritual also. Jacob's soul takes hold of God, and Jacob's faith takes hold of God, and Jacob's prayers takes hold of God, and Jacob's tears takes hold of God, Hos 12:4-5. Certainly Jacob's weapons in this warfare were mainly spiritual, and so "mighty through God." There is no overcoming of God but in his own strength. Jacob did more by his royal faith than he did by his noble hands, and more by weeping than he did by sweating, and more by praying than he did by all his bodily strivings.

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, You have the **outcome** of the combat, and that is, victory over the angel, Gen 32:28. Jacob wrestles in the angel's power, and so overcomes him. As a prince, he overpowers the angel by that very power he had from the angel. The angel was as freely and fully willing to be conquered by Jacob, as Jacob was willing to be conqueror. When lovers wrestle, the strongest is willing enough to take a fall of the weakest; and so it was here. The father, in wrestling with his child, is willing enough, for his child's comfort and encouragement, to take a fall now and then; and so it was between the angel and Jacob in the present case. Now in this blessed story, as in a crystal glass, you may see the great power and prevalency of private prayer; it conquers the great conqueror; it is so

omnipotent that it overcomes an omnipotent God.

Now this you may see more fully and sweetly cleared up in Hos 12:4, "He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there." When Jacob was all alone and in a dark night, and but on one leg—yet then he played the prince with God, as the Hebrew has it. Jacob by prayers and tears did so prince it with God as that he carried the blessing. Jacob's wrestling was by weeping, and his prevailing by praying. Prayers and tears are not only very pleasing to God—but also very prevalent with God. And thus you see that this great instance of Jacob speaks out aloud the prevalency of private prayer.

See another instance of this in **David**: Psalm 6:6, "I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears." These are all excessive figurative speeches, to set forth the greatness of his sorrow, and the multitude of his tears. David in his retirement makes the place of his sin, namely, his bed, to be the place of his repentance. David sins privately upon his bed, and David mourns privately upon his bed. Every place which we have polluted by sin, we should sanctify and water with our tears: Psalm 6:8, "Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity; for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping." As blood has a voice, and as the rod has a voice, so tears have a voice. Tears have tongues, and tears can speak. There is no prayer compared to those which secret tears make in the ears of God.

A prudent and indulgent father can better pick out the wants and necessities of his children by their secret tears than by their loud complaints, by their weeping than by their words; and do you think that God can't do as much? Tears are not always mutes: Lam 2:18, "Cry aloud," says one, "not with your tongue—but with your eyes; not with, your words—but with your tears; for that is the prayer that makes the most forcible entry into the ears of the great God of heaven." Penitent tears are undeniable ambassadors that never return from the throne of grace without a gracious answer. Tears are a kind of silent prayers, which, though they say nothing—yet they obtain pardon; and though they plead not a man's cause—yet they obtain mercy at the hands of God. As you see in that great instance of Peter, who, though he said nothing that we read

of—yet weeping bitterly, he obtained mercy, Matt 26:75.

I have read of Augustine, who, coming as a visitant to the house of a sick man, he saw the room full of friends and kindred, who were all silent—yet all weeping: the wife sobbing, the children sighing, the kinsfolk lamenting, all mourning; whereupon Augustine uttered this short prayer, "Lord, what prayer do you hear—if not these?"

Psalm 6:9, "The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer." God sometimes answers his people **before** they pray: Isa 65:24, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer." And sometimes while they are praying; so it follows in the same verse, "And while they are yet speaking I will hear." So Isa 30:19, "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry: when he shall hear it, he will answer you." And sometimes **after** they have prayed, as the experiences of all Christians can testify. Sometimes God neither hears nor receives a prayer; and this is the common case and lot of the wicked, Prov 1:28; Job 27:9; Isa 1:15. Sometimes God hears the prayers of his people—but does not presently answer them, as in that case of Paul, 2 Cor 12:7-9; and sometimes God both hears and receives the prayers of his people, as here he did David's. Now in this instance of David, as in a glass, you may run and read the prevalency of private prayer and of secret tears.

You may take another instance of this in **Jonah**: "From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said: 'In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.' The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God. "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Salvation comes from the Lord." And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah 2. When Jonah was all alone, and in the midst of many dangers and deaths, when he was in the whale's belly, yes, in the belly of hell—so

called because horrid and hideous, deep and dismal—yet then private prayer fetches him from thence. *Let a man's dangers be ever so many, nor ever so great—yet secret prayer has a certain omnipotency in it that will deliver him out of them all.* In multiplied afflictions, private prayer is most prevalent with God. In the very midst of drowning, secret prayer will keep both head and heart above water. Upon Jonah's private prayer, God sends forth his mandate, and the fish serves Jonah for a ship to sail safe to shore. When the case is even desperate—yet then private prayer can do much with God. Private prayer is of that power that it can open the doors of leviathan, as you see in this great instance, which yet is reckoned as a thing not feasible, Job 41:14.

Another instance of the prevalency of private prayer you have in that 2 Kings 4:32-35, "When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his couch. He went in, shut the door on the two of them (Privacy is a good help to fervency in prayer) and prayed to the Lord. Then he got on the bed and lay upon the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out upon him, the boy's body grew warm. Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out upon him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes." Oh the power, the prevalency, the omnipotency of private prayer, that raises the dead to life! And the same effect had the private prayer of Elijah in raising the widow's son of Zarephath to life, 1 Kings 17:18, et seq.

The great prevalency of **Moses** his private prayers you may read in the following scriptures: Num 12:1-2, "Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the Lord and the fire died down." Moses by private prayer rules and overrules with God; he was so potent with God in private prayer that he could have what he would from God. So Num 21:7-9; Psalm 106:23; Exod 32:9-14; Exod 14:15-17. The same you may see in Nehemiah, Neh 1:11, compared with Neh 2:4-8.

Private prayer, like Saul's sword and Jonathan's bow, when duly qualified as to the person and act, never returns empty; it hits the mark, it carries

the day with God; it pierces the walls of heaven, though, like those of Gaza, made of brass and iron, Isa 45:2. Oh, who can express the powerful oratory of private prayer! etc.

[9.] Ninthly, Consider, that **secret duties are the most soul-enriching duties**. Look! as secret meals make fat bodies, so secret duties make fat souls. And as secret trades brings in great earthly riches, so secret prayers makes many rich in spiritual blessings and in heavenly riches. Private prayer is that secret key of heaven that unlocks all the treasures of glory to the soul. The best riches and the sweetest mercies God usually gives to his people when they are in their closets upon their knees. Look! as the warmth the chickens find by close sitting under the hen's wings nourishes them, so are the graces of the saints enlivened, and nourished, and strengthened by the sweet secret influences which their souls fall under when they are in their closet-communion with God. Private prayer conscientiously performed is the secret key of heaven, that has unlocked such treasures and such secrets as has passed the skill of the cunningest devil to find out. Private prayer midwives the choicest mercies and the chief riches in upon us. Certainly there are none so rich in gracious experiences as those who are most exercised in closet duties.

Psalm 34:6, "This poor man cried," says David, "and the Lord saved him out of all his troubles." David, pointing to himself, tells us that he "cried," that is, silently and secretly, as Moses did at the Red Sea, and as Nehemiah did in the presence of the king of Persia; "and the Lord saved him out of all his troubles," Exod 14:15; Neh 1:11; and Neh 2:4. And, oh, what additions were these deliverances to his experiences! O my friends, look, as the tender dew that falls in the silent night makes the grass and herbs and flowers to flourish and grow more abundantly than great showers of rain that fall in the day, so secret prayer will more abundantly cause the sweet herbs of grace and holiness to grow and flourish in the soul, than all those more open, public, and visible duties of religion, which too, too often are mingled and mixed with the sun and wind of pride and hypocrisy.

Beloved! you know that many times a favorite at court gets more by one secret motion, by one private request to his prince, than a tradesman or a merchant gets in twenty years' labor and pains, etc. So a Christian many

times gets more by one secret motion, by one private request to the King of kings, than many others do by trading long in the more public duties of religion. O sirs! remember that in private prayer we have a far greater advantage as to the exercise of our own gifts and graces and parts, than we have in public; for in public we only hear others exercise their parts and gifts, etc.; in public duties we are more passive—but in private duties we are more active. Now, the more our gifts and parts and graces are exercised, the more they are strengthened and increased. All acts strengthen habits. The more sin is acted, the more it is strengthened. And so it is with our gifts and graces; the more they are acted, the more they are strengthened. But,

[10.] Tenthly, **Take many things together.** All Christians have their secret **sins**. Psalm 19:12, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse me from secret faults." Secret not only from other men—but from himself; even such secret sins as grew from errors which he understood not. It is but natural for every man to err, and then to be ignorant of his errors. 'Many sins I see in myself,' says he, 'and more there are which I cannot spot, which I cannot find out. Nay, I think that every man's sins are beyond his understanding.' There is not the best, the wisest, nor the holiest man in the world, who can give a full and entire list of his sins. "Who can understand his errors?" This interrogation has the force of an affirmation: "Who can?" No man! No, not the most perfect and innocent man in the world. O friends! who can reckon up the secret sinful imaginations, the secret sinful inclinations, or the secret pride, the secret blasphemies, the secret hypocrisies, the secret atheistical risings, the secret murmurings, the secret repinings, the secret discontents, the secret insolencies, the secret filthinesses, the secret unbelievings, etc., that God might every day charge upon his soul? Should the best and holiest man on earth have but his secret sins every day written in his forehead, it would not only put him to a crimson blush—but it would make him pull his hat over his eyes, or cover his face with a double scarf!

So 1 Kings 8:38, "When a prayer or plea is made by any of your people Israel--each one aware of the plague of his own heart," etc. **Sin is the greatest plague in the world—but never more dangerous than when it reaches the heart.** Now, secret sins commonly lie nearest the

heart, the fountain from whence they take a quick, immediate, and continual supply. Secret sins are as near to original sin as the first droppings are to the spring-head. And as every secret sin lies nearest the heart, so every secret sin is the plague of the heart. Now, as secret diseases are not to be laid open to everyone—but only to the prudent physician; so our secret sins, which are the secret plagues, the secret diseases of our souls, are not to be laid open to everyone—but only to the physician of souls, that is only able both to cure them and pardon them.

And as all Christians have their secret sins, so all Christians have their secret **temptations**, 2 Cor 12:8-9. And as they have their secret temptations, so they have their secret **needs**; yes, many times they have such particular and personal needs that there is not one in the congregation, nor one in the family, that has the like. And as they have their secret needs, so they have their secret **fears**, and secret snares, and secret straits, and secret troubles, and secret doubts, and secret jealousies, etc. And how do all these things call aloud upon every Christian to be frequent and constant in secret prayer!

[11.] Eleventhly, Consider, **Christ is very much affected and delighted in the secret prayers of his people.** Song 2:14, "O my dove who is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is lovely." Christ observes his spouse when she is in the clefts of the rock; when she is gotten into a corner a-praying, he looks upon her with singular delight, and with special intimations of his love. Nothing is more sweet, delightful, and welcome to Christ than the secret services of his people. Their secret breathings are like lovely songs to him, Mal 3:4; their secret prayers in the clefts of the rock, or under the stairs, are as sweet incense to Jesus. The spouse retires to the secret places of the stairs not only for security—but also for secrecy, that so she might the more freely, without suspicion of hypocrisy, pour out her soul into the bosom of her beloved. The great delight that parents take in the secret lispings and whisperings of their children, is no delight to that which Christ takes in the secret prayers of his people. And therefore, as you would be friends and furtherers of Christ's delight, be much in secret prayer.

[12.] Twelfthly, Consider **you are the only people in all the world whom God has made choice of to reveal his secrets to.** John 15:15, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Everything that God the Father had communicated to Christ as mediator to be revealed to his servants, he made known to his disciples as to his bosom-friends. Christ loves his people as friends, and he uses them as friends, and he opens his heart to them as friends. There is nothing in the heart of Christ that concerns the internal and eternal welfare of his friends—but he reveals it to them: he reveals himself, his love, his eternal good will, the mysteries of faith, and the secrets of his covenant—to his friends. [1 Cor 2:10-11; John 1:9; Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 3:3-4,9] Christ loves not to entertain his friends with things that are commonly and vulgarly known. Christ will reveal the secrets of his mind, the secrets of his love, the secrets of his thoughts, the secrets of his heart, and the secrets of his purposes—to all his bosom-friends. Samson could not hide his mind, his secrets, from Delilah, though it cost him his life, Judg 16:15-17; and do you think that Christ can hide his mind, his secrets, from them for whom he has laid down his life? Surely no. O sirs! Christ is,

(1.) A universal friend.

(2.) An omnipotent friend, an almighty friend. He is no less than thirty times called Almighty in that book of Job; he can do above all expressions and beyond all apprehensions.

(3.) He is an omniscient friend.

(4.) He is an omnipresent friend.

(5.) He is an indeficient friend.

(6.) He is an independent friend.

(7.) He is an unchangeable friend.

(8.) He is a watchful friend.

(9.) He is a tender and compassionate friend.

(10.) He is a close and faithful friend; and therefore he cannot but open and unbosom himself to all his bosom friends. To be reserved and close is against the very law of friendship. Faithful friends are very free in imparting their thoughts, their minds, their secrets, one to another. A real friend accounts nothing worth knowing unless he makes it known to his friends. He opens up his greatest and most inward secrets to his friends. Job calls his friends "inward friends," or the men of his secrets, Job 19:19. All Christ's friends are inward friends; they are the men of his secrets: Prov 3:32, "His secrets are with the righteous," that is, his covenant and fatherly affection, which is hidden and secret from the world. He who is righteous in secret, where no man sees him, he is the righteous man, to whom God will communicate his closest secrets, as to his dearest bosom-friend. It is only a bosom-friend to whom we will unbosom ourselves. So Psalm 25:14, The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

Now, there **are three sorts of divine secrets:**

(1.) First, There are secrets of **providence**, and these he reveals to the righteous, and to those who fear him, Psalm 107:43; Hos 14:9. The prophet Amos speaks of these secrets of providence: Amos 3:7, Surely the Lord God will do nothing—but he reveals his secrets unto his servants and prophets." Micah knew the secret of the Lord concerning Ahab, which neither Zedekiah nor any other of the false prophets knew. So Gen 18:17, "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" The destruction of Sodom was a secret that lay in the bosom of God; but Abraham being a bosom-friend, God communicates this secret to him, Gen 18:19-21. Abraham was a friend, a faithful friend, a special friend, James 2:23; and therefore God makes him both of his court and counsel. Oh how greatly does God condescend to his people. He speaks to them as a man would speak to his friend; and there is no secrets of providence, which may be for their advantage—but he will reveal them to his faithful servants. As all faithful friends have the same friends and the same enemies, so they are mutual in the communication of their secrets one to another; and so it was between God and Abraham.

(2.) Secondly, There are the secrets of his **kingdom**; and these he reveals to his people: Matt 13:11, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven—but unto them it is not given." So Matt 11:25, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." "Let us not think," says Jerome, that the gospel is in the words of Scripture—but in the sense; not in the outside—but in the marrow; not in the leaves of words—but in the root of reason."

There are many choice, secret, hidden, and mysterious truths and doctrines in the gospel, which Christ reveals to his people, that this poor, blind, ignorant world are strangers to. [Joel 2:28; 1 Tim 3:9,16; Col 1:26-27; 1 Cor 2:9-12; Eph 4:21] There are many secrets wrapped up in the plainest truths and doctrines of the gospel, which none can effectually open and reveal but the Spirit of the Lord, who searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. There are many secrets and mysteries in the gospel, that all the learning and labor in the world can never give a man insight into. There are many who know the doctrine of the gospel, the history of the gospel—who are utter strangers to the secrets of the gospel. There is a secret power, a secret authority, a secret efficacy, a secret prevalency, a secret goodness, a secret sweetness in the gospel—that none experience but those to whom the Lord is pleased to impart gospel secrets to: Isa 29:11-12, "Seal my law among my disciples." The law of God to wicked men is a sealed book that they cannot understand, Dan 12:9-10. It is as blotted paper that they cannot read.

Look! as a private letter to a friend contains secret matter that no other man may read because it is sealed; so the law of grace is sealed up under the secret-seal of heaven, so that no man can open it or read it—but Christ's faithful friends to whom it is sent. The whole Scripture, says Gregory, is but one entire letter despatched from the Lord Christ to his beloved spouse on earth. The Rabbis say that there are four keys that God has under his belt:

- 1, the key of the clouds;
- 2, the key of the womb;
- 3, the key of the grave;

4, the key of food;

and I may add a fifth key that is under his belt, and that is the key of the word, the key of the Scripture; which key none can turn but he who "has the key of David, who opens, and no man shuts; and who shuts, and no man opens," Rev 3:7.

O sirs! God reveals himself, and his mind, and will, and truth—to his people, in a more friendly and familiar way than he does to others: Mark 4:11, "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but unto those who are outside, all these things are done in parables:" Luke 8:10, "And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." Though great doctors, and profound teachers, and deep-studied but unsanctified divines, may know much of the doctrines of the gospel, and commend much the doctrines of the gospel, and dispute much for the doctrines of the gospel, and glory much in the doctrines of the gospel, and take a great deal of pains to dress and trim up the doctrines of the gospel, with the flowers of rhetoric or eloquence; though it be much better to present truth in her native plainness, than to hang her ears with counterfeit pearls. The word, without human adornments, is like the stone garramantides, that has drops of gold in itself, sufficient to enrich the believing soul. Yet the special, spiritual, powerful, and saving knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, is a secret, a mystery, yes, a hidden mystery to them, Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7.

Chrysostom compares the mysteries of Christ, in regard of the wicked, to a written book, that the ignorant can neither read nor spell; he sees the cover, the covers, and the letters—but he understands not the meaning of what he sees. He compares the mystery of grace to an indited epistle, which an unschooled man viewing, he cannot read it, he cannot understand it; he knows it is paper and ink—but the sense, the matter, he knows not, he understands not. So unsanctified people, though they are ever so learned, and though they may perceive the letter of the mystery of Christ—yet they perceive not, they understand not, the mystery of grace, the inward sense of the Spirit, in the blessed Scriptures. Though the devil is the greatest scholar in the world, and though he has more learning than

all the men in the world have—yet there are many thousand secrets and mysteries in the gospel of grace, that he knows not really, spiritually, feelingly, efficaciously, powerfully, thoroughly, savingly, etc.

Oh—but now Christ makes known himself, his mind, his grace, his truth, to his people, in a more clear, full, familiar, and friendly way: 2 Sam 7:27, "For you, O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, have revealed to your servant;" so you read it in your books; but in the Hebrew it is thus: "Lord, you have revealed this to the ear of your servant." Now, the emphasis lies in that word, to the ear, which is left out in your books. When God makes known himself to his people, he reveals things to their ears, as we use to do to a friend who is intimate with us: we speak a thing to his ear. There is many a secret which Jesus Christ speaks in the ears of his servants, which others never come to be acquainted with: 2 Cor 4:6, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The six several gradations that are in this scripture are worthy of our most serious consideration. Here is,

First, Knowledge; and,

Secondly, The knowledge of the glory of God; and,

Thirdly, The light of the knowledge of the glory of God; and,

Fourthly, Shining; and,

Fifthly, Shining into our hearts; and,

Sixthly, Shining into our hearts in the face of Jesus Christ.

And thus you see that the Lord reveals the secrets of himself, his kingdom, his truth, his grace, his glory, to the saints. But,

(3.) Thirdly, There are the secrets of his favor, the secrets of his special love, which he opens to them; the secret purposes of his heart to save them; and these are those great secrets, those "deep things of God," which none can reveal "but the Spirit of God." Now these great secrets, these deep things of God, God does reveal to his people by his Spirit: 1 Cor 2:9-12, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit

within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us." Now what are the things that are freely given to us of God—but our election, effectual calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification? And why has God given us his Spirit—but that we should know "the things that are freely given to us of God."

Some by *secret* in Psalm 25, understand a particular assurance of God's favors, whereby happiness is secured to us, both for the present and for the future. They understand by secret, the sealing of the Spirit, the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name in it, "which none knows but he who has it." And so much those words, "He will show them his covenant," seems to import: for what greater secret can God impart to his people, than that of opening the covenant of grace to them in its freeness, fullness, sureness, sweetness, suitableness, everlastingness, and in sealing up his good pleasure, and all the spiritual and eternal blessings of the covenant to them?

Such as love and serve the Lord shall be of his cabinet-council, they shall know his soul-secrets, and be admitted into a very gracious familiarity and friendship with himself: John 14:21-23, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." God and Christ will keep house with them, and manifest the secrets of their love to those who are observant of their commands.

And thus you see that the saints are the only people to whom God will reveal the secrets of his providence, the secrets of his kingdom, and the secrets of his love unto. Christ came out of the bosom of his Father, and he opens all the secrets of his Father only to his bosom-friends. Now what an exceeding high honor is it for God to open the secrets of his love, the secrets of his promises, the secrets of his providences, the secrets of his counsels, and the secrets of his covenant—to his people!

Tiberius Caesar thought no man fit to know his secrets. And among the Persians none but noblemen, lords, and dukes, might be made partakers of state secrets; they esteeming secrecy a divine thing. But now such honor God has put upon all his saints, as to make them lords and nobles, and the only privy statesmen in the court of heaven. The highest honor and glory that earthly princes can put upon their subjects is to communicate to them their greatest secrets. Now this high honor and glory the King of kings has put upon his people; "For his secrets are with those who fear him, and he will show them his covenant." It was a high honor to Elisha, 2 Kings 6:12, that he could tell the secrets that were spoken in the king's bedchamber. Oh! what an honor must it then be for the saints to know the secrets that are spoken in the presence-chamber of the King of kings!

Now I appeal to the very consciences of all who fear the Lord, whether it be not a just, equal, righteous, and necessary thing, that the people of God should freely and fully lay open all the secrets of their hearts before the Lord, who has thus highly honored them, as to reveal the secrets of his providence, kingdom, and favor to them? Yes, I appeal to all serious and sincere Christians, whether it be not against the light and law of nature, and against the law of love, and law of friendship, to be reserved and close, yes, to hide our secrets from him who reveals his greatest and our choicest secrets to us? And if it is, why then do not you in secret lay open all your secret sins, and secret wants, and secret desires, secret fears, etc., to him who sees in secret? You know all secrets are to be communicated only in secret. None but fools will communicate secrets upon a stage, or before many. But,

[13.] Thirteenthly, Consider, **that in times of great straits and trials, in times of great afflictions and persecutions, private prayer is the Christian's food and drink**; it is his chief city of refuge; it is his shelter and hiding-place in a stormy day. When the saints have been driven by violent persecutions into holes, and caves, and dens, and deserts, and howling wildernesses, private prayer has been their food and drink, and Christ their only refuge. [Heb 11:37-38; Rev 12:6; Psalm 102:6-14]

When Esau came forth with hostile intentions against **Jacob**, secret prayer was Jacob's refuge: Gen 32, "Then Jacob prayed, 'O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper.'" Promises in private must be prayed over. God loves to be pleaded with upon his own word, when he and his people are alone. "Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children;" or upon the children, meaning he will put all to death. Some look upon the words to be a metaphor taken from fowlers, who kill and take away the young and the mothers together, contrary to that old law, Deut 22:6. Others say it is a phrase that does most lively represent the tenderness of a mother, who, seeing her children in distress, spares not her own body nor life, to hazard it for her children's preservation, by interposing herself, even to be massacred together with and upon them, Hos 10:14. When Jacob, and all that was near and dear unto him, were in eminent danger of being cut off by Esau, and those men of blood that were with him, he betakes himself to private prayer as his only city of refuge against the rage and malice of the mighty.

And so when **Jeremiah** was in a solitary and loathsome dungeon, private prayer was his food and drink, it was his only city of refuge: Jer 33:1-3, "While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the Lord came to him a second time: "This is what the Lord says, he who made the earth, the Lord who formed it and established it--the Lord is his name: 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'" When Jeremiah was in a lonesome, loathsome prison, God encourages him by private prayer, to seek for further discoveries and revelations of those choice and singular favors, which in future times he purposed to confer upon his people.

So 2 Chron 33:11-13, "So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his

plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God." When Manasseh was in fetters in his enemy's country, when he was stripped of all his princely glory, and led captive into Babylon, he betakes himself to private prayer as his only city of refuge; and by this means he prevails with God for his restoration to his crown and kingdom.

Private prayer is a city of refuge that no power nor policy, no craft nor cruelty, no violence nor force, is ever able to take by surprise. Though the joint prayers of the people of God together were often obstructed and hindered in the times of the ten persecutions—yet they were never able to obstruct or hinder secret prayer, private prayer. When men and devils have done their worst, every Christian will be able to maintain his private prayer with heaven. Private prayer will shelter a Christian against all the national, domestic, and personal storms and tempests that may threaten him. When a man is lying upon a sickbed alone, or when a man is in prison alone, or when a man is with Job left upon the ash-heap alone, or when a man is with John banished for the testimony of Jesus into this or that island alone—oh then private prayer will be his food and drink, his shelter, his hiding-place, his heaven. When all other trades fail, this trade of private prayer will hold good. But,

[14.] Fourteenthly, **Consider that God is omnipresent.** [Jer 16:17; Job 34:21; Prov 5:21; Jer 32:19; Rev 2:23; Lam 3:66] We cannot get into any blind hole, or dark corner, or secret place—but the Lord has an eye there, the Lord will keep us company there: Matt 6:6, And your Father, who sees in secret, shall reward you openly." So Matt 6:18. There is not the darkest, dirtiest hole in the world into which a saint creeps—but God has a favorable eye there. God never lacks an **eye** to see our secret tears, nor an **ear** to hear our secret cries and groans, nor a **heart** to grant our secret requests; and therefore we ought to pour out our souls to him in secret: Psalm 38:9, "Lord! all my desire is before you; and my groaning is not hidden from you." Though our private desires are ever so confused, though our private requests are ever so broken, and though our private groanings are ever so much hidden from men—yet God eyes them all, God records them all, and God puts them all upon the record-file of heaven, and will one day crown them with glorious answers and returns.

We cannot sigh out a prayer in secret—but he sees us; we cannot lift up our eyes to him at midnight—but he observes us. The eye which God has upon his people when they are in secret, is such a special tender eye of love, as opens his ear, his heart, and his hand, for their good: 1 Pet 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers;" or, as the Greek has it, "his ears are unto their prayers. If their prayers are so faint, that they cannot reach up as high as heaven, then God will bow the heavens and come down to their prayers." God's eye is upon every secret sigh, and every secret groan, and every secret tear, and every secret desire, and every secret pant of love, and every secret breathing of soul, and every secret melting and working of heart; all which should encourage us to be much in secret duties, in closet services. As a Christian is never out of the reach of God's hand, so he is never out of the view of God's eye.

If a Christian cannot hide himself from the sun, which is God's minister of light, how impossible will it be to hide himself from him whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun? In every private duty, a Christian is still under the eye of God's omniscience. When we are in the darkest hole, God has windows into our bosoms, and observes all the secret actings of our inward man, 1 Tim 2:8. The eye of God is not confined to this place or that, to this company or that; God has an eye upon his people as well when they are alone, as when they are among a multitude; as well when they are in a corner, as when they are in a crowd. Diana's temple was burnt down when she was busy at Alexander's birth, and could not be at two places at one time. But God is present both in paradise and in the wilderness, both in the family and in the closet, both in public and in private at the same time. God is an omnipresent God. As he is not confined to one place, so he is excluded from no place: Jer 23:24, "Can any man hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, says the Lord?"

Prov 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," or, "contemplating the evil and the good," as the Hebrew may be read. Now, to contemplate, is more than simply to behold; for contemplation adds to a simple apprehension, a deeper degree of knowledge, entering into the very inside of a matter; and so indeed does

God discern the very inward intentions of the heart, and the most secret motions of the spirit. God is an infinite and immense being, whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere. Now, if our God is omnipresent, then wherever we are, our God is present with us: if we are in prison alone with Joseph, our God is present with us there; or if we are in exile alone with David, our God is present with us there; or if we are alone in our closets, our God is present with us there. God sees us in secret; and therefore let us seek his face in secret. Though heaven is God's palace—yet it is not his prison. But,

[15.] Fifteenthly, **He who willingly neglects private prayer shall certainly be neglected in his public prayer**; he who will not call upon God in secret shall find by sad experience that God will neither hear him nor regard him in public. Neglect of private duties is the great reason why the hearts of many are so dead and dull, so formal and carnal, so barren and unfruitful under public ordinances. Oh that Christians would seriously lay this to heart! Certainly, that man or woman's heart is best in public—who is most frequent in private. They make most yearnings in public ordinances—who are most conscientiously exercised in closet duties. No man's graces rise so high, nor any man's experiences rise so high, nor any man's communion with God rises so high, nor any man's divine enjoyments rise so high, nor any man's springs of comfort rise so high, nor any man's hopes rise so high, nor any man's parts and gifts rise so high, etc., as theirs do, who conscientiously wait upon God in their closets before they wait upon him in the assembly of his people; and who when they return from public ordinances retire into their closets and look up to heaven for a blessing upon the public means.

It is certain that private duties fit the soul for public ordinances. He who makes conscience to wait upon God in private, shall find by experience that God will wonderfully bless public ordinances to him, Mic 2:7. My design is not to set up one ordinance of God above another, nor to cause one ordinance of God to clash with another—the public with the private, or the private with the public—but that every ordinance may have its proper place and right, the desires of my soul being to prize every ordinance, and to praise every ordinance, and to practice every ordinance, and to improve every ordinance, and to bless the Lord for

every ordinance. But as ever you would see the beauty and glory of God in his sanctuary, as ever you would have public ordinances to be lovely and lively to your souls, as ever you would have your drooping spirits revived, and your languishing souls refreshed, and your weak graces strengthened, and your strong corruptions weakened under public ordinances—be more careful and conscientious in the performance of closet duties, Psalm 63:1-3.

Oh how strong in grace! Oh how victorious over sin! Oh how dead to the world! Oh how alive to Christ! Oh how fit to live! Oh how prepared to die! might many a Christian have been, had they been but more frequent, serious, and conscientious in the discharge of closet-duties. Not but that I think there is a truth in that saying of Bede—the word church being rightly understood—namely, That he who comes not willingly to church shall one day go unwillingly to hell. But,

[16.] Sixteenthly, Consider, **the times wherein we live call aloud for secret prayer**. Hell seems to be broken loose, and men turned into incarnate devils; soul-damning wickednesses walk up and down the streets with a whore's forehead, without the least check or restraint: Jer 3:3, "You have a whore's forehead, you refuse to be ashamed!" Jer 6:15, "Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush!" They had sinned away shame, instead of being ashamed of sin. *Continuance in sin* had quite banished all sense of sin and all shame for sin, so that they would not allow nature to draw her *veil of blushing* before their great abominations. They were like to Caligula, a wicked emperor, who used to say of himself, that he loved nothing better about himself—than that he could not be ashamed. The same words are repeated in Jer 8:12. How applicable these scriptures are to the present time I will leave the prudent reader to judge.

But what does the prophet do, now that they were as bold in sin and as shameless as so many harlots? That you may see in Jer 13:17: "But if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places," or secrecies, "for your pride; and my eye shall weep sore" (Hebrew, weeping weep, or shedding tears shed tears; the doubling of the verb notes the bitter and grievous lamentation that he should make for them), "and run down with tears." Now that they were grown up to that height of sin and wickedness,

that that they were above all shame and blushing; now they were grown so proud, so hardened, so obstinate, so rebellious, so bent on self destruction; that no mercies could melt them or allure them, nor any threatenings nor judgments could in any way terrify them or stop them. The prophet goes into a corner, he retires himself into the most secret places, and there he weeps bitterly, there he weeps as if he were resolved to drown himself in his own tears!

When the springs of sorrow rise high, a Christian turns his back upon company, and retires himself into places of greatest privacy, that so he may the more freely and the more fully vent his sorrow and grief before the Lord. Ah, England, England! what pride, luxury, lasciviousness, licentiousness, wantonness, drunkenness, cruelties, injustice, oppressions, fornications, adulteries, falsehoods, hypocrisy, bribery, atheism, horrid blasphemies, and hellish impieties, are now to be found rampant in the midst of you! Ah, England! England! how are the Lord's pure ordinances despised, Scriptures rejected, the Spirit resisted and derided, the righteous reviled, wickedness tolerated, and Christ many thousand times in a day by these cursed practices, afresh crucified! Ah, England! England! were our forefathers alive, how sadly would they blush to see such a horrid degenerate posterity as is to be found in the midst of you! How is our forefathers' generosity converted into riot and luxury, their frugality into pride and prodigality, their simplicity into subtlety, their sincerity into hypocrisy, their charity into cruelty, their chastity into fornication and wantonness, their sobriety into drunkenness, their plain-dealing into fraud, their works of compassion into works of oppression, and their love to the people of God into an utter enmity against the people of God! etc.

And what is the voice of all these crying abominations—but every Christian to his closet, every Christian to his closet, and there weep, with weeping Jeremiah, bitterly, for all these great abominations whereby God is dishonored openly. Oh weep in secret for their sins who openly glory in their sins, which should be their greatest shame. Oh blush in secret for those who are past all blushing for their sins; for who knows but that the whole land may fare the better for the sakes of a few who are mourners in secret? But however it goes with the nation, such as mourn in secret for

the abominations of the times, may be confident that when sweeping judgments shall come upon the land, the Lord will hide them in the secret chambers of his providence, he will set a secret mark of deliverance upon their foreheads, who mourn in secret for the crying sins of the present day, as he did upon theirs in Ezek 9:4-6.

[17.] Seventeenthly, **Consider that the near and dear relations that you stand in to the Lord, calls aloud for secret prayer.**

You are his **friends**. John 15:14-15. Now, a true friend loves to visit his friend when he may find him alone, and enjoy privacy with him. A true friend loves to pour out his heart into the bosom of his friend when he has him in a corner, or in the field, or under a hedge.

You are his **favorites**; and what favorite is there that hides his secret from his prince? Do not all favorites open their hearts to their princes when they are alone?

You are his **children**; and what sincere child is there, who does not delight to be much with his father when he is alone, when nobody is by? Oh, how free and open are children when they have their parents alone, beyond what they are when company is present.

You are the **spouse** of Christ; and what spouse, what wife is there that does not love to be much with her husband when he is alone? True lovers are always best when they are most alone: "I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me. Come, my lover, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages. Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom—there I will give you my love." Song of Songs 7:10-12. The spouse of Christ is very desirous to enjoy his company in the fields, that so, having her beloved alone, she might the more freely and the more secretly open her heart to him. As wives, when they are walking alone with their husbands in the fields, are more free to open their minds and the secrets of their hearts, than they are when in their houses with their children and servants about them—so it was with the spouse.

They have very great cause to question whether they are Christ's real

friends, favorites, children, spouse—who seldom or never converse with Christ in their closets, who are shy of Christ when they are alone, who never accustom themselves to give Christ secret visits. What Delilah said to Samson, Judg 16:15, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you have not told me wherein your great strength lies" (the discovery of which secret at last cost him his life).

That, Christ may say to very many in our days: "How can you say you love me, when you never acquaint me with your secrets? How can you say you love me—when you never bestow any private visits upon me? How can you say that you are my friends, my faithful friends, my bosom-friends—when you never in private unbosom yourselves to me? How can you say that you are my favorites—when you can spend one week after another, and one month after another, and yet not let me know one of all your secrets; when every day you might have my ear in secret if you pleased? How can you say that you are my children—and yet be so closed and reserved as you are? How can you say you are my spouse—and yet never take any delight to open your hearts, your secrets, to me when I am alone?"

What Alexander said to one who was of his name—but a coward, 'Either lay down the name of Alexander—or fight like Alexander,' that I say to you, Either be frequent in closet duties, as becomes a Christian—or else lay down the name of a Christian; either unbosom yourselves in secret to Christ, as friends, favorites, children, spouses—or else lay down these names, etc. But,

[18.] Eighteenthly, Consider that **God has set a special mark of favor, honor, and observation, upon those who have prayed in secret.** As you may see in Moses, Exod 34:28; and in Abraham, Gen 21:33; and in Isaac, Gen 24:63; and in Jacob, Gen 32:24-29; and in David, Psalm 55:16-17; and in Daniel, Dan 6:10; and in Paul, Acts 9:11; and in Cornelius, Acts 10:2,4; and in Peter, Acts 10:9-12; and in Manasseh, 2 Chron 33:18-19. God has put all these worthies who have exercised themselves in secret prayer upon record, to their everlasting fame and honor. The Persians seldom write their king's name but in letters of gold. God has written, as I may say, their names in letters of gold—who have made conscience of exercising themselves in secret

prayer. The precious names of those who have addicted themselves to closet-duties are as statues of gold, which the polluted breath of men can no ways stain; they are like so many shining suns which no clouds can darken; they are like so many sparkling diamonds which shine brightest in the darkest night.

A Christian can never get into a hole, a corner, a closet, to pour out his soul before the Lord—but the Lord makes an honorable observation of him, and sets a secret mark of favor upon him, Ezek 9:4-6. And how should this provoke all Christians to be much with God alone! The Romans were very ambitious of obtaining a great name, a great report, in this world; and why should not Christians be as divinely ambitious of obtaining a good name, a good report, in the eternal world? Heb 11:39. A good name is always better than a great name, and a name in heaven is infinitely better than a thousand names on earth; and the way to both these is to be much with God in secret. But,

[19.] Nineteenthly, **Consider that Satan is a very great enemy to secret prayer.** Secret prayer is a scourge, a hell to Satan. Every secret prayer adds to the devil's torment, and every secret sigh adds to his torment, and every secret groan adds to his torment, and every secret tear adds to his torment. When a child of God is on his knees in his secret addresses to God, oh the strange thoughts, the earthly thoughts, the wandering thoughts, the distracted thoughts, the hideous thoughts, the blasphemous thoughts—which Satan often injects into his soul! and all to draw him off from secret prayer. Sometimes he tells the soul, that it is in vain to seek God in secret; and at other times he tells the soul it is too late to seek God in secret; for the door of mercy is shut, and there is no hope, no help for the soul. Sometimes he tells the soul that it is enough to seek God in public; and at other times he tells the soul, that it is futile to seek the Lord in private. Sometimes he tells the soul, that it is not elected, and therefore all his secret prayers shall be rejected; and at other times he tells the soul, that it is sealed up unto the day of wrath, and therefore a secret prayer can never reverse that seal; and all this to dishearten and discourage a poor Christian in his secret retirements.

Sometimes Satan will object to a poor Christian the greatness of his sins; and at other times he will object against a Christian the greatness of his

unworthiness. Sometimes he will object against a Christian his lack of grace; and at other times he will object against a Christian his lack of gifts to manage such a duty as it should be managed. Sometimes he will object against a Christian his former straitenedness in secret prayer; and at other times he will object against a Christian the small yearnings that he makes of secret prayer; and all to work the soul out of love with secret prayer; yes, to work the soul to loathe secret prayer! So deadly an enemy is Satan to secret prayer. Oh, the strange fears, fancies, and conceits, that Satan often raises in the spirits of Christians, when they are alone with God in a corner; and all to work them to cast off private prayer. It is none of Satan's least designs to interrupt a Christian in his private communion with God.

Satan watches all a Christian's motions; so that he cannot turn into his closet, nor creep into any hole to converse privately with his God—but he follows him hard at heels, and will be still injecting one thing or another into the soul, or else objecting one thing or another against the soul. A Christian is as well able to count the stars of heaven, and to number the sands of the sea—as he is able to number up the various devices and sleights which Satan uses to obstruct the soul's private addresses to God. Now from that great opposition that Satan makes against private prayer, a Christian may safely conclude these five things:

(1.) First, **The excellency of private prayer.** Certainly if it were not an excellent thing for a man to be in secret with God, Satan would never make such head against it.

(2.) Secondly, **The necessity of private prayer.** The more necessary any duty is to the internal and eternal welfare of a Christian, the more Satan will bestir himself to blunt a Christian's spirit in that duty.

(3.) Thirdly, **The utility or profit that attends a conscientious discharge of private prayer.** Where we are likely to gain most, there Satan loves to oppose most.

(4.) Fourthly, **The prevalency of private prayer.** If there were not a kind of omnipotency in it, if it were not able to do wonders in heaven, and wonders on earth, and wonders in the hearts and lives and ways of men—

Satan would never have such an aching tooth against it as he has.

(5.) Fifthly, That **God is highly honored by private prayer**, or else Satan would never be so greatly enraged against it. This is certain. The more glory God has from any service we do, the more Satan will strive by all his wiles and sleights to take us, either off from that service, or so to interrupt us in that service—that God may have no honor, nor we no good, nor himself no hurt, by our private retirements. But, in the

[20.] Twentieth and last place, Consider, that **you alone are the Lord's secret ones, his hidden ones**; and therefore if you do not apply yourselves to private prayer, and to your secret retirements, that you may enjoy God in a corner—none will. It is only God's hidden ones, his secret ones—who are spirited, principled, and prepared to wait on God in secret: Exod 19:5, "Then shall you be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." The Hebrew word signifies God's special jewels, God's proper ones, or God's secret ones—that he keeps in store for himself, and for his own special service and use. Princes lock up with their own hands in secret their most precious and costly jewels; and so does God his: Psalm 135:4, "For the Lord has chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure," or for his secret gem. Psalm 83:3, "They have taken crafty counsel against your people, and consulted against your hidden ones," or your secret ones; so called partly because God hides them in the secret of his tabernacle, Psalm 31:20, and partly because God sets as high a value upon them as men do upon their hidden treasure, their secret treasure; yes, he makes more reckoning of them than he does of all the world besides!

And so the world shall know, when God shall arise to revenge the wrongs and injuries that has been done to his secret ones. Neither are there any on earth who know so much of the secrets of his love, of the secrets of his counsels, of the secrets of his purposes, of the secrets of his heart—as his secret ones do. Neither are there any in all the world, who are under those secret influences, those secret assistances, those secret blessings, those secret anointings of the Spirit—as his secret ones are under. And therefore, no wonder if God calls them again, and again, and again, his secret ones.

Now, what can be more lovely or more desirable than to see their natures and their practices to answer to their names? They are the Lord's secret ones, his hidden ones; and therefore how highly does it concern them to be much with God in secret, and to hide themselves with God in a corner! Shall Nabal's nature and practice answer to his name? 1 Sam 25:25, "I know Nabal is a wicked and ill-tempered man; please don't pay any attention to him. He is a fool, just as his name suggests." Nabal signifies a fool, a sot, a churl; it notes one that is void of wisdom and goodness; it signifies one whose mind, reason, judgment, and understanding is withered and decayed. Now, if you look into the story, you shall find that as face answers to face, so Nabal's nature and practice did echo and answer to his name. And why then, should not our natures and practices answer to our names also? We are called the Lord's secret ones, his hidden ones; and how highly therefore does it concern us to be much with God in secret! Why should there be any jarring or discord between our names and our practices?

It is observable that the practice and conduct of other saints have been answerable to their names. **Isaac** signifies laughter, and Isaac was a gracious son, a dutiful son, a son who kept clear of those abominations with which many of the patriarchs had defiled themselves, a son who proved matter of joy and laughter to his father and mother all their days. So **Josiah** signifies "the fire of the Lord;" and his practice did answer to his name. Witness the pulling down of Jeroboam's altar, and his burning of the vessels that were made for Baal, and his pulling down the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had set up, and his burning the grove at the brook Kedron, and his grinding it to powder, and his breaking down the houses of the Sodomites, and his defiling of the high places where the priests had burnt incense, and his breaking in pieces the images, and cutting down the groves, and filling their places with the bones of men, etc., 1 Kings 13:2; 2 Kings 23:4-21. So **Joshua** signifies "a Savior;" and his practice was answerable to his name. Though he could not save his people from their sins—yet he often saved them from their sufferings. Great and many were the deliverances, the salvations, that were instrumentally brought about by Joshua, as all know who have read the book of Joshua. So **John** signifies "gracious," and his practice was answerable to his name. He was so gracious in his teachings and in his

walkings that he gained favor in the very eyes of his enemies.

By all these instances, and by many more that might be given, you see that other saints' practices have answered to their names. Therefore, let everyone of us see that our practices do also answer to our names, that as we are called the Lord's secret ones, so we may be much with God in secret, that so there may be a blessed harmony between our names and our practices; and we may never repent another day that we have been called God's secret ones, his "hidden ones," but yet never made conscience of maintaining secret communion with God in our closets. And thus you see that there are no less than twenty arguments to persuade you to closet prayer—and to maintain private communion with God in a corner.

### **To Those Who are Strangers to Closet Prayer**

Is it so that closet prayer or private prayer is such an indispensable duty, that Christ himself has laid upon all who are not willing to lie under the woeful brand of being hypocrites? Then **this doctrine condemns five sorts of people.**

(1.) First, It looks sourly and sadly upon all **those who put off secret prayer, private prayer, until they are moved to it by the Spirit;** for by this sad delusion many have been kept from secret prayer many weeks, many months; oh that I might not say, many years! Though it be a very at season to pray when the Spirit moves us to pray—yet it is not the only season to pray, Isa 62:1; Psalm 123:1-2; Gal 4:6. He who makes piety his business, will pray as daily for daily grace as he does pray daily for daily bread: Luke 18:1, "And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." 1 Thess 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." Eph 6:18, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." Rom 12:12, "Persistent in prayer." The Greek is a metaphor taken from hunting dogs, which never give up the

chase until they have got their prey. A Christian must not only pray—but hold on in prayer, until he has got the heavenly prize.

We are always **needing**; and therefore we had need be praying always. The **world** is always alluring; and therefore we had need be always a-praying. **Satan** is always a-tempting; and therefore we had need be always a-praying. We are always **a-sinning**; and therefore we had need be always a-praying. We are in **dangers** always; and therefore we had need be praying always. We are **dying** always, 1 Cor 15:31; and therefore we had need be praying always. Man's whole life is but a lingering death; man no sooner begins to live—but he begins to die. When one was asked why he prayed six times a day, he only gave this answer, "I must die, I must die, I must die." Dying Christians had need be praying Christians, and those who are always a-dying had need be always a-praying. Certainly prayerless families are graceless families, and prayerless people are graceless people, Jer 10:25. It were better ten thousand times that we had never been born into the world, than that we should go stillborn out of the world. But,

(2.) Secondly, This truth looks sourly and sadly upon **those who pray not at all**, neither in their families nor in their closets. Among all God's children, there is not one possessed with a dumb devil. Prayerless people are forsaken of God, blinded by Satan, hardened in sin, and every breath they draw liable to all temporal, spiritual, and eternal judgments. Prayer is that part of natural worship due to God, which none will deny but stark atheists, Psalm 14:1.

It is observable that among the worst of men, Turks, and the worst of Turks, the Moors, it is usual with them to pray six times a day.

- (1.) Before the daybreak they pray for day.
- (2.) When it is day, they give thanks for day.
- (3.) At noon, they thank God for half the day past.
- (4.) After that, they pray for a good sunset.

(5.) And after that, they thank God for the day past.

And then, sixthly and lastly, they pray for a good night after their day.

Certainly these very Moors will one day rise in judgment against them who cast off prayer, who live in a total neglect of prayer, who allow so many suns and moons to rise and set upon their heads without any solemn calling upon God. I have read of a man who, being sick, and afraid of death, fell to his prayers; and, to move God to hear him, told him "that he was no common beggar, and that he had never troubled him with his prayers before; and if he would but hear him at that time, he would never trouble him again." This world is full of such profane, blasphemous, atheistical wretches. But,

(3.) Thirdly, This truth looks very sourly and sadly upon **such who are all for public prayer—but never regard private prayer**; who are all for going up to the temple—but never care for going into their closets. This is most palpable hypocrisy, for a man to be very zealous for public prayer—but very cold and careless as to private prayer. He who pretends conscience in the one, and makes no conscience of the other, is an hypocrite indeed, Matt 23:5, and Matt 6:1-2,5. And the devil knows well enough how to make his markets of all such hypocrites that are all for the prayers of the church—but total Gallios as to private prayer, Acts 18:17. Such as perform all their private devotion in the church—but not in the chamber, do put too great a slight upon the authority of Christ, who says, "When you pray, enter into your chamber." He does not say, "When you pray, go to the church," but, "When you pray, go into your chamber." But,

(4.) Fourthly, This truth looks sadly and sourly upon such who in their closets **pray with a loud clamorous voice**. A Christian should shut both the door of his closet and the door of his lips so close, that none should hear without what he says within. "Enter into your closet," says Christ, "and when you have shut your door, pray." But what need a man shut his closet door, if he may pray with a clamorous voice, if he makes such a noise as all in the street or all in the house may hear him? The hen, when she lays her eggs, gets into a hole, a corner; but then she makes such a noise with her cackling, that she tells all in the house where she is, and about what she is. Such Christians who in their closets do imitate the

hen, do rather pray to be seen, heard, and observed by men, than out of any noble design to glorify God, or to pour out their souls before him who sees in secret.

Sometimes children, when they are vexed, or afraid of the rod, will run behind the door, or get into a dark hole, and there they will lie crying, and sighing, and sobbing, that all the house may know where they are. Oh it is a childish thing so to cry, and sigh, and sob in our closets, as to tell all in the house where we are, and about what work we are. Well! Christians, for an effectual redress of this evil, frequently and seriously consider of these five things.

[1.] First, That **God sees in secret.**

[2.] Secondly, That **God has a quick ear, and is taken more with the voice of the heart, than he is with the clamor of the mouth.** God can easily hear the most secret breathings of your soul. God is more curious in observing the messages delivered by the heart, than he is those who are only delivered by the mouth. He who prays aloud in private, seems to tell others, that God does not understand the secret desires, and thoughts, and workings of his people's hearts.

[3.] Thirdly, **It is not fit, it is not convenient nor expedient, that any should be acquainted with our secret prayers—but God and our own souls.** Now it is as much our duty to look to what is expedient, as it is to look to what is lawful, 2 Cor 8:10; 1 Cor 6:12, "All things are lawful unto me—but all things are not expedient." So 1 Cor 10:23, "All things are lawful for me—but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me—but all things edify not." Now it is so far from being expedient, that it is very high folly for men to lay open their secret infirmities unto others, that will rather deride them, than lift up a prayer for them.

[4.] Fourthly, **Loud prayers may be a hindrance and disturbance to others,** who may be busied near us.

[5.] Fifthly and lastly, **Hannah prayed and yet spoke never a word. Her heart was full—but her voice was not heard,** 1 Sam 1:11.

Moses prays and cries, and yet lets fall never a word: Exod 14:15, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Why do you cry unto me?" Moses did not cry with any audible voice—but with inward sighs, and secret breathings, and wrestlings of soul; and these inward and secret cries, which made no noise, carried the day with God; for Moses is heard and answered, and his people are delivered. Oh the prevalency of those prayers which make no noise in the ears of others!

[5.] Fifthly and lastly, This truth looks sourly and sadly upon **those who do all they can to hinder and discourage others from this duty of duties, private prayer**; and that either by deriding or vilifying of the duty, or else by denying of it to be a duty, or else by their daily neglect of this duty, or else by denying those who are under them, time and opportunity for the discharge of this duty. In Matt 23:13, you have a woe pronounced against those who will neither go to heaven themselves, nor allow others to go, who are willing to enter into an everlasting rest. And so I say—Woe to those parents, and woe to those husbands, and woe to those masters and mistresses—who will neither pray in their closets themselves, nor allow their children, nor their wives, nor their servants, to pour out their souls before the Lord in a corner. O sirs! how will you answer this to your consciences, when you shall lie upon a dying bed! And how will you answer it to the Judge of all the world, when you shall stand before a judgment seat? Certainly all their sins, and all their neglects, and all their spiritual losses, that might have been prevented by their secret prayers, by their closet communion with God—will one day be charged upon your account! And oh that you were all so wise as to lay these things so to heart, that you may never hinder any who are under your care or charge, from private prayer any more!

## **Six Objections Stated and Answered**

**Objection 1.** But many will be ready to object and say, We have much business upon our hands, and we cannot spare time for private prayer;

we have so much to do in our shops, and in our warehouses, and abroad with others, that we cannot spare time to wait upon the Lord in our closets.

Now to this objection I shall give these eight answers, that this objection may never have a resurrection more in any of your hearts.

**(1.)** First, What are all those businesses that are upon your hands, compared to those businesses and weighty affairs, which did lie upon the hands of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Daniel, Elijah, Nehemiah, Peter, Cornelius? and yet you find all these worthies exercising themselves in private prayers. And the king is commanded every day to read some part of God's word, notwithstanding all his great and weighty employments, Deut 17:18-20. Now certainly, sirs, your great businesses are little more than ciphers compared with theirs. And if there were any on earth that might have pleaded an exemption from private prayer, upon the account of business, of much business, of great business, these might have done it; but they were more honest and more noble than to neglect so choice a duty, upon the account of much business. These brave hearts made all their public employments stoop to private prayer; they would never allow their public employments to tread private prayer under foot. But,

**(2.)** Secondly, I answer, No men's outward affairs did ever more prosper than theirs did, who devoted themselves to private prayer, notwithstanding their many and great worldly employments. Witness the prosperity and outward flourishing estates of Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Nehemiah, David, Daniel, and Cornelius. These were much with God in their closets, and God blessed their blessings to them, Gen 22:17. How did their cups overflow! What signal favors did God heap upon them and theirs! No families have been so prospered, protected, and graced, as theirs who have maintained secret communion with God in a corner, 1 Chron 11:9. Private prayer does best expedite our temporal affairs. He who prays well in his closet, shall be sure to speed well in his shop, or at his plough, or whatever else he turns his hand unto, 1 Tim 4:8. It is true, Abimelech was rich as well as Abraham, and so was Laban rich as well as Jacob, and Saul was a king as well as David, and Julian was an emperor as well as Constantine; but it was only Abraham, Jacob, David, and

Constantine, who had their blessings blessed unto them; all the rest had their blessings cursed unto them, Prov 3:33; Mal 2:2. They had many good things—but they had not "the good will of him who dwelt in the bush" with what they had; and therefore all their mercies were but *bitter sweets* unto them.

Though all the sons of Jacob returned laden from Egypt with grain and money in their sacks—yet Benjamin alone had the silver cup in the mouth of his sack. So though the men of the world have their grain and their money, etc.—yet it is only God's Benjamins who have the silver cup, the grace cup, the cup of blessing, as the apostle calls it, for their portion, 1 Cor 10:16. O sirs! as ever you would prosper and flourish in the world; as ever you would have your water turned into wine, your temporal mercies into spiritual benefits, be much with God in your closets. But,

**(3.)** Thirdly, I answer, It is ten to one but that the objector every day fools away, or trifles away, or idles away, or sins away—one hour in each day—and why then should he object the lack of time? There are none that toil and moil and busy themselves most in their worldly employments—but do spend an hour or more in a day to little or no purpose, either in gazing about, or in dallying, or toying, or trifling, or in telling of stories, or in busying themselves in other men's matters, or in idle visits, or in smoking the pipe, etc. And why then should not these men redeem an hour's time in a day for private prayer, out of that time which they usually spend so vainly and idly? Can you, notwithstanding all your great worldly employments, find an hour in the day to catch flies in, as Domitian the emperor did? and to play the fool in? and cannot you find an hour in the day to wait on God in your closets?

There were three special faults whereof Cato professed himself to have seriously repented: one was, traveling by water when he might have gone by land; another was, trusting a secret in a woman's bosom; but the main was, spending an hour unprofitably. This heathen will one day rise up in judgment against them who, notwithstanding their great employments, spend many hours in a week unprofitably, and yet cry out that they have so much to do on earth, that they have no time to look up to heaven.

It was a base and sordid spirit in that King Sardanapalus, who spent

much of his time among women in knitting and playing cards, which should have been spent in ruling and governing his kingdom. So it is a base sordid spirit in any, to spend any of their time in toying and trifling, and then to cry out, that they have so much business to do in the world, that they have no time for closet-prayer, they have no time to serve God, nor to save their own precious and immortal souls. But,

**(4.)** Fourthly, I answer, No man dares plead this objection before the Lord Jesus in the great day of account, Eccles 11:9; Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10. And why then should any man be so childish and foolish, so ignorant and impudent to plead that before men, which is not pleadable before the judgment-seat of Christ. O sirs! as you love your souls, and as you would be happy forever, never put off your own consciences nor others' with any pleas, arguments, or objections now, that you dare not own and stand by, when you shall lie upon a dying bed, and when you shall appear before the whole court of heaven, etc. In the great day of account, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, and God shall call men to a reckoning before angels, men, and devils, for the neglect of private prayer; all guilty people will be found speechless: there will not be a man or woman found, who shall dare to stand up and say, "Lord, I would have waited upon you in my closet—but that I had so much business to do in the world, that I had no time to enjoy secret communion with you in a corner." It is the greatest wisdom in the world, to plead nothing by way of excuse in this our day, that we dare not plead in the great day. But,

**(5.)** Fifthly, I answer, That it is our duty to redeem time from all our secular businesses for private prayer. All sorts of Christians, whether bond or free, rich or poor, high or low, superiors or inferiors, are expressly charged by God to redeem time for prayer, for private prayer, as well as for other holy exercises: Col 4:2-3, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains"

But here some may object and say, We have so much business to do in the world that we have no time for prayer. The apostle answers this objection in Col 4:5, "Walk in wisdom towards those who are without, redeeming

the time." So Eph 5:16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil;" or buying out, or gaining the time. The words are a metaphor taken from merchants, who prefer the least profit that may be gained, before their pleasures or delights, closely following their business while the markets are at best. A merchant when he comes to a mart or fair, takes the first season and opportunity of buying his commodities; he puts it not off to the hazard of an evening, or to the next morning, in hopes to have a better bargain—but he improves the present season, and buys before the market is over.

Others carry the words thus: "Purchase at any rate all occasions and opportunities of doing good, that so you may thereby, in some sort, redeem that precious jewel of time which you have formerly lost." As travelers who have loitered by the way, or stayed long at their inn, when they find night coming upon them, they mend their pace, and go as many miles in an hour as they did before in many. Though time let slip is physically irrecoverable—yet in a moral consideration, it is accounted as regained, when men double their care, diligence, and endeavors to redeem it. **The best Christian is he who is the greatest monopolizer of time for private prayer.** No Christian can be compared to him who redeems time from his worldly occasions and his lawful comforts and recreations, to be with God in his closet.

David having tasted of the sweetness, goodness, and graciousness of God, cannot keep his bed—but will borrow some time from his sleep, that he might take some turns in paradise, and pour out his soul in prayer and praises, when no eye was open to see him, nor no ear open to hear him—but all were asleep round about him, Psalm 63:6. Psalm 119:62, "At midnight will I arise to give thanks unto you." Psalm 119:147, "I rise before dawn and cry for help." David was up and at private prayer before daybreak. David was no sluggish Christian, no slothful Christian, no lazy Christian; he was accustomed to be in his closet when others were sleeping in their beds. So Psalm 119:148, "My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises." So Psalm 130:6, "My soul waits for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning; I say, more than those who watch for the morning." Look! as the weary sentinel in a dark, cold, wet night, waits and peeps, and peeps

and waits for the appearance of the morning; so David did wait and peep, and peep and wait for the first and fittest season to pour out his soul before God in a corner. David would never allow his worldly business to jostle out holy exercises; he would often borrow time from the world for private prayer—but he would never borrow time from private prayer to bestow it upon the world.

Mr. Bradford, the martyr, counted that hour lost wherein he did not some good, either with his pen, tongue, or purse.

Ignatius, when he heard a clock strike, would use to say, "Now I have one hour more to answer for."

So the primitive Christians would redeem some time from their sleep, that they might be with God in their closets, as Clemens observes.

And I have read of Theodosius the emperor, that after the variety of worldly employments relating to his civil affairs in the day time were over, how he was accustomed to consecrate the greatest part of the night to the studying of the Scriptures and private prayer; to which purpose he had a lamp so artificially made, that it supplied itself with oil, that so he might no way be interrupted in his private retirements.

That time ought to be redeemed, is a lesson that has been taught by the very heathens themselves. It was the saying of Pittacus, one of the seven wise men, "Know time, lose not a minute." And so Theophrastus used to say, that "Time is of precious cost." And so Seneca: "**Time is the only thing,**" says he, "**that we can innocently be covetous of; and yet there is nothing of which many are more lavishly and profusely wasteful.**" And Chrestus always counted time so precious, that when he had misspent his time all the day, he would redeem it at night.

When Titus Vespasian, who revenged Christ's blood on Jerusalem, returned victor to Rome, remembering one night as he sat at supper with his friends, that he had done no good that day, he uttered this memorable and praiseworthy apophthegm, "My friends, I have lost a day."

Chilo, one of the seven sages, being asked what was the hardest thing in

the world to be done, answered, "To use and employ a man's time well."

Cato held, that an account must be given, not only of our labor—but also of our leisure. And Elian gives this testimony of the Lacedemonian, "that they were hugely covetous of their time, spending it all about necessary things, and allowing no citizen either to be idle or play." And, says another, "We trifle with that which is most precious, and throw away that which is our greatest interest to redeem."

Certainly, these heathens will rise in judgment, not only against Domitian the Roman emperor, who spent much of his time in killing of flies; nor only against Archimedes, who spent his time in drawing lines on the ground when his country was taken captive; nor against Artaxerxes, who spent his time in carving handles for knives; nor only against Solyman the great Turk, who spent his time in making notches of horn for bows; nor only against Eropas, a Macedonian king, who spent his time in making of lanthorns; nor only against Hyrcanus the king of Parthia who spent his time in catching of moles; but also against many Christian professors who, instead of redeeming of precious time, do trifle and fool away much of their precious time at the mirror, the comb, the lute, the violin, the pipe, or at vain sports, and foolish pastimes, or by idle jestings, immoderate sleeping, and superfluous feasting, etc. O sirs! good hours, and blessed opportunities for closet prayer, are merchandise of the highest rate and price; and therefore, whoever has a mind to be rich in grace, and to be high in glory, should buy up that merchandise, they should be still a-redeeming precious time. O sirs! we should redeem time for private prayer out of our eating time, our drinking time, our sleeping time, our buying time, our selling time, our sinning time, our sporting time, rather than neglect our closet communion with God, etc. But,

**(6.)** Sixthly, I answer, Closet prayer is either a duty or it is no duty. Now that it is a duty, I have so strongly proved, I suppose, that no man nor devil can fairly or honestly deny it to be a duty. And therefore, why do men cry out of their great business? Alas! duty must be done whatever business is left undone; duty must be done, or the man who neglects it will be undone forever. It is a vain thing to object business, when a required duty is to be performed; and, indeed, if the bare objecting of business, of much business, were enough to excuse men from duty, I am

afraid that there are but few duties of the gospel—but men would endeavor to evade under a pretense of business, of much business. He who pretends business to evade private prayer, will be as ready to pretend business to evade family prayer; and he who pretends business to evade family prayer, will be as ready to pretend business to evade public prayer.

Well, sirs! remember what became of those who excused themselves out of heaven, by their carnal apologies, and secular businesses: Luke 14:16-24. "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'" The true reason why they would not come to the supper that the King of kings had invited them to, was not because they had bought farms and oxen—but because their farms and oxen had bought them. The things of the world and their carnal relations had taken up so much room in their hearts and affections, that they had no stomach to heaven's dainties; and therefore it is observable what Christ adds at the end of the parable, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26,27. By these words, it is evident, that it was not simply the farm nor the oxen, nor the wife—but a foolish, inordinate, carnal love and esteem of these things, above better and greater blessings, that made them refuse the gracious invitation of Christ. They refused the grace and mercy of God offering in the gospel, under a pretense of worldly business; and God peremptorily concludes, that not a man of them should taste of his supper. And indeed what can be more just and righteous, than that they should never so much as taste of spiritual and eternal blessings, who prefer their earthly business before heaven's dainties; who, with the Reubenites, prefer a country commodious for the feeding of their cattle, before an interest in the land of promise.

Private prayer is a work of absolute necessity, both to the bringing of the heart into a good frame, and to the keeping of the heart in a good frame. It is of absolute necessity, both for the discovery of sin, and for the

preventing of sin, and for the embittering of sin, and for the weakening of sin, and for the purging away of sin. It is of absolute necessity, both for the discovery of grace, and for a full exercise of grace, and for an eminent increase of grace. It is of absolute necessity to arm us, both against inward and outward temptations, afflictions, and sufferings. It is of absolute necessity to fit us for all other duties and services, etc. For a man to glorify God, to save his own soul, and to further his own everlasting happiness, is a work of the greatest necessity.

Now private prayer is such a work; and therefore why should any man plead business, great business, when a work of such absolute necessity is before him? If a man's child or wife were dangerously sick, or wounded, or near to death, he would never plead, "I have business, I have a great deal of business to do, and therefore I cannot stay with my child, my wife; and I have no time to go or send to the physician," etc. Oh no! but he would rather argue thus: "It is absolutely necessary that I should look after the preservation of the life of my child, my wife, and this I will attend, whatever becomes of my business." O sirs! your souls are of greater concernment to you than the lives of all the wives and children in the world; and therefore these must be attended, these must be saved, whatever business is neglected. But,

**(7.)** Seventhly, I answer, That God did never appoint or design any man's ordinary, particular calling to thrust private prayer out of door. That it is a great sin for any professor to neglect his particular calling under any religious pretense, is evident enough by these scriptures: Exod 20:9, "Six days shall you labor, and do all your work;" 1 Cor 7:20, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called;" 2 Thess 3:10-12, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all—but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread;" 1 Thess 4:11-12, "And that you study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that you may walk honestly toward those who are outside, and that you may have lack of nothing;" Eph 4:28, "But rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing

which is good, that he may have to give to him who needs;" 1 Tim 5:8, "But if any provides not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ was a plain downright carpenter, and was laborious in that particular calling until he entered upon the public ministry, as all the ancients do agree, Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55-56. And we read also that all the patriarchs had their particular callings. Abel was a keeper of sheep, Gen 4:2; Noah was a farmer, Gen 5:29; the sons of Jacob were shepherds and keepers of cattle, Gen 46:34, etc.; and all the apostles, before they were called to the work of the ministry, had their particular callings.

By the law of Mahomet, the great Turk himself is bound to exercise some manual trade or occupation.

Solon made a law, that the son should not be bound to relieve his father when old, unless he had set himself in his youth to some occupation. And at Athens, every man gave a yearly account to the magistrate by what trade or course of life he maintained himself, which, if he could not do, he was banished. And it is by all writers condemned as a very great vanity in Dionysius, who would needs be the best poet; and Caligula, who would needs be the best orator; and in Nero, who would needs be the best fiddler; and so became the three worst princes, by minding more other men's business than their own particular calling.

But for a man to evade or neglect private prayer under pretense of his particular calling, is agreeable to no scripture, yes, it is contrary to very many scriptures, as is evident by the many arguments formerly cited. Certainly no man's calling is a calling away from God or godliness. It never entered into the heart of God that our particular callings should ever drive out of doors our general calling of Christianity. Look! as our general calling must not eat up our particular calling, so our particular calling must not eat up our general calling. Certainly our particular calling must give place to our general calling. Did not the woman of Samaria leave her waterpot, and run into the city, and say, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" John 4:28-29. Did not the shepherds leave their flocks in the field, and go to Bethlehem, and declare the good tidings of great joy that they had heard of the angel, namely, "That there was born that day, in the city of David, a

Savior, who was Christ the Lord"? Luke 2:8-21. And did not Christ commend Mary for that holy neglect of her particular calling, when she sat at his feet, and heard his word? Luke 10:38, et seq. And what do all these instances show—but that our particular callings must give the right hand to the general calling of Christianity?

Certainly the works of our general calling are far more great and glorious, more eminent and excellent, more high and noble—than the works of our particular callings are; and therefore it is much more tolerable for our general calling to borrow time from our particular calling, than it is for our particular calling to borrow time from our general calling. Certainly those men are very ignorant or very profane, who either think themselves so closely tied up to follow their particular callings six days in the week, as that they must not intermeddle with any pious services, or who think their particular callings to be a gulf or a grave designed by God to swallow up private prayer in.

God, who is the Lord of time, has reserved some part of our time to himself every day. Though the Jews were commanded to labor six days of the week—yet they were commanded also to offer up morning and evening sacrifice daily, Deut 6:6-8; Exod 29:38-39; Num 28:3. The Jews divided the day into three parts:

The first, time for prayer.

The second, time for the reading of the Scriptures.

And the third, time for the works of their lawful callings.

As bad as the Jews were—yet every day they set a part of the day apart for religious exercises. Certainly they are worse than Jews, who spend all their time about their particular callings, and shut closet-prayer quite out of doors. Certainly that man's soul is in a very ill case, who is so entangled with the incumbrances of the world, that he can spare no time for private prayer. If God is the Lord of your mercies, the Lord of your time, and the Lord of your soul, how can you, with any equity or honor, put off his service under a pretense of much business? That man is lost, that man is cursed, who can find time for anything—but none to meet with God in his

closet. That man is doubtless upon the brink of ruin, whose worldly business eats up all thoughts of God, of Christ, of heaven, of eternity, of his soul, and of his soul concernments. But,

**(8.)** Eighthly, and lastly, I answer, The more worldly business lies upon your hand, the more need have you to keep close to your closet. Much business lays a man open to many sins, and to many snares, and to many temptations. Now, the more sins, snares, and temptations a man's business lays him open to, the more need that man has to be much in private prayer, that his soul may be kept pure from sin, and that his foot may not be taken in the devil's trap, and that he may stand fast in the hour of temptation. Private prayer is so far from being a hindrance to a man's business, that it is the way of ways to bring down a blessing from heaven upon a man's business, Psalm 1:2-3; Psalm 127:1-2; Psalm 128:1-2; as the first fruits that God's people gave to him brought down a blessing from heaven upon all the rest, Deut 26:10-11. Prayer and provender never hinder a journey.

Private prayer is like to Jacob, which brought down a blessing from heaven upon all that Laban had, Gen 30:27,30. **Private prayer gives a man a sanctified use, both of all his earthly comforts, and of all his earthly business;** and this David and Daniel found by experience: and therefore it was not their great public employments which could take them off from their private duties. **Time spent in heavenly employments, is no time lost from worldly business,** Deut 28:1-8. Private prayer makes all we take in hand successful. Closet-prayer has made many rich—but it never made any man poor or beggarly in this world.

No man on earth knows what may be the emergencies, or the occurrences of a day: Prov 27:1, "Boast not yourself of tomorrow, for you know not what a day may bring forth." Every day is as it were a great-bellied day; every day is as it were with child of something—but what it will bring forth, whether a cross or a comfort, no man can tell; as while a woman is with child, no man can tell what kind of birth it will be. No man knows what mercies a day may bring forth, no man knows what miseries a day may bring forth; no man knows what good a day may bring forth, no man knows what evil a day may bring forth; no man knows what afflictions a

day may bring forth, no man knows what temptations a day may bring forth; no man knows what liberty a day may bring forth, no man knows what bonds a day may bring forth; no man knows what success a day may bring forth, no man knows what failure a day may bring forth; and therefore, a man had need be every day in his closet with God, that he may be prepared and fitted to entertain and improve all the occurrences, successes, and emergencies that may attend him in the course of his life. And let thus much suffice for answer to this first objection. But,

**Objection 2.** Secondly, Others may object and say, Sir, we grant that private prayer is an indispensable duty which lies upon the people of God; but we are servants, and we have no time that we can call our own, and our master's business is such as will not allow us any time for private prayer, and therefore we hope we may be excused.

**Solution (1.)** First, The text is all inclusive, and not limited to any sort or rank of people, whether high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, servant or master. "But you, when you pray, enter into your closet; and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret." Here are three yous—you, you, you—which are to be understood as all inclusive. You servant as well as you master, you bondman as well as you freeman, you poor man as well as you rich man, you maid as well as you mistress, you child as well as you father, you wife as well as you husband. Private prayer is an indispensable duty, which lies upon all sorts and ranks of people. A man may as well say that that pronoun *you*, that runs through the ten commandments—Exod 20:3-18, "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make unto you any engraved image. You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Six days shall you labor. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's," etc.—relates to the rich, and not to the poor, to masters and not to servants, to the free and not to those who are in bonds, etc., as he may say, that the three yous in the text relates to the rich and not to the poor, to masters and not to servants, to those who are free but not to

those who are bound; but certainly there is no man in his wits that will say so, that will affirm such a thing. Doubtless this pronoun you reaches every man, of whatever rank or place he is in this world. But,

**(2.)** Secondly, I answer, That the first, the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth answers that are given to the first objection, are here very applicable; and oh that all masters and servants were so wise, so serious, and so ingenuous, as to lay all those answers warm on their own hearts! It might be a means to prevent much sin, and to bespeak masters and mistresses to give their pious servants a little more time to lift up their hearts to Christ in a corner. But,

**(3.)** Thirdly, I answer, If you are a servant that have liberty to choose a new master, you were better remove your station than live under such a master's roof, who is such an enemy to God, to Christ, to true religion, to himself, and to the eternal welfare of your poor soul—as that he will not give you half an hour's time in a day to spend in your chamber, your closet; though the glory of God, the good of his own family, and the everlasting happiness of your own soul, is concerned in it, Psalm 84:10; Psalm 120:5. It is better for you to shift your master, than to neglect your duty: 1 Cor 7:21, Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you--although if you can gain your freedom, do so."

Laban's house was full of idols. Great houses are often so. Jacob's tent was little—but the true worship of God was in it. It is infinitely better to live in Jacob's tent, than in Laban's house. It is best being with such masters where we may have least of sin, and most of God; where we may have the most helps, the best examples, and the choicest encouragements to be holy and happy.

The pious servant should be as careful in the choice of his master, as the pious master is careful in the choice of his servant. Gracious servants are great blessings to the families where they live; and that master may well be called the unhappy master, who will rather part with a gracious servant, than spare him a little time in a day to pour out his soul before the Lord in a corner. But,

**(4.)** Fourthly, I answer, If you are a gracious servant, then you are

spirited and principled by God, to this very purpose, that you may cry, 'Abba, Father!' when you are alone, when you are in a corner, and no eye sees you—but his who sees in secret, Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Tim 1:14. If you are a gracious servant, then you have received not the spirit of the world—but the Spirit who is of God, 1 Cor 2:12. Now, he who has this tree of life, he has also the fruit that grows upon this tree: Gal 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," etc. Now, grace is called, not the works of the Spirit—but the fruits of the Spirit.

(1.) Because all grace is derived from the Spirit as the fruit is derived from the root. And,

(2.) To note the pleasantness and delightfulness of grace, for what is more pleasant and delightful than sweet and wholesome fruits? Song 4:16; Song 6:2.

(3.) To note the profit and advantage that does redound to those who have the Spirit; for as many grow rich by the fruits of their gardens and orchards, so many grow rich in grace, in holiness, in comfort, in spiritual experiences, by the fruits of the Spirit. Now why has God given you his Spirit, and why has he laid into your soul a stock of supernatural graces—but that you may be every way qualified, disposed, and fitted for private prayer, and to maintain secret communion with God in a corner?

Certainly God never gave any poor servant a talent of gifts, or a talent of grace—but in order to his driving of a secret trade heavenward.

**(5.)** Fifthly, I answer, Though king Darius had made a decree that none should ask any petition of any God or man, for thirty days, upon the penalty of being cast into the den of lions—yet Daniel, who was both a subject and a servant to king Darius, and one upon whose hands the chief and greatest affairs of the kingdom did lie, kept up his private devotions. In Dan 6:1-2, you will find that Daniel had abundance of great and weighty employments upon his hands; he was set over the whole affairs of the whole empire of Persia, and he with two other presidents, of whom himself was chief, were to receive the accounts of the whole kingdom from all those hundred and twenty princes, which in the Persian

monarchy were employed in all public businesses. And yet, notwithstanding such a multiplicity of business as lay upon his hands, and notwithstanding his servile condition—yet he was very careful to redeem time for private prayer; yes, it is very observable that the heart of Daniel, in the midst of all his mighty businesses, was so much set upon private prayer, upon his secret retirements for religious exercises, that he runs the hazard of losing all his honors, profits, pleasures, yes, and life itself, rather than he would be deprived of convenient time and opportunities to wait upon God in his chamber. Certainly Daniel will one day rise in judgment against all those subjects and servants who think to evade private prayer by their pleas of much business, and of their being servants, etc. But,

**(6.)** Sixthly, I answer, If you who are gracious servants, notwithstanding your masters' businesses, cannot redeem a little time to wrestle with God in a corner, what singular thing do you do, more than others? Do you hear? So do others. Do you read? So do others. Do you follow your masters to public prayers? So do others. Do you join with your masters in family prayers? So do others. Oh! but now gracious servants should go beyond all other servants in the world, they should do singular things for God: Matt 5:47, "What do you do, more than others?" That is, "What extraordinary thing do you do? What more ordinary than to find servants follow their masters to public prayers and to family prayers? Oh! but now to find poor servants to redeem a little time from their masters' business to pour out their souls before the Lord in a corner—this is not ordinary, yes, this is extraordinary, and this does wonderfully well befit gracious servants. Oh! that all men's servants, who are servants to the most high God, would seriously consider,

[1.] How singularly they are privileged by God above all other servants in the world. They are called, adopted, reconciled, pardoned, justified before the throne of God, which other servants are not, etc., 1 Cor 3:22-23. And why then should not such servants be singular in their services, who are so singular in their privileges?

[2.] Secondly, Gracious servants are made partakers of a more excellent nature than other servants are. 2 Pet 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be made

partakers of the divine nature." The apostle in this expression does not aim at any essential change and conversion of our substance into the nature of God and Christ—but only at the elevation and dignifying of our nature by Christ. Though that real, that near, that dear, that choice, that mysterious, that peculiar, that singular, union that Christians have with Christ, does raise them up to a higher similitude and likeness of God and Christ; yet it does not introduce any real transmutation, either of our bodies or souls, into the divine nature. It is certain that our union and communion does enjoin our affections, and brings our wills into a league of amity with Christ. To be made partaker of the divine nature notes two things, say some.

First, A fellowship with God in his holiness.

Secondly, A fellowship with God in his blessedness, namely, in the beatifical vision and brightness of glory. To be made "partakers of the divine nature," say others, is to be made partakers of those holy graces, those divine qualities, which sometimes are called, "the image of God, the likeness of God, the life of God," etc., Eph 4:24; Col 3:10, whereby we resemble God, not only as a picture does a man in outward lineaments—but as a child does his father in countenance and nature. Now, take the words which ever way you will, how highly does it concern those servants, who are made partakers of the divine nature, to do singular things for God, to do such things for God, that other servants, who are not partakers of the divine nature, have no mind, no heart, no spirit to do! yes, that they refuse and scorn to do!

[3.] Thirdly, Gracious servants are worthily descended; they have the most illustrious extraction and honorable original, 1 John 5:19; John 3:8; James 2:5.

[4.] Fourthly, Gracious servants are worthily attended, they are nobly guarded; Psalm 34:15; Heb 1:14; Deut 33:26-27; Zech 2:5.

[5.] Fifthly, Gracious servants are worthily dignified; they are dignified with the highest and most honorable titles, 1 Pet 1:2,9; Rev 1:5-6; Rev 5:10.

[6.] Sixthly, Take many things in one: gracious servants have more excellent graces, experiences, comforts, communions, promises, assurances, discoveries, hopes, helps, principles, nourishment, raiment, portion—than all other servants in the world have; and therefore God may well expect better and greater things from them, than from all other servants in the world. God may very well expect that they should do singular things for his glory, who has done such singular things for their good. Certainly God expects that gracious servants should be a-blessing of him, when other servants are a-blaspheming of him; that they should be a-magnifying of him, when other servants are a-debasing of him; that **they should be a-redeeming of precious time, when other servants are a-trifling, fooling, playing or sinning away of precious time**; that they should be a-weeping in a corner, when other servants are a-sporting and making themselves merry among their jovial companions; that they should be a-mourning in secret, when other servants are a-sinning in secret; and that they should be at their private devotion, when other servants are sleeping and sporting, etc.

Solomon, who was the wisest prince who ever sat upon a throne, and who was guided by an infallible Spirit, has delivered it for a standing maxim above two thousand years ago, "that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor," Prov 12:26. When Solomon dropped this aphorism from his royal pen, there was not a man in the world that was *legally* righteous; Adam and all his posterity being fallen from all their honor, glory, dignity, and excellency, into a most woeful gulf of sin and misery; and therefore Solomon must be understood of him who is *evangelically* righteous, Psalm 14:1-3; Rom 3:9-12; Lam 5:16. He who is evangelically righteous, be he master or servant, rich or poor, bond or free, high or low, is more excellent than his neighbor. And oh that all masters would seriously consider of this, that they may carry it no more so proudly, so loftily, so scornfully, so forwardly, so strangely, so sourly, so bitterly, so rigorously, towards their pious servants, as not to afford them a little time to pour out their souls before the Lord in a corner!

I have read of Ingo, an ancient king of the Draves and Veneds, who, making a stately feast, appointed all his pagan nobles to sit in the hall below; and at the same time commanded certain poor Christians to be

brought up into his presence-chamber, to sit with him at his table, that they might eat of his kingly cheer; at which many wondering, he told them, that he accounted Christians, though never so poor, a greater ornament at his table, and more worthy of his company, than the greatest nobles that were not converted to the Christian faith; for says he, when these pagan nobles shall he thrust down to hell, these poor Christians shall be my consorts and fellow-princes in heaven. Certainly, this noble prince will one day rise in judgment against all sour, churlish Labans, who behave so harshly and so severely towards their gracious servants, as that they will not allow them a little time to wait upon God in private devotions, Eph 6:9.

Why should not gracious masters give their gracious servants a little time for closet prayer now, considering that they are sharers with them in all the fundamental good which comes by Christ in this world; and considering that they shall be partakers with them in all the glory of another world? The poorest servant in a family has a soul more precious than heaven and earth; and the greatest work that lies upon his hand in this world, is to look to the eternal safety and security of that: for if his soul is safe, all is safe; if that is well, all is well; but if that is lost, all is lost. Every gracious servant, though he be ever so poor and illiterate—yet has he the image of God, the image of the King of kings stamped upon him; and woe to him who shall wrong, or despise, or trample upon that image! Certainly, God himself is wronged by the injury which is done to his image. The contempt and despite which is done to the image of a king, is done to the king himself; and accordingly he will revenge it.

If it was a capital crime in Tiberius his days, to carry the image of Augustus upon a ring or coin into any sordid place; what crime must it be in those masters who despise, revile, reproach, scorn, abuse, and tread under foot, such servants as have the image of the great God stamped upon their souls, and all because they look Godward, Christ-ward, heavenward, holiness-ward, duty-ward? Masters should never ridicule their servants, for their inferiority, poverty, misery, low parentage, or servile condition; but remember that these things are more the Creator's pleasure than the servant's fault, and that that God who has made the master rich and the servant poor, can as quickly make the master poor

and the servant rich, Prov 22:2; Prov 17:5. God many times puts down the mighty from their seats, and exalts those of low degree, Luke 1:52. Certainly, no master nor mistress should dare to insult or gloat over such servants as have souls as noble as their own; but they should seriously and frequently consider of Solomon's aphorism, "The righteous, though a servant," though the lowest among all the servants, "is more excellent than his neighbor," and accordingly give them a little time and liberty to converse with God in secret.

And oh, that all gracious servants would discover themselves to be more excellent than their neighbors, by making more conscience of private prayer than their neighbors do, and by being more in their closets than their neighbors are, and by delighting themselves in their secret retirements more than their neighbors will, and by redeeming some time for God, for their souls, and for eternity, more than their neighbors do. But,

**(7.)** Seventhly, I answer, That God alone, is the Lord of time. [Hab 2:8; Dan 11:27,29,35; Job 7:1; Psalm 102:13; Eccles 3:1; Dan 2:21; Isa 60:22; Job 14:14] Time is more the Lord's than it is your master's; and therefore it is no neglecting of your master's business, to take a little time daily for private prayer. Times do belong to God's providence; and as God is the God of our mercies, so he is the Lord of our times: "My times are in your hands," says David, Psalm 31:15. Not only the times of his sorrows—but also the times of his comforts; not only the times of his miseries—but also the times of his mercies; not only the times of his dangers—but also the times of his duties, were in the hands of God.

It is observable the Psalmist does not say time—but times, in the plural, to show that every point and period of time depends upon the hand of God.

That servant that borrows a little time every day to seek the face of God in a corner, borrows it rather of God than of his master; and therefore why should his master swell, or rage, or complain, considering that God never made him Lord of time? But,

**(8.)** Eighthly, I answer, That servants should rather redeem time from

their sleep, their recreations, their daily meals—than neglect closet-duty a day. And certainly those servants that, out of conscience towards God, and out of a due regard to the internal and eternal welfare of their own souls, shall every day redeem an hour's time from their sleep, or sports, or meals, to spend with God in secret, they shall find by experience that the Lord will make a few hours' sleep sweeter and better than many hours' sleep to them; and their outward sports shall be made up with inward delights; and for their common bread, God will feed them with that bread which came down from heaven.

Sirs, was not Christ his Father's servant? Isa 42:1. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my elect (or choice one), in whom my soul delights" (or is well pleased)! "I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." And did not he redeem time from his natural rest, rather than he would omit private prayer? Mark 1:35, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Christ spent the day in preaching, in healing the sick, in working of miracles; and rather than these noble works should shut out private prayer, he rises a great while before day, that he might have some time to wrestle with his Father in secret. So Luke 6:12, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." O sirs! did Christ spend whole nights in private prayer for the salvation of your souls; and will you think it much to redeem an hour's time from your natural rest to seek and to serve him in a corner, and to make sure the things of your everlasting peace?

The redeeming of time for private prayer is the redeeming of a precious treasure, which, if once lost, can never fully be recovered again. If riches should make themselves wings, and fly away, they may return again, as they did to Job; or if credit, and honor, and worldly greatness and renown, should fly away, they may return again, as they did to Nebuchadnezzar; if success, and famous victories and conquests, should make themselves wings, and fly away, they may return again, as they did to many of the Roman conquerors and others; but if time, whom the poets paint with wings, to show the volubility and swiftness of it, fly from us, it will never more return unto us!

Queen Elizabeth, on her dying bed cried out, "Call time again, call time again; a world of wealth for an inch of time!" but time past was never, nor could never be recalled.

The Egyptians drew the picture of time with three heads.

The first was of a greedy wolf gaping for time past, because it has ravenously devoured even the memory of so many things past recalling.

The second of a crowned lion roaring for time present, because it has the principality of all action, for which it calls aloud.

And the third was of a deceitful dog, fawning for time to come, because it feeds fond men with many flattering hopes, to their eternal undoing. Oh that all this might prevail with servants to redeem time for private prayer! And if my counsel might take place, I should rather advise servants to redeem some time for private prayer from their sleep or lawful recreations, or set meals, etc., than to spend in private prayer that time which their masters call their time, especially if their masters be unconverted, and in "the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;" and that for these five reasons.

[1.] First, Because this may be a means to prevent much sin on the master's side. Masters that are in their unregenerate estate are very apt to storm, and let fly against God, and Christ, and true religion, etc., when they see their servants spend that time in private prayer, or in any other pious exercise, which, according to their understanding, is their time, and ought to be wholly spent in following their businesses. Now gracious servants should have that honorable respect, and that tender affection, and that Christian compassion to their masters' souls—as to do to the utmost all that lies in them to prevent their masters from contracting guilt upon their souls, or from making work for repentance, for hell.

The Persians, the Turks, and many Indians are so compassionate, that they erect hospitals not only for lame and diseased men—but also for birds, beasts, and dogs that are either aged, starved, or hurt. Oh then, what tender compassions should gracious servants exercise towards their masters' souls, which are jewels more worth than heaven and earth! But,

[2.] Secondly, Because this may be a means to convince the judgments and consciences of their masters, that there is some worth, some excellency, some sweetness, etc., to be found in private prayer, and in other closet-duties; for when masters shall observe their servants to redeem time for closet duties, from their very sleep, recreations, dinners, suppers, they will be ready to conclude, that certainly there is more worth, more goodness, more sweetness, more excellency, more glory, more gain in closet duties, than ever they have understood, felt, or experienced, etc., and that their very poor servants are better and more righteous than themselves. Sozomen reports, that the devout life of a poor captive Christian woman, made a king and all his family embrace the faith of Jesus Christ. **Godly lives convince more than miracles themselves.**

I have read of one Pachomius, a soldier under Constantine the emperor, how that his army being almost starved for want of necessary provision, he came to a city of Christians, and they of their own charity relieved them speedily and freely; he wondering at their free and noble charity, inquired what kind of people they were whom he saw so bountiful? It was answered that they were Christians, whose profession it is to hurt no man, and do good to every man. Hereupon Pachomius, convinced of the excellency of this religion, threw away his weapons, and became a Christian, a saint. Look as husbands sometimes are won by the lives of their wives without the word, 1 Pet 3:1-2; so masters may sometimes be won by the gracious carriage and lives of their servants, without the word. The servant's redeeming of time for private duties, upon the hardest and severest terms, may be so blessed to the master, that it may issue in his conviction, conversion, and salvation. There is a *perhaps* for it; and a very *perhaps* should be a sufficient encouragement for every gracious servant to do all he can to save the soul of his master from going down into the infernal pit. But,

[3.] Thirdly, Because the servant's redeeming of time from his sleep, recreations, meals, for private prayer, will most clearly and abundantly evidence the singular love, the great delight, and the high esteem that he has of private prayer. We say those children love their books well, and delight much in learning, who will be at their books when others are gone

to their beds, and who will be at their books before others can get out of their beds. Certainly they love private prayer well, and they delight much in closet communion with God, who will be a-praying when others are a-sleeping, and who will be a-dressing their souls before God in a corner, before their mistress is a-dressing of herself at the mirror, or their fellow servants a-dressing themselves in the shop. But,

[4.] Fourthly, Because the servant's redeeming of time for private prayer, from his sleep, set meals, recreations, etc., may be of most use to other fellow servants, both to awaken them, and to convince them that the things of true religion are of the greatest and highest importance, and that there is no trade, or pleasure, or profit, compared to that private trade which is driven between God and a man's own soul; and also to keep them from trifling, or fooling away of that time, which is truly and properly their masters' time, and by the royal law of heaven ought to be spent solely and wholly in their service and business. For what sincere servant is there in the world but will argue thus? I see that such and such of my fellow servants will redeem time for private prayer, and for other closet-services, from their very sleep, meals, recreations, etc.; rather than they will borrow, or steal that time which my master says is his, etc.; and why then should I be so foolish, so brutish, so mad, to trifle, or idle, or play, or toy away that time which should be spent in my master's service, and for my master's advantage? But,

[5.] Fifthly, and lastly, Because the servant's redeeming of time for private prayer from his sleep, his meals, his recreations, etc., cannot but be infinitely pleasing to God; and that which will afford him most comfort when he comes to die. The more any poor heart acts contrary to flesh and blood, the more he pleases God; the more any poor heart denies himself, the more he pleases God; the more any poor heart acts against the stream of sinful examples, the more he pleases God; the more difficulties and discouragements a poor heart meets with in the discharge of his duty, the more love he shows to God; and the more love a poor heart shows to God, the more he pleases God: Jer 2:2-3, "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook

them." God was very highly pleased and greatly delighted with the singular love and choice affections of his people towards him, when they followed after him, and kept close to him, in that tedious and difficult passage through the waste, howling wilderness.

How all these things do weigh with that poor pious servant who redeems time for private prayer upon the hardest terms imaginable, I shall leave the sincere reader to judge. And certainly, upon a dying bed, no tongue can express, nor heart conceive—but he who feels it, the unspeakable comfort that closet-duties will afford to him who has been exercised in them, upon those hard terms that are under present consideration. But,

**(9.)** Ninthly, I answer, If you are a gracious servant, then the near and dear **relationship** which is between God and you, and the choice privileges that you are savingly interested in—calls aloud for private prayer, John 8:32-33,36. As you are your Master's servant, so you are the Lord's freeman: 1 Cor 7:22-23, "For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men"—either when they command you things forbidden by Christ, or forbid you things commanded by Christ; or when they would exercise a dominion over your faith, or a lordship over your consciences. Do not allow yourselves in spiritual things, to be brought into such bondage by any men or masters in the world, as not to use that freedom and liberty that Christ has purchased for you with his dearest blood, Gal 5:1; Col 2:20; Gal 2:4.

No servants are to serve their masters in opposition to Christ; nor are any servants to serve their masters as spiritual masters; nor are any servants to serve their masters as supreme masters—but as subordinate masters, Eph 6:5-7. And as every gracious servant is the Lord's freeman, so every gracious servant is the Lord's friend, Isa 41:8; James 2:23; John 15:13-15. And as every gracious servant is the Lord's friend, so every gracious servant is the Lord's son, Gal 4:5-6; Rom 8:16. And as every gracious servant is the Lord's son, so every gracious servant is the Lord's spouse, Hos 2:19-20; 2 Cor 11:2.

And now I appeal to the consciences of all who have tasted that the Lord

is gracious, whether the near and dear relationship which is between the Lord and pious servants does not call aloud upon them to take all opportunities and advantages that possibly they can, to pour out their souls before the Lord in secret, and to acquaint him in a corner with all their secret wants, and weaknesses, and wishes, etc.

And as gracious servants are thus nearly and dearly related to God, so gracious servants are very highly **privileged** by God. Gracious servants are as much freed from the reign of sin, the dominion of sin, and the damnatory power of sin, as gracious masters are, Rom 6:14. Gracious servants are as much freed from hell, from the curse of the law, and from the wrath of God, as their gracious masters are, Rom 8:1. Gracious servants are as much adopted, as much reconciled, as much pardoned, as much justified, and as much redeemed, as their gracious masters are, Gal 3:13. Gracious servants are as much heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, as their gracious masters are. [1 Thess 1:10; Col 3:11; Gal 5:6; Rom 8:17; Gal 6:14; 1 Pet 2:9] Gracious servants are as much a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, called out of darkness into his marvelous light, as their gracious masters are. And therefore they being all alike interested in all these great and glorious privileges which belong to saints as saints, they are, without all question, alike obliged and engaged to all those duties which lies upon saints as saints, among which private prayer is one; and therefore they are to buckle to this duty against all carnal reasons and objections whatever. But,

**(10.)** Tenthly, and lastly, I answer, that the promised **reward** in the text lies as fair and as open to the servant as to the master, to the bond as to the free, to the peasant as to the prince. Whoever prays to his heavenly Father in secret, be he high or low, rich or poor, honorable or lowly, servant or master—he shall receive an open reward. The reward in the text is not to be confined or limited to this or that sort or rank of men—but it is to be extended to all ranks and sorts of men that make conscience of private prayer, of closet duties. So Eph 6:5-8, "Servants, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your

heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free." Col 3:22-24, "Servants, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Such servants as serve their masters faithfully, cordially, and in singleness of spirit, shall receive the reward of grace and the reward of the inheritance. The lowest servant who is faithful in the service of his master, shall for a recompense receive the eternal inheritance, Rom 8:15-17. The recompense of reward in the scripture last cited is not of merit—but of mere grace, because the inheritance belongs only to children upon the account of their birth or adoption. Faithful servants shall be made sons of God, and so enjoy the heavenly inheritance. Christ is so noble a master, that he will not allow any service which has been performed to men out of conscience to his command, to pass unrewarded. Oh how much more will he recompense pious servants for those spiritual services that they perform for his sake, for his glory? God is so liberal a paymaster, that no man shall so much as shut the door, or kindle a fire upon his altar, or give a cup of cold water—one of the least, readiest, and lowest refreshments that be—but he shall be rewarded, Mal 1:10; Matt 10:42.

It is an excellent observation of Calvin, upon God's rewarding of the Rechabites' obedience, Jer 35:19, "God," says he, "often recompenses the shadows and seeming appearances of virtue, to show that delight which he takes in the ample rewards that he has reserved for true and sincere piety." Nebuchadnezzar, though a tyrant—yet being engaged in God's service against Tyre, he shall have Egypt as his pay, for his pains at Tyre, Ezek 29:18-20. It is an ancient slur and slander that has been cast upon God, as if he were an austere master, an illiberal Lord, and as if there were nothing to be gotten in his service but knocks, blows, wounds, crosses, losses, etc.; whereas he is a rewarder, not only of those who diligently seek him—but even of the very worst of men who do any service

for him, Heb 11:6.

How much will the King of kings reward all those poor pious servants of his, who do not only give to him in his members cups of cold water—but do also redeem time from their very rest, meals, and recreations, that they may have some time to seek the face of God in a corner. Certainly, there shall not be a sigh, a groan, a prayer, a tear let fall by a poor servant in a corner, which shall not be at last regarded and rewarded by the great God. Lyra says, that Mordecai waited six years, before his good service was rewarded by king Ahasuerus. It may be God may reward you sooner for all your closet services; but if he does not reward you sooner, he will certainly reward you better, he will reward you with higher honors, with greater dignities, with more glorious robes, and with a more royal crown, even an incorruptible crown, a crown of righteousness, a crown of life, a crown of glory, 1 Cor 9:29; 2 Tim 4:8; Rev 2:10; James 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4. And therefore hold on and hold out in your secret retirements. Though some may deride you, and others revile you, and your carnal masters discourage you—yet God is faithful and will certainly reward you; yes, he will openly reward you for all the secret pourings out of your souls in his bosom. But,

**Objection 3.** Some may further object and say, Oh but we cannot pray alone; we lack those gifts and endowments which others have; we are shut up and know not how to pour out our souls before God in a corner; we would willingly pray—but we lack ability to pour out our souls before the Lord in secret, etc.

**Solution 1.** God's dearest children may sometimes be shut up; they may with Zacharias, for a time, be struck dumb, and not able to speak, Luke 1:20; Psalm 77:4. "I am so troubled that I cannot speak," Psalm 38:9. "Lord, all my desire is before you: and my groaning is not hid from you." God's dearest children have sometimes been so shut up, that they have been able to say nothing, nor to do anything but groan. A child of God may sometimes meet with such a blow from God, from conscience, from Scripture, from Satan, from the world, that may for a time so astonish him, that he may not be able to speak to God, nor speak to others, nor speak to his own heart. Look! as the Holy Spirit is not always a teaching Spirit, nor always a leading Spirit, nor always a comforting Spirit, nor

always a sealing Spirit, nor always a witnessing Spirit, nor always an assuring Spirit to any of the saints; so he is not always a supplicating Spirit in any of the saints. When he is grieved, vexed, quenched, provoked—he may suspend his gracious influences, and deny the soul his assistance; and what can a Christian then say or do? But,

[2.] Secondly, I answer, You cannot pray; but can you not sigh? can you not groan? There may be the Spirit of adoption in sighs and groans, as well as in vocal prayer, Rom 8:26. The force, the virtue, the efficacy, the excellency of prayer does not consist in the number and flourish of words—but in the supernatural motions of the Spirit, in sighs, and groans, and pangs, and strong affections of heart, which are unspeakable and unutterable. Certainly, the very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of a man's soul before the Lord, though it be but in sighs, groans, and tears, 1 Sam 1:13-19. One sigh and groan from a broken heart, is better pleasing to God, than all human eloquence. But,

[3.] Thirdly, I answer, Beg of God to teach you to pray. Oh beg the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of prayer. God has promised his Holy Spirit to those who ask, Luke 11:13. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Ezek 36:26-27. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." Ezek 11:19. "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh," Zech 12:10. "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication."

Now gracious promises are God's pledges, and he loves to see his people put them to use. God expects that we should be his remembrancers, and that we should pray over his promises, Isa 62:6-7; Isa 42:25-26. When he had promised great things to his people concerning justification, sanctification, and preservation; he subjoins, "Yet, I will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it," Ezek 36:37. God looks that we should spread his gracious promises before him, as Hezekiah did Sennacherib's letter, Isa 37:14. God is never better pleased than when his people importune him in his own words, and urge him with arguments taken from his own promises. Though God is a very affectionate father, and a very liberal father—yet he is not a wasteful father, for he will never throw away his mercies on such as will not stoutly and humbly plead out his promises with him. God loves to be sought unto, both for his giving of mercies, and for his making good of precious promises.

You say you can not pray; why! can you not go into a corner, and spread the promises last cited before the Lord, and tell him how much it concerns his honor and glory, as well as your own internal and eternal good, to make good those gracious promises that he has made concerning his giving of his Spirit to those who ask him, and his putting his Spirit within them, and his pouring out a Spirit of grace and supplication upon them?

We read of Tamar, Gen 38:18,25, that when Judah her father-in-law lay with her, she took as a pledge his signet, bracelets, and staff; and afterwards, when she was in great distress, and ready to be burnt as an harlot, she then brought out her staff, and signet, and bracelets, and said, "By the man whose these are, am I with child," and thereby she saved her life. The promises of God are as so many rich mines, they are as so many choice flowers of paradise, they are the food, life, and strength of the soul. They are as a staff to support the soul, and they are as jewelry to adorn the soul, and nourishment to enrich the soul; and therefore poor sinners should bring them forth, and lay them before the Lord, and urge God with them, there being no way on earth to save a man's soul, and to prevent a burning in hell, like pleading the promises. Concerning precious promises, let me give you these eight hints.

[1.] First, That they are truly propounded and stated by God, Mark 10:30.

[2.] Secondly, That they shall certainly be performed, 2 Cor 1:20, they being all made in and through Christ. They are made first to Christ, and then to all who have union and communion with him.

Sirtorius, says Plutarch, paid what he promised with mere fair words; but God pays with performance. Men many times say and unsay; they often eat their words as soon as they have spoken them; but God will never eat the words that are gone out of his mouth: Isa 46:10-11, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: yes, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass: I have purposed it, I will also do it."

[3.] Thirdly, That they all issue from free grace, from special love, from divine goodness, Hos 14:4.

[4.] Fourthly, That they are all as unchangeable as he is, who made them, Jer 31:3.

[5.] Fifthly, That they are all bottomed and founded upon the truth, faithfulness, and all-sufficiency of God, Mal 3:6.

[6.] Sixthly, That they are pledges of great things that God will do for his people in time, Heb 13:5.

[7.] Seventhly, That they are most sure and certain evidences of divine favor, and a declaration of the heart and goodwill of God to his poor people, Heb 6:12; Num 23:19.

[8.] Eighthly, That they are the price of Christ's blood.

Now how should all these things encourage poor souls to be still a-pressing of God with his promises. But,

[4.] Fourthly, You say you cannot pray, etc. Oh that you would leave off objecting, and fall upon praying. If you cannot pray as you **would**, nor as you **should**, pray as well as you **can**. Joseph's brethren stood so long dallying, and delaying, and trifling out the time, that, having a journey to go to buy grain, they might have bought and returned twice before they

went and bought once. When Elijah called Elisha, he must first go bid his father and mother farewell, before he could follow the prophet, 1 Kings 19:20. O friends! take heed of dallying, delaying, trifling, and going about the bush, when you should be a-falling upon the work of prayer. What though with Hannah you can but weep out a prayer, or with Moses stammer out a prayer, or with Hezekiah chatter out a prayer—yet do as well as you can, and you shall find acceptance with God: 2 Cor 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not."

The *publican's prayer* had not much rhetoric or eloquence in it, "God be merciful to me a sinner," Luke 18:13, and yet God accepted it. He prayed much, though he spoke little, and God did not turn a deaf ear upon him. That God who once accepted a handful of meal for a sacrifice, and a grip of goat's hair for an oblation, and the poor widow's two mites—as if they had been two million; will certainly accept of what you are able to do, though you do fall short, yes, much short, of what you ought to do, Lev 2:1-2, and Lev 6:15; Luke 21:3. "Lord," says Luther, "you command me to pray. I cannot pray as I would—yet I will obey; for though my prayer is not acceptable—yet your own commandment is acceptable to you." If weak Christians would but put forth in prayer that little strength they have, God would quickly renew their spiritual strength; he would certainly carry them on from strength to strength; he would still, by secret assistances and secret influences, help them on in their heavenly trade, Isa 49:20-22; Psalm 84:7.

As a loving and caring father will take his little child in his arms, and carry him on in his way homeward, when his strength begins to fail him, and he can walk no further, and the way proves dirty, slippery, or uneven; so does God by his: Hos 11:3, "I taught Ephraim also to walk" (as a nurse does the infant), "taking them by their arm." When God's poor children come to a foul way, or a rough place, he takes them up in his own arms, and helps them over the quagmire of crosses, and the difficulties of duties, and over all that straitness, and narrowness, and weakness of spirit which attends them in their closet performances.

It is observable, that when the king of Israel was to shoot the arrow, he did put his hand upon the bow, and Elisha did put his hand upon the

king's hand, 2 Kings 13:16. So when we go into our closets, we are to put up our hand, and then the Spirit of God likewise will put his hand upon our hand, he will put his strength to our strength, or rather to our weakness: Rom 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities." The Greek word properly signifies such a help, as when another man of strength and ability steps in to sustain the burden which lies upon our shoulders, be it a log, or a piece of timber, setting his shoulders under it, to lift up, and bear part of it with us; or to help us as the nurse helps her little child, upholding it by the sleeve. When a poor Christian sets himself to closet prayer, or to mourn, or to believe, or to obey, etc.; then the Spirit comes in with new help, and new influences, and new assistances, and so carries him on in all these noble services.

That child that does but stammer at first, in time will speak plainly and fluently. Oh how many Christians are there, who now can pray with much freedom, liberty, and fluency, who at first could only sigh out a prayer, or stammer out a prayer, or weep out a prayer! You say you cannot pray—but did you but stir up yourself to obey that command, Matt 6:6, as well as you can, you do not know but that a power may go forth with the command, that may enable you to act suitable to the command. In Matt 9:1-9, Christ bid the palsied man rise and walk: "Take up your bed, and go unto your house." The palsy man might have objected, "Alas! I am carried by four men, I am not able to stir a limb, much less to rise—but least of all to take up my bed and walk, etc." Oh but he rouses up himself as well as he could, and a power went forth with the command, which enabled him to do what was commanded.

So in Matthew 12:10-14, there was a poor man who had a withered hand, and Christ commands him to stretch forth his hand; he might have replied, "My hand is withered, and if I might be given a million worlds to stretch it forth, I could not stretch it forth; yes, if my very life, if my very salvation did lie upon stretching forth my withered arm, I could not stretch it forth." Oh! but he throws by all such pleas, and complies with Christ's command as well as he could, and a power went forth and healed his hand.

O sirs! if you would but pray in your closets as well as you can, you do not know but that such a power and virtue might flow from Christ into your

hearts, as might carry you on in your closet-duties, beyond expectation, even to admiration; others have found it so, and why not you, why not you? Well! remember, that God is no curious nor critical observer of the poor expressions which fall from his poor children when they are in their closet-duties; he is such a Father as is very well pleased with the broken expressions and flawed stammerings of his people when they pray. It is not a flood of words, nor studied notions, nor seraphical expressions, nor elegant phrases in prayer—which takes the ear, or which delights the heart of God, or which opens the gates of glory, or which brings down the best of blessings upon the soul; but uprightness, holiness, heavenliness, spiritualness, and brokenness of heart: these are the things that make a conquest upon God, and bring most benefit to the soul. But,

(5.) Fifthly, You say you cannot pray—but if you are a child of God, you have the Spirit of God—and the Spirit of God is a Spirit of prayer and supplication. That all the children of God have the Spirit of God is most evident in the blessed Scriptures. Take these for a taste: Zech 12:10, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication." Rom 8:15, "You have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." 1 Cor 2:12, "We have received, not the spirit of the world—but the Spirit who is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Thess 4:8, "Who has given unto us his Holy Spirit." 1 John 3:4, "Hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us." 1 John 4:13, "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

That all the children of God have the Spirit of God, may be further made evident by an induction of these seven particulars.

[1.] First, They are all **SANCTIFIED** by the Spirit: 1 Cor 6:11, "You are sanctified by the Spirit of our God." I do not say, that they are all equally sanctified by the Spirit—but I say they are all really sanctified by the Spirit. Though all the servants of Christ have their talents—yet all have not their ten talents, nor all have not their five talents, nor all have not their two talents; some have only their one talent, Matt 25:15. Though Benjamin's portion was five times as much as his brethren's portion—yet everyone of his brethren had their portion, Gen 43:32-34. So, though

some Christians have five times more measure of the Spirit, and greater measures of light, of love, of holiness, of heavenly-mindedness, etc., than others have—yet every Christian has some measure of the Spirit, and some measure of grace and holiness, etc. Though some are babes in Christ, and others are children in Christ, though some are young men in Christ, and others old men in Christ—yet everyone of them is born of the Spirit of Christ, 1 Pet 2:2; 1 John 2:12-14; John 3:8. Though none of the people of God in this life have the Spirit in perfection—yet every one of them have so much of the Spirit as will bring him to salvation. Every Christian has so much of the Spirit as will bring Christ and his soul together; and therefore without any question, every Christian has so much of the Spirit, as will at last bring heaven and his soul together.

[2.] Secondly, They are all **LED** by the Spirit: Rom 8:14, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God." Every child of God has a twofold guide: the word without, and the Spirit within, Isa 30:20-21. How the Spirit leads by the rule of the word, and how he leads to God, and leads to Christ, and leads to truth, and leads to righteousness, and leads to holiness, and leads to happiness, I shall not now undertake to show, Prov 6:22; Eph 5:9.

[3.] Thirdly, They are all **UPHELD** and **STRENGTHENED** by the Spirit: Psalm 51:12, "Uphold me with your free Spirit;" or underprop me or sustain me, as the Hebrew has it, with your free, voluntary Spirit; or, as the Greek renders it, with your noble, princely Spirit. So Eph 3:16, "To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." By the inner man, some understand the regenerate part of man; others, by the inner man, do understand the soul with all its noble faculties and motions. Take the words which way you will, it is certain that all the spiritual might and strength that a Christian has, he has it from the Holy Spirit. Though the Spirit strengthens every Christian in the inner man—yet I do not say that the Spirit strengthens every Christian alike in the inward man. Some have stronger corruptions to subdue than others, and more violent temptations to withstand than others, and greater difficulties to wrestle with than others, and choicer mercies to improve than others, and higher and harder pious duties to manage than others, and accordingly they are more strengthened in the inner man than others.

[4.] Fourthly, They are all **PARTAKERS** of the first fruits of the Spirit: Rom 8:23, "We ourselves have the first fruits of the Spirit," which are but as a handful of corn in respect of the whole crop. All the grace and all the holiness which we have from the regenerating Spirit at first conversion is but a drop to that sea, a mite to those talents, which we shall receive in the life to come, 2 Cor 1:22.

[5.] Fifthly, They are all **TAUGHT** by the Spirit, John 14:26. "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things," Isa 59:21. This promise primarily belongs to the apostles. Secondarily, to all believers. Though these words were spoken at first to the apostles only—yet they were not spoken of the apostles only Isa 54:13, "And all your children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of your children." In these words there are three things promised to the **apostles**:

First, Immediate illumination by the Spirit of God.

Secondly, A full knowledge of all those truths belonging to their apostolical office, and that were necessary for them at that juncture of time.

Thirdly, Absolute infallibility as to matter of doctrine.

There are also three things promised to all **believers**:

First, Mediate illumination, teaching truths by the Spirit of truth, in the use of the means of grace.

Secondly, Knowledge of all truth necessary to salvation.

Thirdly, Infallibility too, so far forth as they adhere and keep close to the Spirit's teaching in the word.

Philo says that the primitive Christians were called tillers, because, as farmers till their fields and fertilize their grounds, so did they teach their families and nurture their children and servants with good instructions. Oh, what choice teachings of the Spirit were these primitive Christians under, who made it so much their business, their work, to teach those

who were under their charge, 1 Thess 4:9; 2 Cor 3:8. So 1 John 2:27, "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him." Not that we know all things simply, or that we need not a ministry to teach and instruct us; but he speaks comparatively: you shall not be so helped by any instructions without the Spirit, as with the Spirit. The Spirit shall declare the truth as it is in Jesus more clearly, more freely, more particularly, more certainly, more universally, more effectually, than any other is able to do. [1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 4:1; John 16:25; Isa 48:17; Eccles 11:5] The Spirit, this holy unction, shall teach the saints all things; not all things knowable, for that is impossible for finite creatures to attain unto. Who knows the motions of the heavens, the influences of the stars, the nature of the creatures, or how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child? Who knows the reason why the river Nilus should overflow in the summer, when waters are at the lowest; or why the loadstone should draw iron to it, or incline to the pole star?

Pliny tells us of one that spent fifty-eight years in learning about the nature of the bee, and yet had not fully attained to it. How is it possible, then, for the wisest naturalist to enter into the deep things of God?

Paul, who learned his divinity among the angels, and who had the Holy Spirit for his immediate teacher, tells us plainly that "he knew but *in part*," 1 Cor 13:9-11; and oh then, how little a part of that part do we know! But the Spirit teaches the saints all things; that is,

First, He teaches them all things needful for the salvation of their souls, all things necessary to bring them to heaven, John 17:3.

Secondly, All things needful to life and godliness, 2 Pet 1:3.

Thirdly, All things needful to their places, callings, sexes, ages, and conditions.

Fourthly, All things needful for you to know to preserve you in the truth, and to preserve you from being deluded and seduced by those false teachers of whom he speaks, 1 John 2:10,19,22-23,26. And certainly this

is the main thing that John hints at in that expression. The "all things" spoken of in 1 John 2:27, according to the ordinary Scripture style, must necessarily be interpreted only of all those things which are there spoken of But,

[6.] Sixthly, They are all **COMFORTED** by the Spirit: [John 14:16,26; John 15:26, and John 16:7] Acts 9:31, They walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit;" Rom 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink—but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." 1 Thess 1:6, "And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit." Not that all Christians have always actual comfort, actual joy. Oh no! For as the air is sometimes clear and sometimes cloudy, and as the sea is sometimes ebbing and sometimes flowing; so the comforts and joys of the people of God are sometimes ebbing and sometimes flowing, sometimes clear and sometimes cloudy.

Hudson the martyr, and having prayed earnestly, was comforted immediately, and suffered valiantly.

So Mr. Glover the martyr, as he was going to the stake he looked back, and cried out to his friend, "He is come, he is come," meaning the Comforter, and so he laid down his life with joy.

Rachel wept, and would not be comforted; she gave so much way to weeping, that she would not give the least way to comfort; and so it is many times with the choicest saints, "My soul refused to be comforted," Psalm 77:2. It is not my purpose at present to insist on the several ways whereby the people of God refuse comfort, and fall short of those strong consolations which God is willing that they should receive. The sun may operate where it does not shine, and a man may be in a state of salvation, and yet lack consolation; a man may fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his servant, and yet walk in darkness and see no light, Isa 50:10. There is no Christian but may sometimes have trouble in his conscience, and grief in his heart, and tears in his eyes, and fears and questionings in his soul—whether God is his Father, and whether Christ is his redeemer, and whether mercy belongs to him, yes, whether any promise in the book of God belongs to him, etc.

Joy and comfort are those dainties, those *sweets* of heaven, which God does not every day feast his people with, Psalm 30:6-7; every day is not a wedding day, nor is every day a harvest day, nor is every day a summer day. The fatted calf is not killed every day, nor are the robe and the ring put on every day; nor is every day a festival day or a dancing day, Luke 15:22-23; Eccles 3:4; Rom 12:15. As there is a time to sing, so there is a time to sigh; as there is a time to laugh, so there is a time to weep; and as there is a time to dance, so there is a time to mourn. **All tears will never be totally wiped from our eyes, until all sin is totally taken out of our hearts.**

But notwithstanding all this—yet gracious souls have always sure and choice grounds of consolation; they have the promises, they have the "first fruits of the Spirit," they have union with Christ, and they have right to eternal life—though they have not always sensible comforts. The children of God have always cause to exercise faith and hope in God in their darkest condition, though they have not always actual joy and consolation, Job 13:15; Psalm 42:5. *The Comforter always abides with the saints—though he does not always actually comfort the saints*, John 1:16. The Spirit many times carries on his sanctifying work in the soul—when he does not carry on his comforting work in the soul; the Spirit many times acts in a way of humiliation—when he does not act in a way of consolation; the Spirit many times fills the soul with godly sorrow—when he does not fill the soul with holy joy. The actings of the Spirit, as to his comforting work, are all of his own sovereign will and pleasure; and therefore he may abide in the soul when he does not actually comfort the soul. But,

[7.] Seventhly, The people of God, first or last, are **SEALED** by the Spirit: Eph 1:13, "In whom, after you believed, you were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise." The nature of sealing consists in the imparting of the image or character of the seal, to the thing sealed. To seal a thing is to stamp the character of the seal on it. Now, the Spirit of God does really and effectually communicate the image of God to us, which image consists in righteousness and true holiness. Then are we truly sealed by the Spirit of God when the Holy Spirit stamps the image of grace and holiness so obviously, so evidently upon the soul, as that the soul sees it, feels it, and

can run and read it; then the soul is sealed by the Holy Spirit. So Eph 4:30, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." The person of the Holy Spirit is here set forth in the Greek with a very great energy, such as our tongue is not able fully to express.

Here are three words, that have three articles, every word his several article by itself; *the* Spirit, not *a* Spirit; and not holy—but *the holy*; nor of God—but of that God: 2 Cor 1:22, "Who has also sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts." In these scriptures you see that the Spirit is a seal. Now, a seal among men is,

First, For secrecy.

Secondly, For distinction.

Thirdly, For authority.

Fourthly, For certainty. A writing sealed is authentic; and for ensuring.

In the three texts last cited, if you compare them together, you may observe these six things:

First, The person sealing, and that is, the Father.

Secondly, In whom, in Christ.

Thirdly, With what seal, the Spirit of promise. Where are all the persons in the Trinity making us sure of our inheritance.

Fourthly, When, after you believed.

Fifthly, The end, which is twofold:

(1.) Subordinate, and that is the certainty of our salvation;

(2.) Ultimate, and that is, the praise of his glory.

Sixthly, The time, how long this seal and earnest shall assure us, and that

is, "until we have the complete possession of what it is in pledge."

To prevent mistakes and disputes about the sealings of the Spirit on the one hand; and to support, comfort, and encourage the poor people of God on the other hand, let me briefly hint at **the Spirit's special sealing times**.

[1.] First, CONVERSION times are often the Spirit's sealing times, Luke 15:22-23. Upon the prodigal's return, the fatted calf is killed, and the best robe is put upon his back, and the ring is put upon his hand, and shoes on his feet. Some by the **robe** understand the righteousness of Christ. And by the **ring**, some understand the pledges of God's love, rings being given as pledges of love; and by the ring others understand the seal of God's Holy Spirit, men using the seal with their rings. Among the Romans the ring was a sign of virtue, honor, and nobility, whereby those who wore them were distinguished from the common people.

I think the main thing intended by the robe and the ring is, to show us, that God sometimes upon the sinner's conversion and returning to him, is graciously pleased to give him some choice manifestations of his gracious pleasure and goodwill, and to seal up to him his everlasting love and favor. And hence it comes to pass that some that are but babes in Christ, 1 Pet 2:2-3; 1 John 2:12-14, are so diligent and active in religious duties, and so conscientious and dexterous in the exercise of their graces. At first conversion, God helps some of his people to read their own names written in legible letters in the book of life, Acts 9:3-6. No sooner are some converted—but the Spirit stamps his seal upon them.

[2.] Secondly, BELIEVING times are sealing times, Eph 1:13. When they were in the very exercise of their faith, when they were acting of their faith, for so much the original imports, the Spirit came and sealed them up to the day of redemption, Rom 15:13; 1 Pet 1:8. He who honors Christ by frequent actings of faith on him, him will Christ honor, by setting his seal and mark upon him.

[3.] Thirdly, HUMBLING times, mourning times, are sealing times. When a holy man was asked, which were the joyfulest days, the comfortablest days, that ever he enjoyed, he answered—his mourning

days. His mourning days were his joyfulest days; and therefore he cried out, "Oh give me my mourning days, give me my mourning days; for they were my joyfulest days." Those were days wherein God sealed up his everlasting love to his soul, Job 22:29; Isa 29:19. When the prodigal had greatly humbled himself before his father, then the best robe and ring were put upon him, Luke 15:17-24. There are none who long for the sealings of the Spirit like humble souls; nor any set so high a price upon the sealings of the Spirit, as humble souls; nor any make so choice an improvement of the sealings of the Spirit, as humble souls. And therefore when men's hearts are humble and low, the Spirit comes and sets the secret-seal of heaven upon them.

[4.] Fourthly, SIN-KILLING, sin-mortifying, sin-subduing times, are the Spirit's sealing times; Rev 2:17, "To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, that no man knows, but he who receives it."

God will give to the victorious Christian a secret love-token, whereby his soul may rest assured of the unspeakable love of God, and of its freedom from condemnation. White stones were of very great use among the Romans, and among the Athenians, and served to acquit the accused in courts of justice. When malefactors were accused, arraigned, and condemned in their courts, they gave them a black stone in token of condemnation; but when they were acquitted, they gave them white stones, in token of absolution; and to this practice the Holy Spirit seems to allude. He who is victorious over his lusts shall have a new name, "which is better than the names of sons and daughters," Isa 56:5; and he shall have the pardon of his sins written in clear letters upon the white stone, so that he may run and read his absolution. The victorious Christian shall have assurance of the full discharge of all his sins, he shall have a clear evidence of his justification, and a blessed assurance of his eternal election; all which are hidden and mysterious things, to all but those who have experienced and tasted what these sweet meats of heaven mean, 1 John 1:7.

Among the Romans there were solemn feasts held in honor of those who were victorious in their sacred games. Now those who were to be admitted to those feasts were accustomed to have their names written on

white shells, and white stones, and by these tickets they were admitted. Now some think the Holy Spirit alludes to this practice, and so would hint to us a secret mark whereby victorious Christians may be known, and admitted as bidden guests to the heavenly banquet of the hidden, manna, according to Rev 19:9. O sirs! when predominate lusts are brought under, when bosom-sins lie slain in the soul—then the Spirit comes and seals up love, and life, and glory to the soul.

[5.] Fifthly, SUFFERING times are sealing times; Acts 7:55-56,59-60; Rev 1:9-10; 2 Cor 4:15-17. The primitive Christians found them so, and the suffering saints in the Marian days found them so. [Acts 5:40-42; Psalm 71:20-21; and Psalm 94:19; Rev 1:9-10] When the furnace is seven times hotter than ordinary, the Spirit of the Lord comes and seals up a man's pardon in his bosom, and his peace with God, and his title to heaven. When the world frowns most—then God smiles most; when the world puts their iron chains upon the saints' legs—then God puts his golden chains about the saints' necks; when the world puts a bitter cup into one hand—then the Lord puts a cup of consolation into the other hand; when the world cries out, "Crucify them, crucify them!"—then commonly they hear that sweet voice from heaven, "These are my beloved ones, in whom I am well pleased."

Blessed Bradford looked upon his sufferings as an evidence to him that he was in the right way to heaven. And says Ignatius, "It is better for me to be a martyr than to be a monarch."

[6.] Sixthly, SELF-DENYING times are the Spirit's sealing times, Matt 19:27-29. "If anyone wants to be My follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." Mark 8:34

He must deny **sinful** self, which takes in a man's lusts.

He must deny **natural** self, which takes in a man's arts, parts, gifts, and reason.

He must deny **religious** self, which takes in all a man's religious duties and services, whether ordinary or extraordinary.

He must deny **moral** self, which includes a freedom from gross, heinous, enormous wickednesses; and a fair, sweet, harmless behavior towards men.

He must deny **relative** self, which takes in our nearest and dearest relations in the flesh; as wife, children, father, mother, brothers, sisters, etc., Psalm 45:7-11.

Now when a man comes thus universally to deny himself for Christ's sake, and the gospel's sake, and religion's sake, then the Spirit of the Lord comes and seals him up unto the day of redemption. This is a truth confirmed by the experiences of many martyrs now in heaven, and by the testimony of many Christians still alive.

[7.] Seventhly, SACRAMENT times are sealing times. In that "feast of fat things," God by his Spirit seals up his love to his people, and his covenant to his people, and pardon of sin to his people, and heaven and happiness to his people. There are many precious souls who have found Christ in this ordinance, and when they could not find him in other ordinances, though they have sought him sorrowingly. In this ordinance many a distressed soul has been strengthened, comforted and sealed.

I might give you many instances. Take one for all. There was a gracious woman, who, after God had filled her soul with comfort, and sealed up his everlasting love to her, fell under former fears and trouble of spirit, and being at the Lord's supper, a little before the bread was administered to her, Satan seemed to appear to her, and told her that she should not presume to eat; but at that very nick of time, the Lord was pleased to bring into her mind that passage in the Canticles, "Eat, O my friend," Song 5:1. But notwithstanding this, Satan still continued terrifying of her, and when she had eaten, he told her that she should not drink; but then the Lord brought that second clause of the verse to her remembrance, "Drink, yes drink abundantly" (or, "be drunk," as the Hebrew has it) "my beloved" (or, "my loves," as the Hebrew has it;—all faithful souls are Christ's loves), and so she drank also, and presently was filled with such unspeakable joys, that she hardly knew how she got home; which soul-ravishing joys continued for a two weeks after, and filled her mouth with songs of praise, so that she could neither sleep nor eat, more than she

forced herself to do out of conscience of duty. At the fortnight's end, when God was pleased to abate her measure of joy, she came to a settled peace of conscience, and assurance of the love of God; so that for twenty years after, she had not so much as a cloud upon her spirit, or the least questioning of her interest in Christ. But,

[8.] Eighthly, When God calls his people to some great and noble WORK, when he puts them upon some high services, some difficult duties, some holy and eminent employments—then his Spirit comes and sets his seal upon them: Jer 1:5, "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you: and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you to be a prophet unto the nations." The Lord sending the prophet Jeremiah to denounce most dreadful judgments against a rebellious people, an impudent brazen-faced nation, he assures him of his eternal election, and of his choice presence, and singular assistance in that work that he set him about, Jer 1:8,17-19. Thus the Lord dealt with Peter, James, and John, Matt 17:1-6, and thus be dealt with Paul, Acts 9:1-23.

[9.] Ninthly, When they are taken up into more than ordinary COMMUNION with God—then is the Spirit's sealing time. When was it that the spouse cried out, "My beloved is mine, and I am his!" but when Christ brought her to his banqueting house, and his banner over her was love? Song 2:16; Song 2:3-6, compared, etc.

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, When Christians give themselves up to PRIVATE PRAYER, when Christians are more than ordinarily exercised in secret prayer, in closet duties—then the Spirit comes and seals up the covenant and the love of the Father to them. When Daniel had been wrestling and weeping, and weeping and wrestling all day long with God in his closet, then the angel tells him, "that he was a man greatly beloved of God." Dan 9:20-23.

There was a gracious woman who, after much frequenting of sermons, and walking in the ways of the Lord, fell into great desertions; but being in secret prayer, God came in with abundance of light and comfort, sealing up to her soul that part of his covenant, namely, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them: and

they shall be my people, and I will be their God," Ezek 11:19-20.

And thus I have given you a brief account of the Spirit's special sealing times. Now mark, this seal God sets upon all his wares, upon all his adopted children; for sooner or later, all of God's children are sealed with this seal. God sets his seal of regeneration, he stamps his image of holiness upon all his people, to difference and distinguish them from all profane, immoral, and hypocritical people in the world, John 3:3; 2 Thess 2:13; Heb 12:14. Doubtless the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, imprinting the likeness and lineaments of God's image of righteousness and holiness upon man, as a seal or signet does leave an impression and stamp of its likeness upon the thing sealed, is the seal of the Spirit spoken of in Scripture: 2 Tim 2:19, "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are his. And let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

But to prevent mistakes, you must remember, that though the Spirit of the Lord, first or last, will set his seal upon every real saint—yet the impression of that seal is not alike visible in all; for some bear this impression as babes, others as men grown up to some maturity. All God's adopted children bear this impression *truly*—but none of them bear it *perfectly* in this life. Sometimes this seal of regeneration, this seal of holiness is so plain and obvious that a man may run and read it in himself and others; and at other times it is so obscure and dark, that he can hardly discern it, either in himself or others. This seal is so lively stamped on some of God's people, that it discovers itself very visibly, eminently, gloriously; but on others it is not alike visible. And thus I have made it evident by these seven particulars, that all the children of God have the Spirit of God.

Now mark, the Spirit of God, who is in all the saints, is a Spirit of prayer and supplication: Rom 8:15, "You have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." While the child is in the womb it cannot cry—but as soon as it is born it cries. While Paul did lie in the womb of his natural estate, he could not pray; but no sooner was he born of the Spirit—but the next news is, "Behold he prays!" Acts 9:11. Prayer is nothing but the turning of a man's inside outward before the Lord. **The very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of a man's soul into the bosom of**

**God.** Prayer is nothing but the breathing that out before the Lord that was first breathed into us by the Spirit of the Lord. Prayer is nothing but a choice, a free, a sweet, and familiar fellowship of the soul with God. Certainly, it is a great work of the Spirit to help the saints to pray: Gal 4:6, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." **God has no stillborn children.** The gemination, "Abba, Father," notes fiducial, filial, and vehement affection. *Abba* is an Hebrew word; *Father* is a Greek word, whereby is signified the union of the Hebrews and Grecians, or the Jews and Gentiles, in one church, "Abba, Father." In Christ the cornerstone, both Jews and Gentiles are joined.

The word *Abba*, say others, signifies father in the Hebrew tongue, which the apostle here retains, because it is a word full of affection, which young children retain almost in all languages, when they begin to speak. And he adds the word *Father*, not only to expound the same—but also the better to express the eager movings and the earnest and vehement desires and singular affections of believers, in their crying unto God; even as Christ himself redoubled the word *Father*, Mark 14:36, to the same purpose, when he was in his greatest distress. This little word *Father*, says Luther, lisped forth in prayer by a child of God, exceeds the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and all other so famed orators in the world.

It is certain that the Spirit of God helps the saints in all their communions with God, namely, in their meditations of God, in their reading and hearing of the word of God, in the communions one with another, and in all their solemn addresses to God. And as to this the apostle gives us a most special instance in that Rom 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." When we are to pray, there is in us sometimes an infirmity of ignorance, so that we know not what to pray for, either in regard of the matter or the manner. And there is in us at other times an infirmity of pride and conceitedness, so that we cannot pray with that humility and lowliness of spirit as we should, spiritual pride having puffed up our prayers. Sometimes there is in us an infirmity of deadness, dullness, drowsiness, etc., so that we cannot pray with that warmth, heat, life,

spirit, and fervency, as we should, or as we would. And at other times there is in us an infirmity of unbelief and slavish fears, so that we cannot pray with that faith and holy boldness, as befits children who draw near to a throne of grace, to a throne of mercy, etc. But now the Spirit helps these infirmities by way of instruction, prompting and teaching us what to pray for, and how we should spell our lesson; and by telling us as it were within, what we should say, and how we should sigh and groan; and by rousing and quickening, and stirring of us up to prayer, and by his singular influence and choice assistance opening and enlarging our hearts in prayer; and by his tuning the strings of our affections, he prepares us and fits us for the work of supplication.

Now, all the saints having the Spirit, and the Spirit being a Spirit of prayer and supplication, there is no reason in the world why a saint should say, 'I would pray in secret—but I cannot pray, I cannot pour out my soul nor my complaint before the Lord in a corner.'

**(6.)** Sixthly and lastly, You say you can not pray, you have not the gifts and abilities which others have. But you can manage your callings, your worldly business as well as others; and why then can you not pray as well as others? Ah, friends! did you but love private prayer as well as you love the world, and delight in private prayer as much as you delight in the world, and were your hearts as much set upon closet-prayer as they are set upon the world—you would never say you could not pray, yes, you would as quickly pray as well as others. It is not so much from lack of ability to pray in secret, that you don't pray in secret; as it is from lack of desire, and lack of heart to pray in secret, that you don't pray in secret.

Jacob's love to Rachel, and Shechem's love to Dinah, carried them through the greatest difficulties, Gen 29 and Gen 34. Were men's affections but strongly set upon private prayer, they would quickly find abilities to pray. He who sets his affections upon a virgin, though he be not learned nor eloquent, will find words enough to let her know how his heart is taken with her. The application is easy. He in Seneca complained of a thorn in his foot, when his lungs was rotten. So many complain of lack of ability to pray in their closets, when their hearts are rotten. Sirs! do but get better hearts, and then you will never say you can't pray. It is one of the saddest sights in all the world, to see men strongly parted and

gifted for all worldly businesses, to cry out that they can't pray, that they have no ability to pour out their souls before the Lord in secret. You have sufficient parts and gifts to tell men of your sins, your needs, your dangers, your difficulties, your mercies, your deliverances, your duties, your crosses, your losses, your enjoyments, your friends, your foes; and why then are you not ashamed to complain of your want of parts and gifts, to tell those very things to God in a corner, which you can tell to men even upon the housetops? etc. But,

**Objection 4.** Fourthly, Some may further object and say, God is very well acquainted with all our needs, necessities, straits, trials; and there is no moving of him to bestow any favors upon us, which he does not intend to bestow upon us, whether we pray in our closets or no; and therefore to what purpose do you press secret prayer so hard upon us? etc.

To this objection I shall give these answers.

**(1.)** First, That this objection lies as strong against family prayer and public prayer, as it does against private prayer. God knows all your needs and necessities, all your straits and trials, etc., and therefore what need you pray in your family, what need you attend public prayers in the communion of saints? There is no wringing of any mercy out of the hands of heaven, which God does not intend to bestow. This objection faces all kind of prayer, and fights against all kinds of prayer. But,

**(2.)** Secondly, I answer, That private prayer is that piece of divine worship and adoration, it is a part of that homage which we owe to God upon the account of a divine command, as I have already proved. Now, all objections must bow before the face of divine commands; as Joseph's brethren bowed before him, Gen 42:6; or as king Ahasuerus his servants bowed before Haman, Esther 3:2. Indeed, every objection that is formed up against a divine command, should fall before it, as Dagon fell before the ark, or as Goliath fell before David. He who casts off private prayer under any pretense whatever, he casts off the dominion of God, the authority of God, and this may be as much as a man's life and soul is worth. But,

**(3.)** Thirdly, I answer, **Though prayer is not the ground, nor the**

**cause of obtaining favors and mercies from God—yet it is the means, it is the silver channel, it is the golden pipe, through which the Lord is pleased to convey to his people all temporal, spiritual, and eternal favors,** [Isa 55:6; James 1:5; Isa 62:7; Psalm 22:24] Ezek 36:26-37. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." Matthew 7:7-8.

God promises to give them the cream, the choicest, the sweetest of all spiritual, eternal, and temporal blessings; but mark, Ezek 36:37, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Though God is very prompt and ready to bestow upon his people the best and the greatest of blessings—yet he will by prayer be sought unto for the actual enjoyment of them. He who has no heart to pray for a mercy, he has no ground to believe that ever God will give him the mercy. There is no receiving without asking, no finding without seeking, no opening without knocking. The threefold promise annexed to the threefold precept in Matt 7:7, should encourage all Christians to be instant, fervent, and constant in prayer. The proud beggar gets nothing from men, and the dumb sinner gets nothing of God. As there is no mercy too great for God to give, so there is no mercy too little for us to crave. Certainly that man has little worth in him who thinks any mercy not worth a seeking. But,

**(4.)** Fourthly and lastly, I answer, Every Christian should labor to enjoy his mercies in mercy; he should labor to have his blessings blessed unto him; he should labor to have "the good will of him who dwelt in the bush," with all he has, Gen 22:17. Now this is an everlasting truth, a maxim to live and die with, that **whatever mercy comes not in upon the wing of prayer is not given in mercy.** Oh, how sweet is that mercy that comes flying in upon the wing of prayer! How sweet was that water to Samson which streamed to him in the channel of private prayer, Judg 15:19; he called the name of it En-hakkore, the well of him who prayed. Samson prayed as for life, and that water that was handed to him was as sweet as life. Every mercy which is gathered by the hand of prayer is as sweet as the rose of Sharon, Song 2:1. But that mercy which comes not in at the door of prayer, comes not in at the right door; and that

mercy that comes not in at the right door will do a man no good: such mercies will make themselves wings and fly from us, Prov 23:5.

Every Christian should narrowly look that all his mercies are sanctified mercies. Now, every mercy is sanctified by the word and prayer, 1 Tim 4:4-5. Prayer prepares and fits us for mercy, and mercy for us. It is prayer which gives us a right and holy use of all our mercies. Such mercies are but great miseries, which come not in upon the wing of prayer. Prayerless men's mercies are all given in wrath; yes, their blessings are cursed unto them, Prov 3:33; Mal 2:2. Look! as every sacrifice was to be seasoned with salt, so every mercy is to be sanctified by prayer. Look! as gold sometimes is laid not only upon cloth and silks—but also upon silver itself, so prayer is that golden duty that must be laid not only upon all our natural and civil actions, as eating, drinking, buying, selling, etc.—but also upon all our silver duties, upon all our most religious and spiritual performances, as hearing, reading, meditating, conference, church-fellowship, breaking of bread, etc.

Certainly prayer is very necessary to make every providence, and every ordinance, and every mercy—to be a blessing to us. Every mercy that comes in upon the wing of private prayer is a double mercy; it is a great-bellied mercy; it is a mercy that has many mercies in the womb of it. Happy is that Christian who can lay his hand upon every mercy that he enjoys, and say of them all as once Hannah said of her Samuel: 1 Sam 1:27, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of him." But,

**Objection 5.** Fifthly, Some may further object and say, I would drive a private trade with God, I would exercise myself in secret prayer—but I lack a convenient place to retire into; I lack a private corner to unbosom my soul to my Father in, etc.

To this objection I shall give these three short answers:

**(1.)** First, I suppose this objection concerns but a few Christians in our days. That God who has given a Christ to believers does commonly give them a convenient corner to enjoy private communion with himself in, Rom 8:32. Most Christians, I am afraid, do rather lack a heart for private

prayer, than a convenient place for private prayer. What men set their hearts upon, they will find time and place to effect it, whether it be good or whether it be evil, whether it concerns temporals or spirituals, whether it concerns this world or another world, this life or eternal life. If most men would but get better hearts, they would quickly find or make convenient places for private prayer. He who has an inflamed love to God will certainly find out a corner to enjoy secret communion with God. True lovers will find out corners to enjoy one another in. How many men are there, who can easily find out private places for their dogs to lie in, and their swine to sleep in, and their horses to stand in, and their oxen to feed in, etc., who can't find out a private place to seek the face of God in! But did these men but love their God, or their souls, or private prayer, or eternity, as well or better than their beasts, they would not be such brutes but that they would quickly find out a hole, a corner, to wait upon the Lord in. But,

**(2.)** Secondly, I answer, If a Christian be on the top of a house with Peter, he may pray there; or if he be walking in the field with Isaac, he may pray there; or if he be on the mountain with Christ, he may pray there; or if he be behind the door with Paul, he may pray there; or if he be waiting at table with Nehemiah, he may secretly pray there; or if he be in a forest, he may pray there, as the primitive Christians in times of persecution did; or if he be behind a tree, he may pray there; or if he be by the sea side, he may pray there, as the apostles did. It was a choice saying of Austin, "Every saint is God's temple," says he, "and he who carries his temple about him, may go to prayer when he pleases." Some saints have never had so much of heaven brought down into their hearts, as when, they have been with God in a corner. Oh the secret manifestations of divine love, the secret kisses, the secret embraces, the secret influences, the secret communion with God, that many a precious Christian has had in the most solitary places: it may be behind the door, or behind the wall, or behind the hedge, or behind the arbor, or behind the tree, or behind the rock, or behind the bush, etc. But,

**(3.)** Thirdly, and lastly, Did you never in your unregenerate estate make use of all your wits, and parts, and utmost endeavors, to find out convenient seasons, and secret corners, and solitary places—to sin in, and

to dishonor your God in, and to undo your own and others' souls in? Yes! I remember with shame and blushing, that it was so with me when I was dead in trespasses and sins, and walked according to the course of this world, Eph 2:1-3. Oh, how much then does it concern you in your renewed, sanctified, and raised estate, to make use of all your wits, and parts, and utmost endeavors, to find out the fittest seasons, and the most secret corners, and solitary places you can, to honor your God in, and to seek the welfare of your own and others' souls in! Oh that men were but as serious, studious, and industrious, to find out convenient seasons, secret places to please and serve and glorify the Lord in—as they have been serious, studious, and industrious to find out convenient seasons, and secret places to displease and grieve the Spirit of the Lord in. But,

**Objection 6.** Sixthly, and lastly, others may further object and say, We would be often in private with God, we would give ourselves up to closet-prayer—but that we can no sooner shut our closet doors—but a multitude of infirmities, weaknesses, and vanities do face us, and rise up against us. Our **hearts** being full of distempers and follies; and our **bodies**, say some, are under great indispositions; and our **souls**, say others, are under present indispositions; and how then can we seek the face of God in a corner? how can we wrestle with God in our closets? etc.

Now, to this objection I shall give these six answers.

**(1.)** If these kinds of reasonings or arguings were sufficient to shut private prayer out of doors, where does that man or woman live, that husband or wife, that father or child, that master or servant—who would ever be found in the practice of that duty? [Psalm 40:12; Psalm 51:5; Rom 7:15,24; Psalm 130:3; 1 Cor 4:4; 2 Chron 6:36; Phil 3:12] Where is there a person under heaven whose heart is not full of infirmities, weaknesses, follies, and vanities; and whose body and soul is not too often indisposed to closet duties? 1 Kings 8:46, "If they sin against you, for there is no man who sins not, etc." Eccles 7:20, "For there is not a just man upon the earth that does good and sins not." Prov 20:9, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 9:30-31, "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shall you plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me." Job 9:20, "If I justify

myself, my own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." Psalm 143:2, "And enter not into judgment with your servant: for in your sight shall no man living be justified." James 3:2, "For in many things we all offend." 1 John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Such who affirm that men may be **fully perfect in this life**, or without sin in this life—they do affirm that which is expressly contrary to the Scriptures last cited, and to the universal experience of all saints, who daily feel and lament over that body of sin and death which they bear about with them; yes, they do affirm that which is quite contrary to the very state or constitution of all the saints in this life. In every saint, "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusts against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other, so that they cannot do the things that they would," Gal 5:17. In every Christian man there are two men, the old man and the new; the one must be daily put on, and the other daily put off, Eph 4:22-24. All saints have a law in their members rebelling against the law of their minds; so that the good that they would do, they do not; and the evil that they would not do, that they do, Rom 7:23,25, comp. They have two contrary principles in them, from whence proceeds two manner of actions, motions, and inclinations, continually opposite one to another. Hence it is that there is a continual combat in them, like the struggling of the twins in Rebekah's womb.

An absolute perfection is peculiar to the triumphant state of God's elect in heaven: heaven is the only privileged place, where no unclean thing can enter in, Rev 23:21; that is the only place where neither sin nor Satan shall ever get footing. Such as dream of an absolute perfection in this life, do confound and jumble heaven and earth together; the state of the church militant, with the state of the church triumphant, which are certainly distinct both in time and place, and in order, measure, and attendants, Heb 12:22-23. This dangerous opinion of absolute perfection in this life, shakes the very foundation of religion, and overthrows the gospel of grace; it renders the satisfaction of Christ, and all his great transactions, null and void; it tells the world that there is no need of faith, of repentance, of ordinances, of watchfulness. Those who say they have no sin, say they have no need of the blood of Christ to cleanse them from

sin, 1 John 1:7. Such as say they have no sin, say they have no need of faith to rest upon Christ for imputed righteousness to justify their persons. Such as say they have no sin, say they have no need of Christ as king to subdue their lusts; nor as priest, to expiate offences; nor as prophet, to teach and instruct them; nor as a Savior, to save them from their sins, or from wrath to come, Matt 1:21; 1 Thess 1:10. Those who have a perfect righteousness of their own, need not be indebted to Christ for his pure, perfect, spotless, matchless righteousness. Such as are without sin have no cause to repent of sin, nor yet to watch against sin. Such as are perfect cannot say, 'We are unprofitable servants.'

But are they indeed just? Then they must live by faith, Heb 2:4. Are they men, and not angels? Then they must repent, Acts 17:30, "For now he commands all men everywhere to repent." **Surely the best of men— are but men at the best.** Oh how bad those men must be, who make God himself a liar, 1 John 1:10. But if these men are absolutely perfect, how comes it to pass that they are afflicted and diseased as other men? How comes it to pass that they eat, and drink, and sleep, and buy, and sell, and die as other men? Are these things consistent with an absolute perfection? Surely not! An absolute perfection is not a step short of heaven; it is heaven on this side heaven; and those who would obtain it must step to heaven before they have it. But,

**(2.)** Secondly, I answer, That this objection lies as strong against family-prayer, and against all other kind of prayer, as it does against closet-prayer. He who shall upon any grounds make this objection a great bugbear to scare his soul from closet-prayer; he may upon the same ground make it a great bugbear to scare his soul not only from all other kind of prayer—but from all other duties of religion also, whether private or public. The spirit of this objection fights against all religion at once; and therefore you should say to it, as Christ said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!" But.

**(3.)** Thirdly, I answer, It is not the infirmities and weaknesses of a Christian which are known, lamented, bewailed, and resisted—that can obstruct or hinder the efficacy and success of his prayers. A spiritual infirmity is the indisposition of the soul, which arises from a weakness of grace. Let me clear up this in a few instances. **Jonah**, you know, was a

man full of sinful passions, and other weaknesses, etc., and yet his prayer was very prevalent with God: Jon 2:1-2,7,10, compared.

So **Elijah's** prayers were exceeding prevalent with God; he could open and shut heaven at his pleasure; and yet subject to like passions as we are, James 3:17. Elijah was a man of extraordinary sanctity and holiness, a man who lived in heaven while he dwelt on earth; Enoch-like, he walked with God, and yet subject to like passions as we are, 1 Kings 19:8; Rom 11:2-3. God did in an eminent way communicate to him his counsel and secrets; he lay in the bosom of the Father; and yet was a man subject to like passions as we are. He was a very powerful and prevalent prophet; his very name imports as much; Eli-jah signifies *my strong God*. In that 1 Kings 17:1, it is Eli-jahu, that is, *the Lord is my strong God*; and yet subject to like passions as we are. He was a man much in fasting and prayer; he was an inferior mediator between God and his people; and yet subject to like passions as we are.

Now because some from hence might object and say, No wonder if such a man as he was, could by his prayers open and shut heaven at his pleasure; but I am a poor, weak, low, sinful, and unworthy creature; I am full of infirmities, weaknesses, and passions; and shall my prayers ever find access to God, and acceptance with God, or gracious answers and returns from God? Now to obviate this objection, and to remove this discouragement out of the thoughts and hearts of poor sinners, the Holy Spirit adds this clause, that he was not a God, nor an angel—but a *man*, and such a man as was not exempted from common infirmities; for he had his passions, frailties, and weaknesses as well as other saints; intimating to us, that infirmities in the lowest saints should no more prejudice the acceptance and success of their prayers with God, than they did in Elijah himself.

The word *passion* sometimes signifies, first, a motion of the sensual appetite, arising from the imagination of good or ill, with some commotion of the body; secondly, sometimes passions signify sinful infirmities, sinful perturbations of the mind; and thirdly, sometimes passion is taken more strictly for the especial affection of sinful anger and wrath, which Chrysostom calls a short devil. It makes a man speak he knows not what, as you may see in Jonah; and to do he knows not what,

as you may see in Saul. Now in these two last senses Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and yet a man so potent with God, that by private prayer he could do even what he desired in the court of heaven.

In 1 Sam 21, you may read of **David's** bold lies, and of his other failings, infirmities, and unseemly carriages before Achish, king of Gath, and for which he was turned out of the king's presence, under the notion of a madman; and yet at that very time he prays, and prevails with God for favor, mercy, and deliverance: Psalm 34:4, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me out of all my fear." But when was this? Read the title of the psalm, and you shall find it: "A psalm of David, who changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed."

In Num 20:10-12, **Moses'** infirmities are pointed out.

First, You have there his immoderate anger.

(2.) His speaking to the people, when he should have spoken to the rock, Num 20:8.

(3.) His smiting of it, when he should only have spoken to it with the rod in his hand; and smiting it twice, as in a pang of passion and impatience.

(4.) His distrusting of the Lord's word, Num 20:12.

(5.) His reviling of the people, when he should have convinced them, "Hear, you rebels."

(6.) He seems to be so offended at his commission, that he can hardly forbear murmuring: "Must we bring water out of the rock?" Mark that word, "must we." Oh how is the meekest man in all the world transported into passion, and anger, and unbelief, and hurried into sad indecencies! Num 12:3. And yet there was not a man on earth whose prayers were so powerful and prevalent with God as Moses' were, Psalm 106:23; Exod 32:9-15; Exod 33:11-17; Exod 14:13-16, etc.

So king **Asa** was a man full of infirmities and weaknesses; he relies on the king of Syria, and not on the Lord, 2 Chron 16:7-13; he is very impatient,

and under a great rage upon the prophet's reproof. He imprisons the prophet; he oppressed some of the people; or, as the Hebrew has it, "he crushed," or he trampled upon some of the people at the same time; and being greatly diseased in his feet, he sought to the physicians and not to the Lord. And yet this man's prayer was wonderfully prevalent with God, 2 Chron 14:11-15.

**The saints' failings and infirmities** can never make void those gracious promises by which God stands engaged to hearken to the prayers of his people, Psalm 50:15; Isa 30:19, and Isa 65:24. God's hearing of our prayers does not depend upon sanctification—but upon Christ's intercession; not upon what we are in ourselves—but upon what we are in the Lord Jesus; both our persons and our prayers are acceptable in the beloved, Eph 1:6; 1 Pet 2:5. When God hears our prayers, it is neither for our own sakes nor yet for our prayers' sake—but it is for his own sake, and his Son's sake, and his glory's sake, and his promise's sake, etc.

Certainly God will never cast off his people for their failings and infirmities.

First, It is the glory of a man to pass by infirmities, Prov 19:11. Oh how much more, then, must it be the glory of God to pass by the infirmities of his people!

Secondly, Saints are children; and what father will cast off his children for their infirmities and weaknesses? Psalm 103:13-14; 1 Cor 12:27.

Thirdly, Saints are members of Christ's body; and what man will cut off a limb because there is a scab or wart upon it? "What man will cut off his nose," says Luther, "because there is some filth in it?"

Fourthly, Saints are Christ's purchase; they are his possession, his inheritance. [Eph 1:22-23; 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Cor 7:23; 1 Pet 1:18-20] Now what man is there that will cast away, or cast off his purchase, his possession, his inheritance, because of thorns, bushes, or briars that grow upon it?

Fifthly, Saints are in a marriage-covenant with God, Hos 2:19-20. Now what husband is there that will cast off his wife for her failings and infirmities? So long as a man is in covenant with God, his infirmities can't cut him off from God's mercy and grace. Now it is certain a man may have very many infirmities upon him, and yet not break his covenant with God, for no sin breaks a man's covenant with God but such as unties the marriage knot.

As in other marriages, every offence or infirmity does not disannul the marriage union; it is only the breach of the marriage vow, namely, adultery, which unties the marriage knot; so here it is only those sins which breaks the covenant, which unties the marriage knot between God and the soul: (1) When men freely subject to any lust as a new master; or, (2.) When men take another husband; and this men do, when they enter into a league with sin or the world, when they make a new covenant with hell and death, Isa 28:15,18. Now from these mischiefs God secures his chosen ones. In a word, if God should cast off his people for their failings and infirmities, then none of the sons or daughters of Adam could be saved: "For there is not a just man upon the earth that does good and sins not," Eccles 7:20. Now if God will not cast off his people for their infirmities, then certainly he will not cast off the prayers of his people because of those invincible infirmities which hang upon them; and therefore our infirmities should not discourage us, or take us off from closet prayer, or from any other duties of religion. But,

**(4.)** Fourthly, I answer, The more infirmities and weaknesses hang upon us, the more cause have we to keep close and constant to our closet-duties. If grace is weak, the omission of private prayer will make it weaker. Look! as he who will not eat will certainly grow weaker and weaker; so he who will not pray in his closet will certainly grow weaker and weaker. If corruptions are strong, the neglect of private prayer will make them stronger. The more the remedy is neglected, the more the disease is strengthened. Whatever the distempers of a man's heart be, they will never be abated—but augmented, by the omission of private prayer. The more bodily infirmities hang upon us, the more need we have of the physician; and so the more sinful infirmities hang upon our souls, the more need we have of private prayer. All sinful omissions will make

work for repentance, for hell, or for the physician of souls. Sinful omissions lead to sinful commissions, as you may see in the angels that fell from heaven to hell, and in Adam's fall in paradise.

Origen going to comfort and encourage a martyr who was to be tortured, was himself apprehended by the officers, and constrained either to offer to the idols, or to have his body tortured; of which hard choice, to save his life, he bowed unto the idol; but afterwards, making a sad confession of his foul fact, he said, "That he went forth that morning before he had been with God in his closet;" and so peremptorily concludes, "that his neglect of prayer was the cause of his falling into that great sin."

The neglect of one day, of one duty, of one hour, would undo us forever, if we had not an advocate with the Father, 1 John 2:1-2. Those years, those months, those weeks, those days, those hours that are not filled up with God, with Christ, with grace, with duty, will certainly be filled up with vanity and folly. All omissions of duty, will more and more unfit the soul for duty. A key thrown aside, gathers rust; a pump not used, will be hard to work; and armor not used, will not be bright, etc. Look! **as sinful commissions will stab the soul; so sinful omissions will starve the soul.** Such as live in the neglect of private prayer may well cry out, Isa 24:16; Job 16:8, "Our leanness, our leanness!" And therefore away with all these pleas and reasonings about infirmities, and weaknesses, and indispositions, and address yourselves to closet prayer! But,

(5.) Fifthly, I answer, It may be your distemper and indisposition of body is not so great—but that you can buy, and sell, and get gain. Notwithstanding your aching head, and your shooting back, and your pained sides, and your feeble knees—yet you can, with Martha, cumber yourself about your worldly affairs. In that Song 5:3, Christ calls upon his spouse to open the door, and let him in. But sin and shifting coming into the world together, see how poorly and unworthily she labors to shift Christ off: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" Rather than she will make no excuse for herself, she will make a silly excuse, a worthless excuse. She was not a mere child; and what a great business had it been for her to have risen to have let in such a guest, who brings everything with him that heart can wish or need require, Rev 3:17-18. She was not grown so decrepit with old

age—but that she was able to make herself ready; at least, she might easily have slipped on her morning-coat and stepped to the door without any danger of taking cold, or of being wet to the skin, and so have let him in, who never comes empty-handed, Rev 22:12; yes, who was now come full of the dew of divine blessings to enrich her; for so some sense those words, "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Oh, the frivolous pretenses, and idle excuses that even gracious people are apt sometimes to take up to over-color their neglect of duty!

But some may say, It may be the spouse of Christ was asleep. Oh no! for she says, Song 5:2, "I sleep—but my heart wakes." She slept with open eyes, as the lion does; she slept but half-sleep; though her outward man was drowsy—yet her inward man was wakeful; though the flesh took a nap—yet her spirit did not nod.

Oh! but it may be Christ made no noise, he gave no notice that he was at the door! O yes! he knocked and knocked by the hammer of his word, and the hand of his Spirit; he knocked by outward corrections and inward admonitions; he knocked by providences, and he knocked by mercies. His importunity and vehemency for admission was very great.

Oh! but it maybe he did but only knock, he should have called as well as knocked; for none but madmen would open their doors in the night, except they knew the voice of him who knocks. Oh yes! he did not only knock—but called also.

Oh! but it may be she did not know his voice, and therefore she would not open. No chaste wife will at unseasonable hours arise and open her doors unto a stranger, especially in her husband's absence. Oh yes, she knew his voice: Song 5:2, "It is the voice of my beloved who knocks." She was not so fast asleep—but that she knew the voice of her beloved from all other voices, and could tell every tittle that he said. The calls of Christ were so strong, so loud, and his pulsations so mighty, that she could not but know and confess, that it was the voice of her beloved, though she was not so respectful and dutiful as to obey that voice.

Oh! but it may be Christ knocked and called, like a friend in his journey, only to inquire how it was with her, or to speak to her at the window. Oh

no! he speaks plainly, he speaks with authority, "Open to me!"

Oh! but it may be she had no power to open the door. Oh yes; for when he commands his people to open, he lends them a key to open the door, that he may enter in, Phil 1:6,13; 1 Cor 15:10. Infused grace is a living principle that will enable the soul to open to Christ. If a man be not a free agent to work and act by the helps of grace received, to what purpose are counsels, commands, exhortations and directions, given to perform this, and that, and the other work? And certainly it is our greatest honor and happiness in this world to cooperate with God in those things which concern his own glory, and our own internal and eternal good.

Oh! but it may be Christ had given his spouse some distaste, or it may be he had let fall some hard words, or some unkind speeches, which made her a little froward and petulant. Oh no! for he owns her as his beloved, and courts her highly, with the most winning and amicable terms of love: "My sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, or my perfect one." He calls her so for her dovelike simplicity, purity, and integrity. All these endearing and honoring titles, are the rhetoric of divine love; and should have been as so many sacred engagements upon her, to open to her beloved.

Oh! but it may be Christ was too quick for her, it may be he gave but a knock and a call, and was gone before she could rise and open the door. O no! Christ stayed until his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night; which most passionate expression notes the tender goodness, patience, and gentleness of our Lord Jesus, who endures far greater and harder things for his spouse's sake, than ever Jacob did for his Rachel's sake.

After Christ had suffered much for her sake, and waited her leisure a long while, she very unkindly, and very unmannerly, and unworthily turns her back upon all his sweet and comfortable compellations, and blessed and bleeding embracements, and turns him off to look for his lodging in some other place; so that he might well have said, Is this your kindness to your friend, your husband, your Lord—to allow him to stand bareheaded, and that in foul weather, yes, in the night time, wooing, entreating, and beseeching admittance; and yet to turn him off as one in whom your soul

could take no pleasure?

Now, if you will but seriously weigh all these circumstances in the balance of the sanctuary, you may run and read the fault and folly, the weakness and madness, the slightness and laziness of the spouse; and by her you may make a judgment of those sad and sinful distempers that may seize upon the best of saints, and see how ready the flesh is to frame excuses; and all to keep the soul off from duty, and the doors fast bolted against the Lord Jesus.

It is sad when men are well enough to sit, and chat, and trade in their shops—but are not well enough to pray in their closets. Certainly, that man's heart is not right with God, at least at this time, who, under all his bodily distempers, can maintain and keep up his public trade with men—but is not well enough to maintain his private trade with heaven. Our bodies are but dirt, handsomely fashioned. We derive our pedigree from the dirt, and are akin to clay. One calls the body "the blot of nature;" another calls it the "the soul's beast," "a sack of dung," "worms' food;" another calls it "a prison," "a sepulcher;" and Paul calls it "a body of vileness." "All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return." Genesis 3:19. Now for a man to make so much ado about the distempers of his body to excuse the neglects of his soul, is an evil made up of many evils.

But really, sir, I am so ill, and my body is so distempered and indisposed, that I am not able to mind or meddle with the least things of the world! Well! if this be so, then know that God has on purpose knocked you off from the things of this world, that you may look the more effectually after the things of the eternal world. The design of God in all the distempers that are upon your body, is to wind you more off from your worldly trade, and to work you to follow your heavenly trade more close. Many a man had never found the way to his closet, if God by bodily distempers had not turned him out of his shop, his trade, his business, his all, etc.

Well, Christians! remember this once for all, if your indisposition to closet prayer does really arise from bodily distempers, then you may be confident that the Lord will pity you much, and bear with you much, and

kindly accept of a little. You know how affectionately parents and kind masters treat their children and servants, when they are under bodily distempers and indisposition; and you may be confident that God will never treat you worse. Ponder often upon that Ezek 34:4,16,21-22. But,

**(6.)** Sixthly, and lastly, I shall answer this objection by way of distinction, thus: **FIRSTLY**, There is a voluntary indisposition to private prayer; and there is an involuntary indisposition to private prayer.

There is a **voluntary** indisposition, and that is when a man, by his willful sinning against light, knowledge, conviction, etc., contracts that guilt that lies as a load upon his conscience. Now guilt makes the soul shy of God; and the greater the guilt is, the more shy the soul is of drawing near to God in a corner. The child that is sensibly under guilt hides himself; as Adam did, in the day from his father's eye, and at night he slips to bed, to avoid either a chiding or a whipping from his father, Gen 3:7-8. Guilt makes a man fly from God, and fly from prayer. It is a hard thing to look God in the face, when guilt stares a man in the face, Job 11:14-15. Guilt makes a man a terror to himself, Jer 20:3-4; now when a man is a terror to himself, he is neither fit to live, nor fit to die, nor fit to pray.

When poison gets into the body, it works upon the vitals, and it weakens the vitals, and it endangers life, and unfits and indisposes a man to all natural actions. It is so here; when guilt lies heavy upon the conscience, it works upon the soul, it weakens the soul, it endangers the soul, and it does greatly unfit and indispose the soul to all holy actions. Guilt fights against our souls, our consciences, our comforts, our duties, yes, and our very graces also, 1 Pet 2:11. There is nothing which wounds and lames our graces like guilt; there is nothing which weakens and wastes our graces like guilt; there is nothing which hinders the activity of our graces like guilt; nor there is nothing which clouds our evidences of grace like guilt. Look! what water is to the fire, that our sinnings are to our graces, evidences, and duties. Guilt is like Prometheus' vulture, which ever lies gnawing. It is better with Evagrius to lie on a bed of straw with a good conscience, than to lie on a bed of down with a guilty conscience.

What the probationer-disciple said to our Savior—Matt 8:19, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go,"—that a guilty conscience says to the

sinner, "Wherever you go I will follow you." If you go to a fast, I will follow you, and fill your mind with black and dismal apprehensions of God; if you go to a feast, I will follow you, and show you the handwriting on the wall, Dan 5:5; if you go abroad, I will follow you, and make you afraid of every leaf that shakes; you shall look upon every bush as an armed man, and upon every man as a devil; if you stay at home, I will follow you from room to room, and fill you with horror and terror; if you lie down to rest, I will follow you with fearful dreams and tormenting apparitions; if you go into your closet, I will follow you, and make your very closet a hell to hold you.

It is storied of king Richard the Third, that after he had murdered his two nephews, guilt lay so hard upon his conscience, that his sleeps were very unquiet; for he would often leap out of his bed in the dark, and catching his sword in his hand, which hung by his bedside, he would go distractedly about his chamber seeking for the traitor.

So Charles the Ninth of France, after he had made the streets of Paris run down with the blood of the Protestants, he could seldom take any sound sleep, nor could he endure to be awakened out of his sleep without music.

Judge Morgan, who passed the sentence of condemnation upon Jane Grey, a virtuous lady, shortly after fell mad, and in his raving cried out continually, "Take away the Lady Jane from me, take away the Lady Jane from me," and in that horror ended his wretched life.

James Abyes, going to execution for Christ's sake, as he went along, he gave his money and his clothes to one and another, until he had given all away to his shirt, whereupon one of the sheriff's men fell a-scoffing and deriding of him, and told him that he was a madman and a heretic, and not to be believed; but as soon as the good man was executed, this wretch was struck mad, and threw away his clothes, and cried out that "James Abyes was a good man, and gone to heaven—but he himself was a wicked man, and was damned," and thus he continued crying out until his death. Certainly he who derides a man for walking according to the word of the Lord, the Lord will, sooner or later, so smite and wound that man's conscience, that all the physicians in the world shall not heal it.

Now if your indisposition to private prayer springs from contracting guilt upon your conscience, then your best way is speedily to renew your repentance, and greatly to judge and humble your own soul, and so to act faith afresh upon the blood of Christ, both for pardoning mercy and for purging grace. When a man is stung with guilt, it is his highest wisdom in the world to look up to the brazen serpent, and not to spend his time or create torments to his own soul by perpetual poring upon his guilt. When guilt upon the conscience works a man to water the earth with tears, and to make heaven ring with his groans, then it works kindly. When the sense of guilt drives a man to God, to duty, to the throne of grace, then it will not be long night with that man. He who thinks to shift off private prayer under the pretense of guilt, does but in that increase his own guilt. Neglect of duty will never get guilt off the conscience.

But there is also an **involuntary** indisposition to private prayer; as in a sick man, who would work and walk—but cannot, being hindered by his disease; or as it is with a man who has a great chain on his leg, he would very gladly walk or get away—but his chain hinders him. Now if your indisposition to private prayer is an involuntary indisposition, then God will in mercy, in course, both pardon it and remove it.

SECONDLY, There is a total indisposition to private prayer, and there is a partial indisposition to private prayer.

A **total** indisposition to private prayer is, when a man has no mind at all to private prayer, nor any will at all to private prayer, nor any love at all to private prayer, nor any delight, nor any heart at all to private prayer, Jer 4:22, and Jer 44:17-19. Now where this frame of heart is, there all is evil, very evil, stark evil.

A **partial** indisposition to private prayer is, when a man has some will to private prayer, though not such a will as once he had; and some mind to private prayer, though not such a mind as once he had; and some affections to private prayer, though not such warm and burning affections as once he had.

Now if your indisposition to private prayer is total, then you must wait upon the Lord in all his appointments for a changed nature, and for

union with Christ; but if your indisposition to private prayer be only partial, then the Lord will certainly pardon it, and in the very use of holy means, in time remove it. But,

THIRDLY, and lastly, There is a transient, accidental, occasional, or fleeting indisposition to private prayer; and there is a customary, a constant, or permanent indisposition to private prayer.

Now a transient, accidental, **occasional**, or fleeting indisposition to that which is good may be found upon the best of saints, as you may see in Moses, Exod 4:10-14; and in Jeremiah, Jer 1:5-8,17-19, and Jer 20:9; and in Jon 1; and in David, Psalm 39:2-3. Now if this be the indisposition that you are under, then you may be confident that it will certainly work off by degrees, as theirs did—which I have cited, Isa 65:2.

But then there is a customary, a **constant** or permanent indisposition to private prayer, and to all other holy duties of religion. Now if this be the indisposition that you are under, then I may safely conclude that you are in the very gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, Acts 8:21-23, and your work lies not in complaining of your indisposition—but in repenting and believing, and in laboring for a change of your heart and state; for until your heart, your state be changed, you will remain forever indisposed both to closet prayer and to all other duties of religion and godliness. To see a sinner sailing hell-ward with wind and tide on his side—to alter his course, and tack about for heaven; to see the earthly man become heavenly; the carnal man become spiritual; the proud man become humble; the vain man become serious; to see a sinner move contrary to himself in the ways of Christ and holiness—is as strange as to see a fish flying in mid air, contrary to its own nature. And yet a divine power of God upon the soul can effect it; and this must be effected before the sinner will be graciously inclined and sincerely disposed to closet prayer. And let thus much suffice by way of answer to this objection also.

## Eleven Advices and Counsels

Now, for the better management of this great duty, namely, closet prayer, I beseech you take my advice and counsel in these eleven following particulars.

(1.) First, **Be frequent in closet prayer**, and not *now and then* only. He will never make any earnings of closet prayer, who is not frequent in closet prayer. Now, that this counsel may stick, consider,

**[1.]** First, Other eminent servants of the Lord have been frequent in this blessed work: Neh 1:6, "Let your ear now be attentive, and your eyes open, that you may hear the prayer of your servant, which I pray before you, day and night." So Daniel, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did beforetime, Dan 6:10. So David, "My voice shall you hear in the morning, and in the evening will I direct my prayer unto you, and will look up," Psalm 5:3. So Psalm 88:13, "But unto you have I cried, O Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you." So Psalm 119:147, "I rise before dawn and cry out for help." So Psalm 55:17, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud." Psalm 109:4, "I give myself unto prayer;" or, as the Hebrew may be read, "But I am a man of prayer."

Of Carolus Magnus it was said, that he spoke more with God than with men.

**[2.]** Secondly, Consider the blessed Scripture does not only enjoin this duty—but it requires frequency in it also, Luke 18:1; 1 Thess 5:17; Col 4:2. In the former part of this discourse, I have given light into these scriptures; and therefore the bare citing of them must now suffice.

**[3.]** Thirdly, Christ was frequent in private prayer, as you may easily see by comparing of these scriptures together, Mark 1:35; Matt 14:23; Luke 22:39; John 18:2. In my second argument for private prayer you may see these scriptures opened and amplified. But,

**[4.]** Fourthly, Consider that you have the examples of the very worst of men in this case. Papists are frequent in their private devotions. And the Mahommedans, whatever occasion they have, either by profit or pleasure, to divert them, will yet pray five times every day. Yes, the very heathens

sacrificed to Hercules morning and evening upon the great altar at Rome. Now, shall blind nature do more than grace? But,

**[5.]** Fifthly, Consider you cannot have too frequent communion with God, you cannot have too frequent fellowship with Jesus, you cannot have your hearts too frequently filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and with that peace that passes understanding, you cannot have heaven too frequently brought down into your hearts, nor you cannot have your hearts too frequently carried up to heaven; and therefore you cannot be too frequent in closet prayer. But,

**[6.]** Sixthly, Consider that you are under frequent needs, and frequent sins, and frequent snares, and frequent temptations, and frequent allurements, and frequent trials, and frequent cares, and frequent fears, and frequent favors, 1 Pet 5:8, Job 1:7; and therefore you had need be frequent with God in your closets. But,

**[7.]** Seventhly, Consider you are the favorites of heaven, you are greatly beloved, you are highly honored, you are exceedingly esteemed and valued in the court of the Most High God. And remember, that the petitions of many weak Christians, and of many benighted Christians, and of many tempted Christians, and of many clouded Christians, and of many staggering Christians, and of many doubting Christians, and of many bewildered Christians, and of many fainting Christians, etc., are put into your hands, for a quick and speedy despatch to the throne of grace; so that you had need be frequent in your closets, and improve your interest in heaven, or else many of these poor hearts may be wronged, betrayed, and prejudiced by your neglect. Such as are favorites in princes' courts, if they are active, diligent, careful, and watchful, they may do much good for others, they may come as often as they please into their prince's presence, and with Queen Esther have for asking what they please, both for themselves and others, Esther 7.

Oh what a world of good may such do for others, if they would be but frequent with God in their closets! O sirs! if you have not that love, that regard, that pity, that compassion to your own souls, as you should have —yet, oh let not others suffer by your neglect of private prayer! Oh, let not Zion suffer! Oh, let not any particular saint suffer by your being found

seldom in your closets.

Certainly, it might have gone better with the churches of Christ, and with the concernments of Christ, and with many of the poor people of Christ, if most Christians had been more frequent with God in their closets. But,

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, Consider that this liberty to approach near to God in your closets, cost Christ his dearest blood, Eph 2:13; Heb 10:20. Now, he who is not frequent with God in his closet, tells all about him, that he sets no great value upon that liberty which Christ has purchased with his blood. The incomparable, the unparalleled price which Christ has paid down upon the nail, above sixteen hundred years ago, that we might have liberty and free access to his Father in our closets, argues very strongly, yes, irrefragably, the superlative excellency of that liberty, 1 Pet 1:19. Oh therefore let us improve to purpose this blessed purchase of our Lord Jesus, by being frequent with God in our closets.

O sirs! shall Christ shed not only a few drops of blood—but his very heart blood, to purchase you a freedom and liberty to be as often in your closets with his Father as you please; and will you only now and then give God a visit in private? The Lord forbid!

(2.) My second advice and counsel is this, **Take the fittest seasons and opportunities that possibly you can for closet prayer.** Many take unfit seasons for private prayer, which more obstruct the importunity of the soul in prayer, than all the suggestions and instigations of Satan. As,

First, **When the body is drowsy and sleepy;** this is a very unfit season for closet prayer, Song 3:1. Take heed of laying cushions of sloth under your knees, or pillows of idleness under your elbows, or of mixing nods with your petitions, or of being drowsily devoted when you draw near to God in your closets.

Secondly, **When a man's head and heart is filled with worldly cares and distractions;** this is a very unfit season for closet-prayer, 1 Cor 7:35; Ezek 33:31.

"Dinah, Leah's daughter whom she bore to Jacob, went out to see some of the young women of the area. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, a prince of the region, saw her, he took her and raped her." Genesis 34:1-2. When Dinah must needs be gadding abroad to see fashions; Shechem meets with her, and rapes her. So when our hearts, Dinah-like, must needs be a-roving and gadding abroad after the things of the world, then Satan, the prince of the air, usually seizes upon us, commits a rape upon our souls, and either leads us off from prayer, or else he does so distract us from prayer, that it were better not to have prayed at all, than to have offered the sacrifice of foolish and distracted prayer.

I have read a story, how that one offered to give his horse to his fellow, upon condition he would but say the Lord's prayer, and think upon nothing but God; the offer was accepted, and he began, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be your name." But I must have the bridle too, said he. "No, nor the horse neither," said the other, for you have lost both already. The application is easy.

Certainly, the most free and lively season for closet-prayer is the mornings, before a man's spirit is blunted or cooled, deadened, damped, or flattened by worldly businesses. A man should speak with God in his closet, before he speaks with his worldly affairs and occasions. A man should say to all his worldly business, as Abraham said unto his young men, when he went to offer up his only Isaac, "Abide here, and I will go yonder and worship, and then return to you again." He who will attend closet prayer without distraction or disturbance, must not, first, slip out of the world into his closet—but he must first slip into his closet before he be compassed about with a crowd of worldly employments.

It was a precept of Pythagoras, that when we enter into the temple to worship God, we must not so much as speak or think of any worldly business, lest we make God's service an idle, perfunctory, and lazy recreation. The same I may say of closet-prayer.

Jerome complains very much of his distractions, dullness, and indisposedness to prayer, and chides himself thus, "What! do you think, that Jonah prayed thus when he was in the whale's belly; or Daniel when he was among the lions; or the thief when he was upon the cross?"

Thirdly, **When men or women are under rash and passionate distempers**, 1 Tim 2:8. For when passions are up, holy affections are down, and this is a very unfit season for closet-prayer. Such prayers will never reach God's ear—which do not first warm our own hearts. In the Muscovy churches, if the minister mistakes in reading, or stammers in pronouncing his words, or speaks any word that is not well heard, the hearers do very much blame him, and are ready to take the book from him, as unworthy to read therein. And certainly God is no less offended with the giddy, rash, passionate, precipitate, and inconsiderate prayers of those who, without a deliberate understanding, do send their petitions to heaven in posthaste. Solomon's advice is worthy of all commendation and acceptance: "Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty, to utter anything before God," Eccles 5:2; or as the Hebrew may be read, "Let not your heart through haste be so troubled or disturbed, as to tumble over, and throw out words without wisdom or premeditation." Good men are apt many times to be too hasty, rash, and unadvised in their prayers, complaints, and deprecations. Witness David, Job, Jeremiah, Jonah, and the disciples. [Psalm 31:2-3; Psalm 116:11; Job 10:1-3; Jer 18:15,18; Jon 4:2-4; Matt 20:20-21] There is no Christian like him, who does wisely and seriously weigh over his prayers and praises before he pours out his soul before the Lord. He never repents of his requests, who first duly deliberates what to request; but he who blurts out whatever lies uppermost, and who brings into the presence of God his rash, raw, tumultuary, and undigested petitions, confessions, complaints, etc., he does but provoke God, he does but brawl with God; instead of praying to him or wrestling with him. Suitors at court observe their fittest times and seasons of petitioning; they commonly take that very nick of time, when they have the king in a good mood, and so seldom come off but with good success.

Sometimes God strongly inclines the heart to closet-prayer; sometimes he brings the heart beforehand into a praying frame; sometimes both body and soul are more enlivened, quickened, raised, and divinely inflamed than at other times; sometimes conscience is more stirring, working, and tender, etc. **Oh, now strike while the iron is hot!** Oh now lay hold on all such blessed opportunities, by applying of yourself to private prayer. O sirs! can you take your fittest times, seasons, and opportunities for

ploughing, and sowing, and reaping, and buying and selling, and eating, and drinking, and marrying, etc. And cannot you as well take your fittest times and seasons to seek the Lord in your closets? **Must the best God be put off with the least and worst of your time?** The Lord forbid. Neglect not the seasons of grace; slip not your opportunities for closet-prayer; thousands have lost their seasons and their souls together!

(3.) My third advice and counsel is this, **Be very careful that you do not perform closet duties, merely to still your consciences.** You must perform them out of conscience—but you must not perform them only to quiet conscience. Some have such a light set up in their understandings, that they cannot omit closet-prayer—but conscience is upon their backs, conscience is still upbraiding and disquieting of them; and therefore they are afraid to neglect closet-prayer, lest conscience should question, arraign, and condemn them for their neglects. Sometimes when men have greatly sinned against the Lord, conscience becomes impatient, and is still accusing, condemning, and terrifying of them; and now in these agonies they will run to their closets, and cry, and pray, and mourn, and confess, and bitterly bewail their transgressions—but all this is only to quiet their consciences. And sometimes they find upon their performance of closet-duties, that their consciences are a little allayed and quieted; and for this very end and purpose do they take up closet-prayer as a *charm* to allay their consciences. And when the storm is over, and their consciences quieted, then they lay aside closet-prayer—and are ready to transgress again.

O sirs! take heed of this, for this is but open hypocrisy, and will be bitterness in the end. He who performs closet-prayer only to bribe his conscience, that it may not be clamorous, or to stop the mouth of conscience that it may not accuse him for sin—he will at length venture upon such a trade, such a course of sinning against conscience, as will certainly turn his troubled conscience into a seared conscience, 2 Tim 4:2. And a seared conscience is like a sleeping lion, when he awakes he roars, and tears his prey in pieces; and so will a seared conscience, when it is awakened, roar and tear the secure sinner in pieces.

All the mercy that *a seared, a benumbed conscience* does afford the sinner, when it does most befriend him, when it deals most seemingly

kind with him, is this—that it will not cut, that it may kill; it will not convince, that it may confound; it will not accuse, that it may condemn; it will spare the sinner a while, that it may torment him forever; it will spare him here, that it may gnaw him hereafter; it will not strike until it is too late for the sinner to ward off the blow. Oh cruel mercy, to observe the sin, and let alone the sinner until the gates of mercy be shut upon him, and hell stands gaping to devour him: Gen 4:7, "Sin lies at the door." The Hebrew word signifies to lie down, or couch, like some wild beast at the mouth of his cave, as if it were asleep—but indeed watches and wakes, and is ready to fly at all that come near it. O sirs! sin is rather lying down than dormant; it sleeps dog's sleep, that it may take the sinner at the greater advantage, and fly the more furiously in his face! But,

(4.) My fourth advice and counsel is this, **Take heed of resting upon closet-duties**, take heed of trusting in closet-duties. Noah's dove made use of her wings—but she did not trust in her wings—but in the ark; so you must make use of closet-duties—but you must not trust in your closet-duties—but in Jesus, of whom the ark was but a type. There are many that go a round of duties, as mill horses go their round in a mill, and rest upon them when they are done, using the means as mediators; and so fall short of Christ and heaven at once. Closet-duties rested in, will as eternally undo a man as the greatest and foulest enormities; open wickedness slays her thousands—but a secret resting upon duties slays her ten thousands. Multitudes bleed inwardly of this disease, and die forever. Open profaneness is the broad dirty way which leads to hell—but trusting in religious duties is a sure way, though a cleaner way to hell. Profane people and formal professors shall meet at last in the same hell. Ah, Christians! do not make closet-duties your money, lest you and your money perish together.

The phoenix gathers sweet odoriferous sticks in Arabia together, and then blows them with her wings and burns herself with them; so do many shining professors burn themselves by resting in their duties and services. You know, in Noah's flood all that were not in the ark, though they climbed up the tallest trees, and the highest mountains and hills—yet were really drowned; so let men climb up to this duty and that—yet, if they don't get into Christ, they will be really damned. It is not your duties

—but your Christ, that must save you. If a man be not interested in Christ, he may perish with "Our Father" in his mouth. It is as natural to a man to rest in his duties as it is for him to rest in his bed.

This was Bernard's temptation, who, being a little assisted in duty, could stroke his own head with 'O Bernard, this was gallantly done, now cheer up yourself.' Ah, how apt is man, when he has been a little assisted, heated, melted, enlarged, etc., in a way of duty, to go away and stroke himself, and bless himself, and hug himself, and warm himself with the sparks, with the fire of his own kindling, Isa 50:11. "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." Isaiah 64:6. "I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get." Luke 18:12

Adam was to win life and wear it; he was to be saved by his doings: "Do this and live," Gen 2:2. Hence it is that all his posterity are so prone to seek for salvation by doing: Acts 2:37; Acts 16:30, "What shall we do to be saved?" and "good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Mark 10:17,20. Like father, like son. But if our own duties or doings were sufficient to save us, to what purpose did Christ leave his Father's bosom, and lay down his dearest life? etc. Closet-duties rested in may pacify conscience for a time—but this will not always hold. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could they not heal him, nor cure him of his wound," Hos 5:13. If we rest on closet-duties, or on anything else on this side Christ, we shall find them as weak as the Assyrian, or as Jareb; we shall find to our cost that they cannot help us nor heal us; they cannot comfort us nor cure us of our wounds. As creatures, so duties, were never true to any who have trusted in them. When the Israelites were in great distress, the Lord bids them go and cry unto the gods which they had chosen, and let them deliver you, says God, in the time of your tribulation, Judg 10:14. O sirs! if, when you are under distress of conscience, or lying upon a dying bed, God should say to you, 'Go to your closet prayers and performances, that you have made and rested in, go to your closet tears that you have shed and rested in, and let them save you and deliver you; oh, what miserable saviors and comforters would they be unto you!'

Look! what the ark of God was to the Philistines, 1 Sam 5, that closet-duties are to Satan; he trembles every time he sees a poor sinner go into his closet and come out of his closet, resting and glorying in Jesus, and not in his duties; but when he sees a poor creature confide in his closet-duties, and rest upon his closet-duties, then he rejoices, then he claps his hands and sings, 'Aha! so would I have it.'

Oh, rest not on anything on this side Jesus Christ! Say to your graces, say to your duties, say to your holiness, 'You are not my Savior, you are not my mediator; and therefore you are not to be trusted to, you are not to be rested in.' It is my duty to perform closet-duties—but it is my sin to rely upon them, or to put confidence in them; do them I must—but glory in them I must not. He who rests in his closet-duties, he makes a Savior of his closet-duties. Let all your closet-duties lead you to Jesus, and leave you more in communion with him, and in dependence upon him; and then thrice happy will you be, Heb 7:25. Let all your closet prayers and tears, your closet fastings and meltings, be a star to guide you to Jesus, a Jacob's ladder by which you may ascend into the bosom of eternal loves; and then you are safe forever.

Ah! it is sad to think, how most men have forgotten their resting-place, as the Lord complains: Jer 50:6, "My people have been like lost sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray, and have turned them away to the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill, and forgotten their resting-place." Ah! how many poor souls are there, that wander from mountain to hill, from one duty to another, and here they will rest, and there they will rest, and all on this side their resting-place! O sirs! it is God himself that is your resting-place; it is his free grace, it is his special mercy, it is his infinite love that is your resting-place; it is the bosom of Christ, the favor of Christ, the satisfaction of Christ, and the pure, perfect, spotless, matchless, and glorious righteousness of Christ, that is your resting-place; and therefore say to all your closet duties and performances, Farewell; prayer, farewell; reading, farewell; fasting, farewell; tears, farewell; sighs and groans, farewell; meltings and humblings, I will never trust more to you, I will never rest more on you; but I will now return to my resting place, I will now rest only in God and Christ, I will now rest wholly in God and Christ, I will now rest forever in

God and Christ.

It was the saying of a precious saint, that "He was more afraid of his religious duties, than of his sins. **For his duties often made him proud; his sins always made him humble.**" But,

(5.) My fifth advice and counsel is this, **Labor to bring your hearts into all your closet prayers and performances.** Look that your tongues and your hearts keep time and tune. Psalm 17:1, "Give ear to my prayer—it does not rise from deceitful lips." Heart and tongue must go together; word and work, lip and life, prayer and practice, must echo one to another, or else your prayers and your soul will be lost together. The labor of the lips, and the travail of the heart must go together.

The Egyptians of all fruits made choice of the peach to consecrate to their goddess, and for no other cause—but that the fruit thereof is like to one's heart, and the leaf to one's tongue. These very heathens in the worship of their gods, thought it necessary that men's hearts and tongues should go together. Ah, Christians! when in your closet duties your hearts and your tongues go together, then you make that sweet and delightful melody that is most acceptable and pleasing to the King of kings. **The very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of the soul before God,** 1 Sam 1:15. Psalm 42:4, "When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me." So the Israelites poured out their souls like water before the Lord. So the church: "The desire of our soul is to your name, and to the remembrance of you. With my soul have I desired you in the night, yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early," Isa 26:8-9. So Lam 3:41, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." So Heb 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart," etc. So Rom 1:9, "For God is my witness, whom I serve in the spirit." 1 Cor 14:15, "I will pray with the spirit, and sing with the spirit." Phil 3:3, "We are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit."

Under the law the inward parts were only to be offered to God in sacrifice; the skin belonged to the priests. Whence we may easily gather, that truth in the inward parts, is that which is most pleasing in a sacrifice.

When the Athenians would know from the oracle the cause of their often

defeats in battle, seeing they offered the choicest things they could get, in sacrifice to the gods, which their enemies did not; the oracle gave them this answer, that "the gods were better pleased with their inward supplication, than with all their outward pomp in costly sacrifices." Ah, sirs! **the reason why so many are so unsuccessful in their closet-duties and services, is because there is no more of their hearts in them.** No man can make sure work or happy work in prayer but he who makes heart work on it. When a man's heart is in his prayers, then great and sweet will be his returns from heaven. That is no true prayer in which the heart of the person bears no part. When the soul is separated from the body the man is dead; and so when the heart is separated from the lip in prayer, the prayer is dead.

The Jews at this day write upon the walls of their synagogues these words, 'a prayer without the heart, is like a body without a soul.'

In the law of Moses the priest was commanded to wash the inwards of the sacrifices in water; and this was done, says Philo, to teach us to keep our hearts and affections clean when we draw near to God. In all your closet-duties God looks first and most to your hearts: "My son, give me your heart," Prov 23:26. It is not a piece, it is not a corner of the heart, which will satisfy the Maker of the heart; the heart is a treasure, a bed of spices, a royal throne wherein he delights. God looks not at the elegance of your prayers, to see how refined they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are; nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are. There is no prayer acknowledged, approved, accepted, recorded, or rewarded by God—but that wherein the heart is sincere.

The true mother would not have the child divided. As God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so he loathes a divided heart, Psalm 51:17; James 1:8. God neither loves halting nor halving; he will be served truly and totally. The royal law is, "You shall love and serve the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul." Among the heathens, when the beasts were cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart, and if the heart was bad, the sacrifice was rejected. Verily, God

rejects all those services and sacrifices, wherein the heart is bad, as you may see by comparing these Scriptures together. [Prov 21:27; Isa 1:11-12; Isa 29:13; Matt 15:7-9; Ezek 33:30-82; Zech 7:4-6; 2 Chron 25:1-2; Psalm 78:36-37]

Prayer without the heart is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Prayer is only lovely and weighty, as the heart is in it, and no otherwise. It is not the lifting up of the voice, nor the wringing of the hands, nor the beating of the breasts, nor an affected tone, nor studied motions, nor seraphical expressions—but the stirrings of the heart, which God looks at in prayer. God hears no more than the heart speaks. If the heart be dumb, God will certainly be deaf. No prayer is accepted by God—but that which is the travail of the heart.

The same day Julius Caesar came to the imperial dignity, sitting in his golden chair, he offered a beast in sacrifice to the gods; but when the beast was opened, it was without a heart, which the soothsayers looked upon as an ill omen. It is a sad omen, that you will rather provoke the Lord than prevail with him, who are habitually heartless in your closet duties. Of the heart, God seems to say to us, as Joseph did to his brethren, concerning Benjamin, "You shall not see my face without it."

It was the speech of blessed Bradford, that "he would never leave a duty, until he had brought his heart into the frame of the duty. He would not leave confession of sin, until his heart was broken for sin. He would not leave petitioning for grace, until his heart was quickened and enlivened in a hopeful expectation of more grace. He would not leave thanksgiving, until his heart was enlarged with the sense of the mercies he enjoyed, and quickened in the return of praise."

(6.) My sixth advice and counsel is this, **Be fervent, be warm, be importunate with God in all your closet duties and performances.** James 5:16, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much;" or, as the Greek has it "the working prayer;" that is, such working prayer as sets the whole man on work, as sets all the faculties of the soul, and all the graces in the soul, at work. The word signifies such a working as notes the liveliest activity that can be. Certainly, all those usual phrases of *crying*, *wrestling*, and *striving* with

God, which are scattered up and down in Scripture, do strongly argue that holy importunity and sacred violence that the saints of old have expressed in their addresses to God. [Psalm 55:1; Psalm 61:1; Psalm 64:1; Psalm 88:1,13; Psalm 119:164; Jon 2:1-2; Joel 2:13; Psalm 119:145,147; Psalm 119:20] **Fervency feathers the wings of prayer, and makes them fly the swifter to heaven.** An arrow, if it be drawn up but a little way, flies not far; but if it be drawn up to the head, it will fly far, and pierce deeply: so fervent prayer flies as high as heaven, and will certainly bring down blessings from thence.

Cold prayers call for a denial—but fervent prayers offer a sacred violence both to heaven and earth. Look! as in a painted fire there is no heat; so in a cold prayer there is no heat, no warmth, no omnipotency, no devotion, no blessing. Cold prayers are like arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings: they pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Such prayers as have no heavenly fire in them, do always freeze before they reach as high as heaven. But fervent prayer is very prevalent with God. Acts 12:5, "Peter, therefore, was kept in prison—but prayer was made without ceasing." The Greek word signifies instant prayer, earnest prayer, stretched out prayer. These gracious souls did in prayer strain and stretch themselves, as men do that are running in a race; they prayed with all the strength of their souls, and with all the fervency of their spirits; and accordingly they carried the day with God, as you may see in the following verses.

So Acts 26:7, "They earnestly serve God day and night," or rather as the Greek has it, "in a stretched out manner, serving God day and night." They stretched out their hearts, their affections, their graces, to the utmost in prayer. In all your private retirements, do as these did. Rom 12:11, "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The Greek word signifies seething hot. God loves to see his people zealous and warm in his service. Without fervency of spirit, no service finds acceptance in heaven. God loves that his people should be lively and active in his service. Rom 12:12, "Persistent in prayer;" or "continuing with all your might in prayer." It is a metaphor from hunting dogs, which will never give over the hunt until they have got their prize. Rom 15:30, "That you strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me;" "strive mightily, strive as champions

strive, even to an agony," as the word imports. It is a military word, and notes such fervent wrestling or striving, as is for life and death.

Col 4:12, "Always laboring fervently for you in prayer." The Greek word which is here used, signifies to strive or wrestle, as those do who strive for mastery; it notes the vehemency and fervor of Epaphras' prayers for the Colossians. Look! as the wrestlers do bend, and writhe, and stretch, and strain every joint of their bodies, that they may be victorious; so Epaphras did bend, and writhe, and stretch, and strain every joint of his soul, if I may so speak—that he might be victorious with God upon the Colossians' account. So, when Jacob was with God alone, ah how earnest and fervent was he in his wrestlings with God, Gen 32:24-27; Hos 12:4-5. He wrestles and weeps, and weeps and wrestles; he tugs hard with God, he holds his hold, and he will not let God go, until as a prince he had prevailed with him. Fervent prayer is the soul's contention, the soul struggling with God; it is a sweating work, it is the sweat and blood of the soul, it is a laying out to the uttermost all the strength and powers of the soul. He who would gain victory over God in private prayer, must strain every string of his heart; he must, in beseeching God, besiege him, and so get the better of him; he must be like importunate beggars, that will not be put off with frowns, or silence, or sad answers. Those who would be masters of their requests, must, like the importunate widow, press God so far as to put him to a holy blush, as I may say with reverence: they must with a holy impudence, as Basil speaks, make God ashamed to look them in the face, if he should deny the importunity of their souls.

Had Abraham had a little more of this impudence, says one, when he made suit for Sodom, it might have done well. Abraham brought down the price to ten righteous, and there his modesty stopped him; had he gone lower, God only knows what might have been done, for God went not away, says the text, "until he had left communing with Abraham," that is, until Abraham had no more to say to God. Abraham left over asking, before God left over granting; he left over praying, before God left over conceding; and so Sodom was lost.

Oh the heavenly fire, the holy fervency that was in Daniel's closet prayer! "O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your

Name," Dan 9:19. Look! as there be two kinds of antidotes against poison, namely, hot and cold, so there are two kinds of antidotes against all the troubles of this life, namely, fervent prayers and holy patience: the one hot, the other cold; the one quickening, and the other quenching, and holy Daniel made use of them both. Fervency to prayer, is as the fire was to the spices in the censer, or as wings to the bird, or as oil to the wheels; and this Daniel found by experience. God looks not for any James with horny knees, through assiduity of prayer; nor for any Bartholomew with a hundred prayers for the morning, and as many for the evening; but for fervency of spirit in prayer, which alone carries all with God. Feeble prayers, like weak pangs, go over, and never brings a mercy to the birth. Cold prayers are stillborn children, in whom the Father of spirits can take no pleasure. Look! as a painted man is no man, and as painted fire is no fire; so a cold prayer is no prayer. Such prayers never win upon the heart of God, which do not first warm our own hearts. As a body without a soul, much wood without a fire, a bullet in a gun without powder; so are all prayers without fervency of spirit.

Luther terms prayer, the gun or cannon of Christians, or the Christian's gunshot.

The hottest springs send forth their waters by ebullitions. Cold prayers make a smoke in the eyes of God. Lazy prayers never procure noble answers; lazy beggars may starve for all their begging, Isa 1:15, and Isa 65:5.

Such as have a male in their flock, and offer to the Lord a female; such as offer to the Lord the torn, and the lame, and the sick; such as turn off God with their cold, lazy, sleepy, and formal devotions—are condemned, cast out, and cursed by God, Mal 1:13-14. David compares his prayers to incense, and no incense was offered without fire, Psalm 141:2; it was the *fire*, which made the smoke of it to ascend. It is only fervent prayer which hits the mark, and which pierces the walls of heaven, though, like those of Gaza, Isa 45:2, made of brass and iron.

While the child only whimpers and whines in the cradle, the mother lets it alone; but when once it pitches up its note, and cries outright, then she runs and takes it up. So it is with a Christian: Psalm 34:6, "This poor man

cried." There is his fervency, he cried; but it was silently and secretly, in the presence of King Achish, as Moses did at the Red Sea, and as Nehemiah did in the presence of the king of Persia. "And the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles;" here is his prevalency. So Latimer plied the throne of grace with great fervency, crying out, "Once again, Lord, once again restore the gospel to England," and God heard him.

Hudson the martyr, having prayed fervently, he was comforted immediately, and suffered valiantly.

I have read of one Giles of Bruxels, a Dutch martyr, who was so fervent in his prayer, kneeling by himself in some secret place of the prison where he was, that he seemed to forget himself; and being called to his food, he neither heard nor saw who stood by him, until he was lifted up by the arms, and then he spoke gently to them, as one awaked out of a trance.

So Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of his sister Gorgonia, says, that, in the vehemency of her prayer, she came to a religious impudency with God, so as to threaten heaven, and tell God that she would never depart from his altar until she had her petition granted.

Let us make it our business to follow these noble examples, as ever we would so please it in prayer as to prevail with God. An importunate soul in prayer is like the poor beggar, who prays and knocks, who prays and waits, who prays and works, who knocks and knocks, who begs and pleads—and will not stir from the door until he has an alms. Well, friends, remember this, God respects no more lukewarm prayers than he does lukewarm people, and they are such that he has threatened to spue out of his mouth. Those prayers that are but lip-labor are lost labor; and therefore, in all your closet prayers, look to the fervency of your spirits.

(7.) My seventh advice and counsel is this, **Be constant, as well as fervent, in closet-prayer.** Look that you hold on and hold out, and that you persevere to the end in private prayer: 1 Thess 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." A man must always pray habitually, though not actually; he must have his heart in a praying disposition in all states and conditions. Though closet-prayer may have an intermission—yet it must

never have a cessation: Luke 18:1, "And he spoke a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," or, as the Greek has it, not to shrink back, as sluggards in work, or cowards in war.

Closet-prayer is a fire like that on the altar, which was never to go out, day nor night: 1 Thess 3:10, "Night and day praying exceedingly." Paul speaks like a man made up all of prayer, like a man who minded nothing so much as prayer: so Eph 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Calvin makes this difference between "praying always" in the beginning of this verse, and "praying with perseverance" in the end of this verse: "By *praying always*," says he, "he exhorts us to pray in prosperity as well as in adversity, and not to quit the duty of prayer in a prosperous estate, because we are not driven to it by outward pressing necessities and miseries; and by *praying with perseverance*, he admonishes us that we be not weary of the work—but continue instant and constant in its performance, though we have not presently what we pray for." So that "praying always" is opposed to a neglect of the duty in its proper times and seasons, and "praying with perseverance" is opposed to a fainting in our spirits, in respect of this or that particular suit or request that we put up to God.

When God turns a deaf ear to our prayers, we must not fret nor faint, we must not be dismayed nor discouraged—but we must hold up and hold on in the duty of prayer with invincible patience, courage, and constancy, as the church did: Lam 3:8,44,55-57, compared; Col 4:2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." We must be constant and instant in closet prayer; we must wait upon it, and lay all aside for it. He who is only in his closet by fits and starts, will neither glorify God nor advantage his own soul. If we do not make a trade of closet-prayer, we shall never make any earnings of closet-prayer.

Look! as those who get money by their iron mills do keep a continual fire in their iron mills; just so, those who will get any soul-good by closet duties, they must keep close and constant to closet duties. The hypocrite is only constant in inconstancy; he is only in his closet by fits and starts. Now and then, when he is in a good mood, you shall find him step into his closet—but he never holds it: Job 27:10, "Will he always call upon

God," or, as the Hebrew has it, "Will he in every time call upon God?" When they are under the smarting rod, or when they are upon the tormenting rack, or when they are under grievous needs, or when they are struck with panic-fears, etc., then you shall have them run to their closets, as Joab ran to the horns of the altar, when he was in danger of death; but they never persevere, they never hold out to the end; and therefore in the end they lose both their closet prayers and their souls together, Isa 26:16; Psalm 78:34; Zech 7:5.

It was a most profane and blasphemous speech of that atheistical wretch, who told God "that he was no common beggar, and that he never troubled him before with prayer, and if God would but hear him that one time, he would never trouble him again."

Closet-prayer is a hard work; and a man must tug hard at it, and stick close to it, as Jacob did, if ever he intends to make any internal or eternal advantages by it, Gen 32. Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life, than to give over praying in his chamber, Dan 6. It is not he who begins in the spirit and ends in the flesh, Gal 3:3; it is not he who puts his hand to the plough and looks back, Luke 9:62; but he who perseveres to the end in prayer, who shall be saved and crowned, Matt 24:13. It is he who perseveres in well doing, who shall eat of the hidden manna, and who shall have the white stone, "and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows, but him who receives it," Rev 2:17.

Those precious, praying, mourning souls in Ezek 9:4,6, who were marked to be preserved in Jerusalem, were distinguished, say some of the learned, by the character *t, tau*, which is the last of all the Hebrew letters, to teach them that they must hold out and hold on to the end in well doing. It is constancy in closet-duty which crowns the Christian and commends the duty.

Objection—But would God have his people to cast off their callings, and to cast off all care of their relations, and shut themselves up in their closets, and there spend their whole time in secret prayer? Oh, no! Every duty must have its time and place; and as one friend must not shut out another, so one duty must not shut out another, Eccles 3:1. The duties of my particular calling as a *man*, must not shut out the duties of my general

calling as a *Christian*; neither must the duties of my general calling as a Christian, shut out the duties of my particular calling as a man. But that you may be fully satisfied in this case, you must remember that **a man may be said to pray always,**

[1.] First, **When his heart is always in a praying frame.** Look! as a man may be truly said to give always, whose heart is always in a giving frame; and to suffer always, whose heart is always in a suffering frame—"For your sake are we killed all the day long," Psalm 44:22; and to sin always, whose heart is always in a sinning frame, 2 Pet 2:14; Jer 9:3, so a man may be as truly said to pray always, whose heart is always in a praying frame.

[2.] Secondly, A man prays always **when he takes hold on every fit season and opportunity for the pouring out of his soul before the Lord in his closet.** To pray always is to pray in every opportunity; but this has been addressed before.

If we continue constant in our closet-wrestlings with God, if we hold on in private prayer though God should appear to us in the form or shape of a judge, an enemy, a stranger—we shall certainly triumph at last: "O woman, great is your faith, be it unto you even as you will; and her daughter was made whole from that very hour," Matt 15:28.

The philosopher being asked in his old age why he did not give over his practice and take his ease, answered, "When a man is to run a race of forty furlongs, would you have him sit down at the 39th, and so lose the prize, the crown for which he ran?" O sirs! if you hold not out to the end in closet-prayer, you will certainly lose the heavenly prize, the crown of life, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory. To continue in giving glory to God in this way of duty, is as necessary and requisite as to begin to give glory to God in this way of duty; for though the beginning be more than half—yet the end is more than all. The God of all perfections looks that our ultimate end should be his optimum glory; that our last works should be our best works; and that we should persevere in closet-prayer to the end, Rev 2:10.

(8.) My eighth advice and counsel is this, **In all your closet prayers,**

**thirst and long after communion with God.** In all your private retirements, rest in nothing below fellowship with God, in nothing below a sweet and spiritual enjoyment of God, Song 3:1-3; Psalm 73:28. Psalm 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The temple of the Lord, without communion with the Lord of the temple, will not satisfy David's soul.

Psalm 42:1-2, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" The deer, as Aristotle and others observe, is of all creatures most hot and dry of itself; but especially when it is chased and hunted, then it is extreme thirsty. The female is here meant, as the Greek article does manifest. Now, in the females the passions of thirst are more strong, as the naturalists observe. By this David discovers what a vehement and inflamed thirst there was in his soul after communion with God; and as nothing could satisfy the hunted deer but the water brooks, so nothing could satisfy his soul but the enjoyments of God.

Psalm 43:4, "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." The altar of God is here put for the worship of God. Now, it is not barely the worship of God—but communion with God in his worship, that was David's exceeding joy. Psalm 63:1-3, "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you." David's soul did not thirst after a crown, a kingdom, or any worldly greatness or glory—but after a choice and sweet enjoyment of God in his wilderness estate. Never did any woman with child long more after this or that, than David's soul did long to enjoy sensible communion with God in the midst of all his sorrows and sufferings.

Psalm 84:2, "My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God." By the "courts of the Lord," we are to understand the ordinances. Now, these without communion with God would never have satisfied David's soul. I

commend that speech of Bernard, "I never come from God, without God."

Whenever you go into your closets, press hard after real and sensible communion with God, that so you may come out of your closets with some shines of God upon your spirits, as Moses came down from the mount with his face shining, Exod 34:29-35. Oh, labor and long to enjoy that inward and close fellowship with God in your closets, as may leave such a choice and sweet savor of God, both upon your hearts and lives, as others may be forced to say, "Surely these have been with Jesus," Acts 4:13. It is sad when Christians return from their closets to their shops, their trades, their families, their commerce, etc., without the least visible rays of divine glory upon them.

O sirs! closet-prayer will be found to be but a dry, sapless, lifeless, heartless, comfortless thing, if you do not enjoy communion with God in it. **Communion with God is the very life, soul, and crown of all your closet duties;** and therefore press after it as for life. When you go into your closets, let everything go which may hinder your fruition of Christ; and let everything be embraced, which makes way for your enjoyment of Christ. Oh let closet-prayer be a golden bridge, a chariot to convey your souls over to God, and to bring you into a more intimate communion with God. Let no closet duty satisfy you or content you, wherein you have not conversed with God, as a child converses with his father, or as a wife converses with her husband, or as a friend converses with his friend, even face to face. Nothing speaks out more unsoundness, falseness, and baseness of heart than this—when men make duty the end of duty; prayer the end of prayer; than when men can begin a duty, and go on in a duty, and close up a duty, and bless and stroke themselves after a duty, and yet never enjoy the least communion with God in the duty!

Question. **But how shall a man know when he has a real communion with God in a duty or not?** This is a very noble and necessary question, and accordingly it calls for a clear and satisfactory answer; and therefore thus:

**Solution [1.]** First, **A man may have communion with God in sorrow and tears, when he has not communion with God in joy, delight,** Psalm 51:17. A man may have communion with God in a heart-

humbling, a heart-melting, and a heart-abasing way—when he has not communion with God in a heart-reviving, a heart-cheering, and a heart-comforting way. It is a very great mistake among many tender-hearted Christians, to think that they have no communion with God in their closets, except they meet with God embracing and kissing, cheering and comforting up their souls (Song 2:4-6). When they find God raising the springs of joy and comfort in their souls; when they find God a-speaking peace unto them; when they find the singular sensible presence of God cheering, refreshing, and enlarging of them in their closets—oh then they are willing to grant that they have had sweet communion with God in their closets. But if God meets with them in their closets, and only breaks their hearts *for* sin, and *from* sin; if he meets with them and only makes his power and his presence manifest—in debasing and casting down of their souls, upon the sight and sense of their strong corruptions and many imperfections, how unwilling are they to believe that they have had any communion with God!

Well, friends, remember this once for all, namely, that **a Christian may have as real communion with God in a heart-humbling way, as he can have in a heart-comforting way.** A Christian may have as choice communion with God when his eyes are full of tears, as he can have when his heart is full of joy, John 20:11-19. Sometimes God meets with a poor Christian in his closet, and exceedingly breaks him and humbles him; and at other times he meets with the same Christian in his closet, and mightily cheers him, and comforts him. Sometimes God meets with a poor soul in his closet, and there he sweetly quiets him and stills him; and at other times he meets with the same soul in his closet, and then he greatly revives him and quickens him. God does not always come upon the soul one way, he does not always come in at one and the same door, John 3:8. We sometimes look for a friend to come in at the front-door, and then he comes in at the back-door; and at other times, when we look for him at the back-door, then he comes in at the front-door; and just so it is with God's coming into his people's souls. Sometimes they go into their closets, and look that God will come in at the front-door of joy and comfort; and then God comes in at the back-door of sorrow and grief. And at other times, when they look that God should come in at the back-door of humiliation, breaking, and melting their hearts; then God comes

in at the front-door of joy and consolation, cheering and rejoicing their souls. But,

**[2.]** Secondly, I answer, That **all Christians do not enjoy a like communion with God in their closets.** Some enjoy much communion with God in their closets, and others enjoy but little communion with God in their closets. Moses had a more clear, glorious, and constant communion with God in his days, than any others had in those times wherein he lived, Exod 33:11; Deut 5:4; Num 12:7-8. God spoke to none "face to face," as he did to Moses. And Abraham, Gen 18, in his time, had a more close, friendly, and intimate communion with God, than holy Lot, or any others had in that day. And though all the disciples, Judas excepted, had sweet communion with Christ in the days of his flesh —yet Peter, James, and John had a more clear, choice, and full communion with him than the rest had, Matt 17:1-4. Among all the disciples John had most bosom-communion with Christ, he was the greatest favorite in Christ's court, he leaned on Christ's bosom, he could say anything to Christ, and he could know anything of Christ, and he could have anything from Christ, John 13:23; John 20:2, and John 21:20. **Now that all Christians do not enjoy communion with God alike in their closets, may be thus made evident:**

First, **All Christians do not prepare alike to enjoy closet-communion with God;** and therefore all Christians do not enjoy communion with God alike in their closets, Eccles 5:1; Psalm 10:17. Commonly he who prepares and fits himself most for closet-communion with God, he is the man who enjoys most closet-communion with God, 2 Chron 30:17-20.

Secondly, **All Christians do not alike prize communion with God in their closets.** Some prize communion with God in their closets before all and above all other things; as that noble marquis said, "Cursed be he who prefers all the world, to one hour's communion with God." They look upon it as that pearl of price, for the enjoyment of which they are ready to sell all and part with all; others prize it at a lower rate, and so enjoy less of it than those who set a higher price and value upon it, Job 23:12; Psalm 119:127; Matt 13:45-46.

Thirdly, **All Christians do not alike press after communion with God in their closets.** Some press after communion with God in their closets, as a condemned man presses after a pardon, or as a prisoner presses after freedom, or as a poor beggar presses after alms, Psalm 33:8; Isa 26:8-9. Now, you know these press on with the greatest earnestness, the greatest fervency, and the greatest importunity imaginable. But others press after communion with God in their closets more coldly, more carelessly, more slightly, more lazily: "I have taken off my robe-- must I put it on again? I have washed my feet-- must I soil them again?" Song 5:3. Now, those who press hardest after communion with God in their closets, they are usually blessed with the highest degrees of closet-communion with God.

Fourthly, **All Christians don't alike improve their communion with God in their closets;** and therefore all Christians don't enjoy communion with God alike in their closets. Some Christians do make a more wise, a more humble, a more holy, a more faithful, a more fruitful, and a more constant improvement of their closet-communion with God than others do; and therefore they are blessed with higher degrees of communion with God than others are. Some Christians do more improve their closet-communion with God against the world, the flesh, and the devil, than others do; and therefore no wonder if they do enjoy more communion with God in their closets than others do.

Fifthly, **All Christians do not alike need communion with God in their closets;** and therefore all Christians have not a like communion with God in their closets. All Christians have not a like place in the mystical body of Christ, 1 Cor 12:14, seq.; some rule, and others are ruled. Now, every man stands in more or less need of communion with God, according to the place that he bears in the body of Christ. Again, all Christians have not alike burdens to bear, nor alike difficulties to encounter with, nor alike dangers to escape, nor alike temptations to wrestle with, nor alike passions and corruptions to mortify, nor alike mercies and experiences to improve, etc.; and therefore all Christians don't need alike communion with God in their closets. Now, commonly God lets himself out more or less in ways of communion, according as the various necessities and conditions of his people does require.

Sixthly and lastly, **All Christians do not alike meet with outward interruptions, nor inward interruptions;** and therefore all Christians have not alike communion with God in their closets. Some Christians meet with a world of outward and inward interruptions more than others do; some Christians' outward callings, relations, conditions, and stations, etc., do afford more plentiful matter and occasions, to interrupt them in their closet-communion with God, than other Christians' callings, relations, conditions, and stations do, etc.

Besides, **Satan** is more busy with some Christians than he is with other Christians; and **corruptions** work more strongly and violently in some Christians than they do in other Christians, etc.; and let me add this to all the rest, that the very **natural tempers** of some Christians are more averse to closet-duties than the natural tempers of other Christians are; and therefore all Christians have not alike communion with God in their closets—but some have more and some have less, according as God in his infinite wisdom sees best.

Now, let no Christian say, that he has no communion with God in closet-prayer, because he has not such a full, such a choice, such a sweet, such a sensible, and such a constant communion with God in closet-prayer—as such and such saints have had, or as such and such saints now have; for all saints do not alike enjoy communion with God in their closets: some have more, some have less; some have a higher degree, others a lower; some are enrapt up in the third heaven, when others are but enrapt up in the clouds. What man is there so childish and babyish as to argue thus, that he has no *wisdom*, because he has not the wisdom of Solomon; or, that he has no *strength*, because he has not the strength of Samson; or, that he has no *life*, because he has not the swiftness of Ahimaaz; or, that he has no *estate*, because he has not the riches of Dives?

And yet so childish and babyish many weak Christians are, as to argue thus: namely, that they have no communion with God in their closets, because they have not such high, such comfortable, and such constant communion with God in their closets, as such and such saints have had, or as such and such saints now have! Whereas they should seriously consider, that though some saints have a great communion with God—yet other saints have but a small communion with God; and though some

Christians have a strong communion with God—yet other Christians have but a weak communion with God; and though some Christians have a very close and near communion with God—yet other Christians have but a more remote communion with God; and though some of God's servants have a daily, constant, and uninterrupted communion with God—yet others of his servants have but a more transient and inconstant communion with God. But,

**[3.]** Thirdly, I answer, **When a man acts grace in closet-duties, then certainly he has communion with God in closet-duties**, 2 Tim 1:17; 1 Tim 2:8. When a man in closet-duties acts **faith** in God, or faith in the promises, or faith in the blood of Christ; or when a man in private duties acts **repentance** for sin, or **love** to Jesus Christ, or sets up God as the object of his **holy fear**, or as the object of his **joy**, etc., then he has communion with God, then he has fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, 1 John 1:3.

An unregenerate man may act gifts and abilities in a duty—but he cannot act grace in a duty; for no man can act grace in a duty—but he who has grace in his soul; and hence it comes to pass that unsanctified people under the highest activity of their arts, parts, and gifts in religious duties, enjoy no communion with God at all; witness the scribes and pharisees, Demas, Judas, Simon Magus, etc., Isa 1:11-13. As ever you would have an evidence of your communion with God in closet-duties, carefully look to the activity of your graces, carefully stir up the grace of God which is in you, 2 Tim 1:6. But,

**[4.]** Fourthly, I answer, **When a man has communion with God in his closet, then he gives God the glory of all his actings and activities**, Psalm 115:1. Communion with God always helps a man to set *the crown of praise and honor* upon the head of God. Witness that gracious and grateful doxology of David and his people, in that 1 Chron 29:13, "Now therefore, our God, we thank you, and praise your glorious name." Men who enjoy no communion with God in religious duties, are still a-sacrificing unto their own net, and a-burning incense unto their own dragnet, Hab 1:16; they are still a blessing themselves, and a-stroking of themselves, and applauding themselves; they think the garland of praise, the crown of honor, befits no head but their own, Luke

18:11-12.

But now, men that enjoy communion with God in religious duties, they will uncrown themselves to crown God, they will uncrown their duties—to crown the God of their duties; they will uncrown their arts, parts, gifts, and enlargements—to set the crown of praise upon the head of God alone, Acts 3:11-13,16; Rev 4:10-11; Rev 5:11-12.

You think that you have communion with God in closet-duties, yes, you say that you have communion with God in closet-duties; but on whose head do you put the garland of praise? Psalm 148:13. If on God's head, you have communion with God; if on your own head, you have no communion with God. As all the rivers run into the sea, and all the lines meet in the center—so, when all our closet-duties terminate and center in the advance of God's glory, then have we communion with God in them.

Constantine used to write the name of Christ over his door. When a man has communion with Christ in a duty, then he will write the name of Christ, the honor of Christ, upon his duty. Some say that the name of Jesus was engraved upon the heart of Ignatius; sure I am, when a man has communion with God in a duty, then you shall find the honor and glory of Jesus engraved upon that duty. But,

[5.] Fifthly, I answer, **When the performance of closet-duties leaves the soul in a better frame—then a man has communion with God in them.** When a man comes off from closet-duties in a more **holy** frame, or in a more **humble** frame, or in a more **spiritual** frame, or in a more **watchful** frame, or in a more **heavenly** frame, or in a more **broken** frame, or in a more **quickened** and **enlivened** frame, etc.—then certainly he has had communion with God in those duties. When a man comes out of his closet, and finds the frame of his heart to be more strongly set against sin than ever, and to be more highly resolved to walk with God than ever, and to be more eminently crucified to the world than ever, and to be more divinely fixed against temptations than ever—then without all question, he has had communion with God in his closet.

[6.] Sixthly, I answer, **When closet-duties fit a man for those other duties** that lie next at hand, then doubtless he has had

communion with God in them. When private duties fit a man for public duties, or when private duties fit a man for the duties of his place, calling, and condition, wherein God has set him—then certainly he has had fellowship with God in them, Eccles 9:10. When a man in closet duties finds more spiritual strength and power to perform the duties that are incumbent upon him, then assuredly he has met with God. When private prayer fits me more for family prayer, or public prayer—then I may safely conclude that God has drawn near to my soul in private prayer. When one closet duty fits me for another closet duty, as when praying fits me for Scripture reading, or reading for praying; or when the more external duties in my closet, namely, reading or praying, fits me for those more spiritual and internal duties, namely, self-examination, holy meditation, soul-humiliation, etc., then I may rest satisfied that there has been some choice fellowship between God and my soul.

When the more I pray in my closet, the more fit I am to pray in my closet; and the more I read in my closet, the more fit I am to read in my closet; and the more I meditate in my closet, the more fit I am to meditate in my closet; and the more I search and examine my heart in my closet, the more fit I am to search and examine my heart in my closet; and the more I humble and abase my soul in my closet, the more fit I am to humble and abase my soul in my closet: then I may be confident that I have had communion with God in my closet.

[7.] Seventhly, I answer, That **all private communion with God is very soul-humbling and soul-abasing.** **Abraham** was a man who had much private communion with God, and a man who was very vile and low in his own eyes: Gen 18:27, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes." In respect of my *nature*, says Abraham, I am but base dust and ashes; and in respect of my *deserts*, I deserve to be burnt to ashes. There are none so humble as those who have nearest communion with God, Gen 28:10-18. **Jacob** was a man who had much private communion with God—and a man who was very little in his own eyes: Gen 22:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which you have showed unto your servant;" or, as the Hebrew has it, "I am less than all your mercies." When Jacob had to deal with Laban, he pleads his merit but when he has

to do with God, he debases himself below the least of his mercies, Gen 31:38-41. **Moses** was a man who had much private communion with God, as I have formerly evidenced, and a man who was the meekest and humblest person in all the world: Num 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth." And so, when the glory of God appeared to Moses, he falls upon his face, Num 16:22, in token of humility and self-abasing.

**David** was a man who had much private communion with God, as is granted on all hands; and how greatly does he debase himself and vilify himself! 1 Sam 26:20, "The king of Israel has come out to seek a flea;" and what more weak and contemptible than a flea? So 1 Sam 24:14, "After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom do you pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea?" As if David had said, "It is not worth the while, the labor; it is below the dignity and honor of the king of Israel to take such pains and to pursue so violently after such a poor nothing as I am, who has no more strength nor power to bite or hurt than a dead dog or a poor flea has." So Psalm 22:6, "But I am a worm, and no man." Now, what is more weak, what less regarded, what more despicable, what more trampled under foot than a poor worm? The Hebrew word which is here rendered worm, signifies a very little worm, which are so little that a man can scarcely see them, or perceive them. Thus you see that holy David debases himself below a worm, yes, below the least of worms. **No man sets so low a value upon himself, as he does who has most private communion with God.**

The twenty-four elders cast down their crowns at the feet of Jesus Christ, Rev 4:10-11. Their crowns note all their inward and outward dignities, excellencies, and glories; and the casting down of their crowns notes their great humility and self-debasement. When Christians, in their closets and out of their closets, can cast down their crowns, their duties, their services, their graces, their enlargements, their enjoyments, etc., at the feet of Jesus Christ, and sit down debasing and lessening of themselves, then certainly they have had a very near and sweet communion with God.

Austin being once asked what was the first grace, answered, humility; what the second, humility; what the third, humility.

Chrysostom has a remarkable saying of humility: "Suppose," says he, "that a man were defiled with all manner of sin and enormity—yet humble; and another man enriched with gifts, graces, and duties—yet proud; the humble sinner were in a safer condition than this proud saint."

When a man can come off from closet-duties, and say, as Ignatius once said of himself, 'I am not worthy to be called the least,' then certainly he has had fellowship with God in them. All the communion that the creature has with God in his closet is very soul-humbling and soul-abasing. In all a man's communion with God, some beams, some rays of the glory and majesty of God, will shine forth upon his soul. Now all divine manifestations are very humbling and abasing, as you may clearly see in those two great instances of Job and Isaiah: Job 42:5-6 "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear—but now my eye sees you: Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Isa 6:1,5, "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." What sweet communion had Elijah with God in the low cave!

There was a gentlewoman, of no ordinary quality or breeding, who, being much troubled in mind, and sadly deserted by God, could not be drawn by her husband, or any other Christian friends, either to hear or read anything that might work for her spiritual advantage. At last her husband, by much importunity, prevailed so far with her, that she was willing he should read one chapter in the Bible to her; so he read Isa 57, and when he came to Isa 57:15, "For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." Oh, says she, is it so, that God dwells with a contrite and humble spirit? Then I am sure he dwells with me, for my heart is broken into a thousand pieces. Oh happy text and happy time, that ever I should hear such comfort! and she was thereupon recovered. The more communion any man has with God, the more humble and broken his heart will be.

Holy Bradford was a man who had much private communion with God,

and he would many times subscribe himself in his letters, "John the hypocrite, and a very painted sepulcher." Agur was one of the wisest and holiest men on the earth in his days, and he condemned himself for being more brutish than any man, and not having the understanding of a man, Prov 30:2. How sweet is the smell of the lowly violet, which hides his head, above all the gaudy tulips that be in your garden. The lowly Christian is the most amiable and the most lovely Christian. When a man can come out of his closet, and cry out with Augustine, "I hate that which I am, and love and desire that which I am not. O wretched man who I am, in whom the cross of Christ has not yet eaten out the poisonous and the bitter taste of the first tree." Or, as another says, "Lord, I see, and yet am blind; I will, and yet rebel; I hate, and yet I love; I follow, and yet I fall; I press forward—yet I faint; I wrestle—yet I halt;" then he may be confident that he has had communion with God in his closet. He who comes off from closet-duties in a self-debasing way, and in laying of himself low at the foot of God, he certainly has had communion with God; but when men come out of their closets with their hearts swelled and lifted up, as the hearts of the pharisees were, Luke 18:11-12, it is evident that they have had no communion with God. God has not been near to their souls, who say, 'stand by yourself, come not near to me, for I am holier than you.' Isa 65:5. But,

[8.] Eighthly, and lastly, **When a man finds such a secret virtue and power running through his closet-duties—as wounds and weakens his beloved corruption**, as breaks the strength and the power of his special sin, as sets his heart more fully, resolutely, and constantly against his darling lust, as stirs up a greater rage, and a more bitter hatred, and a more fierce indignation against the toad in the bosom—then certainly he has had communion with God in his closet-duties. Consult these scriptures:

Isa 2:20, "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they have made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." In the day wherein God should take these poor hearts into communion with himself, their hearts should be filled with such rage and indignation against their most delectable and desirable idols, that they should take not only those made of trees and stones—but even their

most precious and costly idols, those who were made of silver and gold, and cast them to the moles and to the bats, to note their horrible hatred and indignation against them. Idolatry was the darling-sin of the Jews; their hearts were so exceedingly affected and delighted with their idols, that they did not care what they spent upon them: Isa 46:6, "They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a God: they fall down, yes, they worship it." The word here used for lavish, in the Hebrew, signifies properly to waste, or spend riotously; they set so light by their treasure, that they cared not what they spent upon their idols. God gave them gold and silver as pledges of his favor and bounty, and they lavish it out upon their idols, as if God had hired them to be wicked.

Oh, but when God should come and take these poor wretches into a close and near communion with himself, then you shall find their wrath and rage to rise against their idols, as you may see in that Isa 30:19-21. Their communion with God is more than hinted; but mark, Isa 30:22, "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them—Away with you!" None defile, deface, detest, and disgrace their idols like those who are taken into communion with God. Fellowship with God will make a man cast away, as a menstruous cloth, those very idols, in which he has most delighted, and with which he has been most pleased and enamored.

Idols were Ephraim's bosom-sin. Hos 4:17, "Ephraim is joined," or glued, as the Hebrew has it, "to idols; let him alone." Oh! but when you find Ephraim taken into close communion with God, as you do in that Hos 14:4-7, then you shall find another spirit upon him: Hos 14:8, "Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?" I have had too much to do with them already, I will never have to do with them any more. Oh! how does my soul detest and abhor them, and rise up against them. Oh! how do I now more loathe and abominate them, than ever I have formerly loved them, or delighted in them. After the return of the Jews out of Babylon, they so hated and abhorred idols, that in the time of the Romans they chose rather to die, than allow the eagle, which was the imperial insignia, to be set up in their temple.

Though closet-duties are weak in themselves—yet when a man has communion with God in them, then they prove exceeding powerful to the casting down of strongholds, and vain imaginations, and every high thing and thought, which exalts itself against the knowledge of God, 2 Cor 10:4-5. When a man comes out of his closet with a heart more fully and steadfastly set against every known sin—but especially against his bosom-sin, his darling-sin, his Delilah which he played and sported himself most with, and which he has hugged with pleasure and delight in his bosom—then certainly he has had private communion with God.

After Moses had enjoyed forty days' private communion with God in the mount, how did his heart rise, and his anger wax hot against the molten calf that his people had made! Exod 32:19-20, "When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it." Moses had never more intimate fellowship with God than now, and he never discovered so much holy zeal, anger, and indignation against sin as now.

When a man comes off from the mount of closet-duties with a greater hatred, anger, wrath, and indignation against bosom-sins, darling-sins, complexion-sins, which were once as dear to him as right hands or right eyes, or as Delilah was to Samson, or Herodias to Herod, or Isaac to Abraham, or Joseph to Jacob, then certainly he has had communion with God in those duties. When a man finds his beloved sins, his Delilahs, which, like the prince of devils, command all other sins, to fall before his closet-duties, as Dagon fell before the ark, or as Goliath fell before David—then assuredly he has had fellowship with God in them.

Pliny writes of some families which had secret marks on their bodies, peculiar to those of that line. Certainly, there are no people—but have some sin or sins; some secret marks on their souls, that may in a peculiar way be called theirs. Now when in private duties they find the bent of their hearts, and the purposes, resolutions, and inclinations of their souls more raised, inflamed, and set against these, they may safely and comfortably conclude, that they have had communion with God in them.

O sirs! **there is no no bosom-sin so sweet or profitable, that is worth burning in hell for, or worth shutting out of heaven for;** and therefore, in all your private duties and services, labor after that communion with God in them, that may break the neck and heart of your most bosom-sins. When Darius fled before Alexander, that he might run the faster out of danger, he threw away his massive crown from his head. As ever you would be safe from eternal danger, throw away your golden and your silver idols, throw away your bosom-sins, your darling lusts.

And thus I have done with the answers to that noble and necessary question, that was last proposed.

(9.) My ninth advice and counsel is this, **In all your closet-duties look that your ends be right, look that the glory of God be your ultimate end**, the mark, the bulls-eye, that you have in your eye. There is a great truth in that old saying, that "duties are esteemed, not by their acts—but by their ends." Look! as the shining sun overshadows the light of the fire, so the glory of God must consume all other ends. There may be bad aims in good actions, as in Jehu's zeal. Two things make a good Christian, good actions and good aims. And though a good aim does not make a bad action good, as in Uzzah—yet a bad aim makes a good action bad, as in Jehu, whose justice was approved—but his policy punished. God writes 'worthless' upon all those services, wherein men's ends are not right: Jer 32:23, "They obeyed not your voice, neither walked in your law, they have done nothing of all that you have commanded them to do." So Dan 9:13, "All this evil is come upon us—yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God." The Jews were very much in religious duties and services; witness Isa 1:11-15; Isa 58:1-3; Zech 7:5-6. I might produce a hundred more witnesses to confirm it, were it necessary; but because they did not aim at the glory of God in what they did, therefore the Lord writes a cipher upon all their duties and services. It was Ephraim's folly, that he brought forth fruit unto *himself*, Hos 10:1.

It was the Pharisees' hypocrisy, that in all their duties and services they looked at the praise of men. Matt 6:1-5, "Verily," says Christ, "you have your reward." A poor, a pitiful reward indeed! Such men shall be sure to fall short of divine acceptance, and of a glorious recompense; who are not

able to look above the praises of men. Woe to that man who, with Augustus, is ambitious to go off the *stage of duty* with a plaudit. Peter was not himself when he denied his Lord, and cursed himself to get credit among a cursed crew. As ever you would ask and have, speak and speed, seek and find—see that the glory of the Lord be engraved upon all your closet-duties. He shall be sure to speed best, whose heart is set most upon glorifying of God in all his secret retirements. When God crowns us, he does but crown his own gifts in us; and when we give God the glory of all we do, we do but give him the glory which is due unto his name; for it is he, and he alone, who works all our works in us and for us.

All closet-duties are good or bad, as the mark is at which the soul aims. He who makes God the object of closet-prayer—but not the end of closet-prayer, does but lose his prayer, and take pains to undo himself. God will be all in all—or he will be nothing at all. **Such prayers never reach the ear of God, nor delight the heart of God, nor shall ever be lodged in the bosom of God—which are not directed to the glory of God.** The end must be as noble as the means, or else a man may be undone after all his doings. A man's most splendid actions will at last be found to be but **splendid sins**, if he has made himself, and not the glory of God, the end of those actions.

(10.) My tenth advice and counsel is this, **Be sure that you offer all your closet prayers in Christ's name, and in his alone;** John 14:13-14, "And whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." John 15:16, "Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." John 16:23-24, "In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." O sirs! this is your privilege as well as your comfort, that you never deal with God but by a mediator. When you appear before God, Jesus Christ appears with you, and he appears for you; when you invoke—then he advocates; when you put up your petitions—then he does make intercession for you. Christ gives you a commission to put his name upon all your requests; and whatever prayer comes up with this name upon it, he will procure it an

answer. In the state of innocency, man might worship God without a mediator; but since sin has made so wide a breach between God and man, God will accept of no worship from man—but what is offered up by the hand of a mediator. Now this mediator is Christ alone; 1 Tim 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." One mediator, not of redemption only, as the papists grant—but of intercession also, which they deny.

The papists make saints and angels co-mediators with Christ; but in this, as in other things, they fight against clear Scripture light. The apostle plainly tells us, that the office of intercession pertains unto Christ, as part of his mediation, Heb 7:25: and it is certain, that we need no other *master of requests* in heaven—but the man Christ Jesus; who being so near to the Father, and so dear to the Father, and so much in with the Father, can doubtless accomplish anything with the Father, which makes for his glory and our good. This was typified in the law. The high-priest alone did enter into the sanctuary, and carry the names of the children of Israel before the Lord, while the people stood all outside; this pointed out Christ's mediation, Exod 28:29. In Lev 16:13-14, you read of two things: first, of the cloud of incense that covered the mercy seat; secondly, of the blood of the bullock, which was sprinkled before the mercy-seat. Now that blood typified Christ's satisfaction, and the cloud of incense his intercession.

Some of the learned think, that Christ intercedes only by virtue of his merits; others, that it is done only with his mouth. I suppose it may be done both ways, the rather because Christ has a tongue, as also a whole body—but glorified, in heaven; and is it likely, that that mouth which pleaded so much for us on earth, should be altogether silent for us in heaven?

There is no coming to the Father—but by the Son, John 14:6. Christ is the true Jacob's ladder, by which we must ascend to heaven. Joseph, you know, commanded his brethren, that as ever they looked for any good from him, or to see his face with joy, that they should be sure to bring their brother Benjamin along with them. O sirs! as ever you would be prevalent with God, as ever you would have sweet, choice, and comfortable returns from heaven to all your closet-prayers, be sure that

you bring your elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the arms of your faith, be sure that you treat and trade with God only in the name of the Lord Jesus.

When you go to closet-prayer, look that you pray not in your own names—but in the name of Christ; and that you believe and hope not in your own names—but in the name of Christ; and that you look not to speed in your own names—but in the name of Christ: Col 3:17, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Whatever we do, we are to do it by the *authority* of Christ, and through the *assistance* of Christ, and in the *name* of Christ, and for the *sake* and *glory* of Christ. Christ's name is so precious and powerful with the Father, that it will carry any suit, obtain any request at his hands. When a man writes the name of Jesus upon his closet-prayers, then he shall be sure to speed. Though God will not give a man a drop, a sip, a crumb, a crust, for his own sake—yet for Jesus' sake he will give the best, the choicest, and the greatest blessings that heaven affords; that name is still mighty and powerful, prevalent and precious before the Lord.

The prayers which were offered up with the *incense* upon the altar were pleasing, Rev 8:3; and were accepted by God, Rev 8:4. Joseph's brethren were kindly received for Benjamin's sake. O sirs! all our duties and services are accepted by the Father, not for their own sakes, nor for our sakes—but for Christ's sake! There are no prayers that are either heard, owned, accepted, regarded, or rewarded—but such as Christ puts his hand to. If Christ does not mingle his blood with our sacrifices, our services—they will be lost, and never ascend as incense before the Lord. No coin is accepted, which has not Caesar's stamp upon it; nor any prayers are accepted in heaven, which have not the stamp of Christ upon them. There is nothing more pleasing to our heavenly Father, than to use the mediation of his Son. Such shall be sure to find most favor, and to speed best in the court of heaven—who present themselves before the Father with Christ in their arms. But,

(11.) My eleventh and last advice and counsel is this, **When you come out of your closets, narrowly watch what becomes of your private prayers.** Look at what door, in what way, and by what hand the Lord shall please to give you an answer to the secret desires of your souls.

It has been the custom of the people of God, to look after their prayers, to see what success they have had, to observe what answer they have found in heaven: Psalm 5:3, "My voice shall you hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto you—and will look up." In the words you may observe two things: first, David's posture in prayer; secondly, his practice after prayer. First, His posture in prayer, "I will direct my prayer unto you." Secondly, His practice after prayer, "And I will look up." The psalmist, in these words, makes use of two military words. First, he would not only pray—but marshal up his prayers, he would put them in battle-array; so much the Hebrew word imports. Secondly, when he had done this, then he would be as a watchman upon his watchtower, to see whether he prevailed, whether he got the answer or not; and so much the Hebrew word imports. When David had set his prayers, his petitions, in rank and file, in good array, then he was resolved he would look abroad, he would look about him, to see at what door God would send in an answer of prayer.

He is either a fool or a madman, he is either very weak or very wicked, who prays and prays—but never looks after his prayers; who shoots many an arrow towards heaven—but never minds where his arrows alight: Psalm 85:8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints." If David would have God to hearken to his prayers, he must then hearken to what God will speak; and upon this point it seems he was fully resolved. David's prayer you have in Psalm 85:1-7, and his gracious resolution you have in Psalm 85:8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." As if he had said, "Certainly it will not be long before the Lord will give me a gracious answer, a seasonable and a suitable return to my present prayers."

Psalm 130:1-2,5-6, "Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice, let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning; I say, more than those who watch for the morning." Those who watch abroad in dangerous times and severe weather look frequently for peep of day. How does the weary sentinel, who is wet with the rain of heaven or with the dew of the night—wait and watch, look and long, for

the morning light. Now this was the frame and temper of David's spirit when he came off from praying; he falls a-waiting for a gracious answer. Shall the farmer wait for the precious fruits of the earth, and shall the merchantman wait for the return of his ships, and shall the wife wait for the return of her husband, who is gone a long journey? James 5:7-8, and shall not a Christian wait for the return of his prayers?

Noah patiently waited for the return of the dove to the ark with an olive-branch in his mouth, so must you patiently wait for the return of your prayers. When *children* shoot their arrows, they never mind where they fall; but when prudent archers shoot their arrows, they stand and watch where they fall. You must deal by your prayers as prudent archers do by their arrows. Hab 2:1, "I will stand at my guard post and station myself on the lookout tower. I will watch to see what He will say to me." The prophet, in the former chapter, having been very earnest in his expostulations, and very fervent in his supplications, he gets now upon his watchtower, to see what becomes of his prayers. He stands as a sentinel, and watches as vigilantly and as carefully as a spy, a scout, earnestly longing to hear and see the event, the outcome, and success of his prayers.

That Christian who in prayer has one eye upon a divine precept, and another upon a gracious promise—that Christian will be sure to look after his prayers. He who prays and waits, and waits and prays, shall be sure to speed; he shall never fail of rich returns, Psalm 40:1-4. He who can pray as well as wait, and he who can be contented that God is glorified, though he himself is not gratified; he who dares not demand God's promises immediately, but patiently waits for the accomplishment of them—he may be confident that he shall have seasonable and suitable answers to all those prayers that he has posted away to heaven.

Though God seldom comes at our time—yet he never fails to come at his own time: "He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry," Heb 10:37. The mercies of God are not styled the *swift*—but the "*sure* mercies of David." He who makes as much conscience to look after his prayers as to pray, he shall shortly clap his hands for joy, and cry out with that blessed martyr, "He has come, he has come, he has come." Certainly there is little worth in that man's heart, or in that man's prayers, who keeps up a trade

of prayer—but never looks what becomes of his prayers. When you are in your closets, marshal your prayers; see that every prayer keeps his place and ground; and when you come out of your closets, then look up for an answer; only take heed that you be not too hasty and hot with God. Though mercy in the promise be yours—yet the *time* of giving it out is the Lord's; and therefore you must *wait* as well as pray.

And thus much by way of **counsel** and **advice**, for the better carrying on of closet prayer.

I have now but one thing more to do before I close up this discourse, and that is, to lay down some **means, rules, or directions** which may be of use to help you on in a faithful and conscientious discharge of this great duty, namely, closet-prayer.

### **Means, Rules, and Directions**

I have now but one thing more to do before I close up this discourse, and that is, to lay down some **means, rules, or directions** which may be of use to help you on in a faithful and conscientious discharge of this great duty, namely, closet-prayer. And therefore thus,

(1.) First, As ever you would give up yourselves to private prayer, **Take heed of an idle and slothful spirit.** If Adam, in the state of innocency, must work and dress the garden, and if, after his fall, when he was monarch of all the world, he must yet labor—why should any be idle or slothful? Idleness is a sin against the law of creation. God created man to labor, the idle person violates this law of creation; for by his idleness he casts off the authority of his Creator, who made him for labor. Idleness is a contradiction to the principles of our creation. Man in innocency should have been freed from weariness—but not from employment; he was to dress the garden by divine appointment: "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it," Gen 2:15. All weariness in labor, and all vexing, tiring, and tormenting

labor, came in by the fall: "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread," Gen 3:19. The bread of idleness is neither sweet nor sure: "An idle person shall suffer hunger," says Solomon, Prov 19:15. "Warn those who are idle." 1 Thessalonians 5:14

An idle life and a holy heart are far enough asunder. By doing nothing, says the heathen man, men learn to do evil things. It is easy slipping out of an idle life into an evil and wicked life; yes, an idle life is of itself evil, for man was made to be active, not to be idle. The Cyclops thought man's happiness did consist in doing nothing; but no excellent thing can be the child of idleness. Idleness is a mother-sin, a breeding-sin; it is the devil's cushion, on which he sits, and the devil's anvil, on which he frames very great and very many sins, Eph 4:28; 2 Thess 3:10,12. Look! as toads and serpents breed most in standing waters, so sin thrives most in idle people. Idleness is that which provokes the Lord to forsake men's bodies, and the devil to possess their souls.

No man has less means to preserve his body, and more temptations to infect his soul, than an idle person. Oh shake off sloth! The sluggish Christian will be sleeping, or idling, or trifling, when he should be in his closet a-praying. Sloth is a fatal sickness of the soul; get it cured, or it will be your eternal bane. Of all devils, it is the idle devil which keeps men most out of their closets. There is nothing that gives the devil so much advantage against us as idleness. It was good counsel that Jerome gave to his friend, that when the devil comes with a temptation, you may answer him you are not at leisure.

It was the speech of Mr. Greenham, once a famous preacher of this nation, that when the devil tempted a poor soul, she came to him for advice how she might resist the temptation, and he gave her this answer: "Never be idle—but be always well employed, for in my own experience I have found it. When the devil came to tempt me, I told him that I was not at leisure to hearken to his temptations, and by this means I resisted all his assaults." Idleness is the time of temptation, and an idle person is the devil's tennis-ball, tossed by him at his pleasure.

"He who labors," said the old hermit, "is tempted but by one devil—but he who is idle is assaulted by all." Cupid complained that he could never

fasten upon the Muses, because he could never find them idle. The fowler bends his bow and spreads his net for birds when they are set, not when they are upon the wing. So Satan shoots his most fiery darts at men, when they are most idle and slothful. And this the Sodomites found by woeful experience, Ezek 16:49, when God rained hell out of heaven upon them, both for their idleness, and for those other sins of theirs, which their idleness did expose them to.

It was said of Rome, that during the time of their wars with Carthage and other enemies in Africa, they knew not what vice meant; but no sooner had they got the conquest—but through idleness they came to ruin. Idleness is a sin, not only against the law of grace—but also against the light of nature. You cannot look any way but every creature checks and upbraids your idleness and sloth; if you look up to the heavens, there you shall find all their glorious lights constant in their motions, "The sun rejoices as a strong man to run a race," Psalm 19:5; Psalm 104:23; the winds blow, the waters run, the earth brings forth her pleasant and delightful fruits, all the fish in the sea, fowls in the air, and beasts in the fields and on the mountains, have their motions and operations, all which call aloud upon man not to be idle—but active. Solomon sends the sluggard to the ant to learn industry, Prov 6:6. The ant is a very little creature—but exceeding laborious. Nature has put an instinct into her to be very busy and active all the summer; she is early and late at it, and will not lose an hour unless the weather hinders.

And the prophet Jeremiah sends the Jews to school to learn to wait, and observe of the stork, the turtle-dove, the crane, and the swallow, Jer 8:7. And our Savior sends us to the sparrows and lilies, to learn attendance upon providence, Matt 6:26,28. And let me send you to the busy bee, to learn activity and industry; though the bee is little in bulk—yet it is great in service; she flies far, examines the fields, hedges, trees, orchards, gardens, and loads herself with honey and wax, and then returns to her hive. Now how should the activity of these creatures put the idle person to a blush. O sirs! man is the most noble creature, into whom God has put principles of the greatest activity, as capable of the greatest and highest enjoyments; and therefore idleness is a forgetting man's dignity, and a forsaking of that rank that God has set him in, and a debasing of himself

below the least and basest creatures, who constantly in their order obediently serve the law of their creation. Nay, if you look up to the blessed angels above you, you shall still find them active and serviceable; "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb 1:14. And if you look down to the demons of darkness below you, oh how laborious and industrious are they to destroy and damn your precious and immortal souls! 1 Pet 5:8.

For a close, remember that idleness is so great an evil, that it has been condemned and severely punished by the very worst of men. Among the Egyptians, idleness was a capital crime. Among the Lucans, he who lent money to an idle person was to forfeit it. By Solon's law, idle people were to suffer death; and Seneca had rather be sick than idle. The Lacedemonian called men to an account for their idle hours. Antoninus Pius, being emperor, caused the roofs and coverings of all such houses to be taken away, as were known to receive in idle people, affirming that nothing was more unfitting, or absurd to be allowed, than such idle caterpillars and slowworms to have their food and nourishment from that commonwealth, in the maintenance of which there was no supply from their industry and labor. All which should steel us and arm us against sloth and idleness.

I have the longer insisted on this, because there is not a greater hindrance to closet prayer than sloth and idleness. Slothful and idle people commonly lie so long a-bed, and spend so much precious time between the comb and the glass, and in eating, drinking, sporting, and trifling, etc., that they can find no time for private prayer. Certainly such as had rather go sleeping to hell, than sweating to heaven, will never care much for closet-prayer. And therefore shun sloth and idleness, as you would shun a lion in the way, or poison in your food, or coals in your bosom, or else you will never find time to wait upon God in your closets.

(2.) Secondly, **Take heed of spending too much of your precious time about circumstantials, about the minor things of religion,** as "mint, anise, and cummin," Matt 23:23, or in searching into the circumstances of worship, or in standing stoutly for this or that ceremony, or about inquiring what fruit it was which Adam ate in paradise, or in inquiring after things which God in his infinite wisdom

has concealed, or in inquiring what God did before the world was made. When one asked Austin that question, he answered, "that he was preparing hell for such busy questionists as he was." It was a saying of Luther, "From a vain-glorious doctor, from a contentious pastor, and from unprofitable questions, the good Lord deliver his church." It is one of Satan's great designs to hinder men in the great and weighty duties of religion, by busying them most about the lowest and least matters of religion. Satan is never better pleased, than when he sees Christians puzzled and perplexed about those things in religion, which are of no great consequence or importance, Col 2:21. Such as who trade in religion for a good name, more than a good life; for a good report, more than a good conscience; to humor others, more than to honor God, etc., such will take no pleasure in closet-duties. Such as are more busied about ceremonies than substances, about the form of godliness than the power, 2 Tim 3:5, such will never make it their business to be much with God in their closets, as is evident in the Scribes and Pharisees, Matt 6:1-6. Such as are more taken up with the outward dress and garb of religion, than they are with the spirit, power, and life of religion. Such will never make a secret trade heavenwards, Luke 11:34-40. **There cannot be a surer nor a greater character of a hypocrite, than to make a great deal of stir about little things in religion, and in the mean while neglect the great and main things in religion.** Such as these have all along in the Scripture discovered a strangeness, and a perfect carelessness as to closet duties. I never knew any man hot and zealous about circumstantials, about the little things of religion, who was ever famous for closet prayer. But,

(3.) Thirdly, **Take heed of curiosity, and of spending too much of your precious time in searching into those dark, abstruse, mysterious, and hidden truths and things of God and religion,** which lie most remote from the understanding of the best and wisest of men. Curiosity is the spiritual adultery of the soul. Curiosity is a spiritual drunkenness; for look, as the drunkard is never satisfied unless he sees the bottom of the cup, be it ever so deep; so those who are troubled with the itch of curiosity, will say they can never be satisfied until they come to the bottom of the most deep and profound things of God. They love to pry into God's secrets, and to scan the mysteries of religion—by their weak,

shallow reason—and to be wise above what is written. Curious searchers into the deep mysterious things of God will make all God's depths to be shallows, rather than they will be thought not able to fathom them by the short line of their own reason.

Oh that men would once learn to be **contentedly ignorant**, where God would not have them knowing! Oh that men were once so humble, as to account it no disparagement to them, to acknowledge some depths in God, and in the blessed Scripture, which their shallow reason cannot fathom! They are only a company of fools, who attempt to know more than God would have them. Did not Adam's tree of knowledge make him and his posterity mere fools? He who goes to school to his own reason, has a fool for his schoolmaster!

The ready way to grow stark blind is to be still prying and gazing upon the body of the sun: so the ready way to spiritual blindness is to be still prying into the most secret and hidden things of God, Deut 29:29. Are there not many who, by prying long into the secrets of *nature*, are become archenemies to the *grace* of God? Rom 9:20. Oh that we were wise to admire those deep mysteries which we cannot understand, and to adore those depths and counsels which we cannot reach. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" Romans 11:33. "There are secret things which belong to the Lord our God." Deuteronomy 29:29. "For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9

Oh let us check our curiosity in the things of God, and sit down satisfied and contented to resolve many of God's actions into some hidden causes which lie secret in the abyss of his eternal knowledge and infallible will. Christ, when he was on earth, very frequently, severely, and sharply condemned curious inquirers, as is evident by these scriptures: [John 21:22; Acts 1:6-7] and the great reason why our Savior did so frequently check this humor of curiosity, was because the great indulgers of it were too frequent neglecters of the more great, necessary, and important points of religion.

Curiosity is one of Satan's most dangerous weapons, by which he keeps

many souls out of their closets, yes, out of heaven. When many a poor soul begins in good earnest to look towards heaven, and to apply himself to closet duties, then Satan begins to bestir himself, and to labor with all his might, so to busy the poor soul with vain inquiries, and curious speculations, and unprofitable curiosities, that the soul has no time for closet prayer. Ah! how well might it have been with many a man, had he but spent one quarter of that time in closet prayer, that he has spent in curious inquiries after things that have not been fundamental to his happiness.

The heathenish priests affected curiosity, they had their mythologies, and strange canting expressions of their imaginary inaccessible deities, to amaze and amuse their blind superstitious followers, and thereby to hold up their popish and apish idolatries in greater veneration. Oh that there were none of this heathenish spirit among many in these days, who have their faces toward heaven! Ah! how many are there that busy themselves more in searching after the reasons of the irrecoverableness of man's fall, than they do to recover themselves out of their fallen estate! Ah, how many are there that busy themselves more about the apostasy of the angels, than they do about securing their saving interest in Christ! And what a deal of precious time have some spent in discovering the natures, distinctions, properties, and orders of angels.

That high-soaring, imaginative Dionysius describes the hierarchy of angels as exactly as if he had dwelt among them. He says there are nine orders of them, which be grounds upon nine words, which are found partly in the Old Testament, and partly in the New; as seraphims, cherubim, thrones, powers, hosts, dominions, principalities, archangels, and angels; and then he describes their several natures, distinctions, and properties, as that the first three orders are for immediate attendance on the Almighty, and the next three orders for the general government of the creatures, and the last three orders for the particular good of God's elect; that the archangel surpasses the beauty of angels ten times, principalities surpass the archangels twenty times, and that powers surpass the principalities forty times, etc. How he came by this learning is not known, and yet this hierarchy in these nine several orders has passed for current through many ages of the church.

The devil knows he is no loser, and the curious soul but a very little gainer, if he can but persuade him to spend most of his precious time in studying and poring upon the most dark, mysterious, and hidden things of God. He who affects to read the Revelation of John more than his plain epistles; or Daniel's prophecies more than David's Psalms; and is more busy about reconciling difficult scriptures than he is about mortifying of unruly lusts, or who is set more upon vain speculations than upon things that make most for edification—he is not the man who is cut out for closet-prayer. Such as affect sublime notions, obscure expressions, and are men of abstracted conceits, are but a company of wise fools, that will never take any delight to be with God in a corner. Had many men spent but half that time in secret prayer, that they have spent in seeking after the philosopher's stone, how happy might they have been! Oh how holy, how happy, how heavenly, how humble, how wise, how knowing, might many men have been, had they spent but half that time in closet prayer, that they have spent in searching after those things that are hard to be understood! 2 Pet 3:16. But,

(4.) Fourthly, **Take heed of engaging yourselves in a crowd of worldly businesses.** Many have so much to do on earth that they have no time to look up to heaven. As much earth puts out the fire, so much worldly business puts out the fire of heavenly affections. Look! as the earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Num 22:32; so much worldly business swallows up so much precious time, that many men have no leisure to be with God in their closets. "This business is to be done, and that business cannot be omitted, and the other necessary occasion must be attended—so that I have no leisure to step out of my shop into my closet," says the earthly-minded man, Phil 3:19. Thus a crowd of worldly businesses crowds closet-prayer quite out of doors. Many drive so great a trade in their shops, that their private trade to heaven is quite laid by. There is nothing that has kept men more from Christ and closet-prayer, than the shop, the exchange, the farm, and the oxen, etc., Luke 14:16-22.

The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole; and men that are least perplexed with worldly businesses are commonly nearest to God, to Christ, to heaven, and so the fitter for closet-prayer. It is sad when men

grasp so much worldly business, that they can have no leisure for communion with God in private prayer. The noise is such in a mill, as hinders all private fellowship between man and man; and so a multitude of worldly businesses make such a noise, as that it hinders all private fellowship between God and the soul. If a man of much business should now and then slide into his closet—yet his head and his heart will be so filled and distracted with the thoughts of his employments, that God shall have little of him but his bodily presence, or, at most—but bodily exercise, which profits little, 1 Tim 4:8. If Christ blamed Martha, Luke 10:40-42, for the multitude of her domestic employments, though they were undertaken for the immediate service and entertainment of himself, because they hindered her in her soul-concernments; oh how will he one day blame all those who, by running themselves into a crowd of worldly businesses, do cut themselves off from all opportunities of pouring out their souls before him in secret! But,

(5.) Fifthly, **Take heed of secret sins.** There is no greater hindrance to secret prayer in all the world than secret sins; and therefore stand upon your watch, and arm yourselves with all your might against them. There is an antipathy between secret sinning and secret praying; partly from guilt, which makes the soul shy of coming under God's secret eye; and partly from those fears, doubts, disputes, and disorders, which secret sins raise in the heart. Light is not more opposite to darkness, Christ to Belial, nor heaven to hell, than secret prayer is to secret sins; and therefore, whatever you do, look that you keep clear of secret sins. To that purpose consider these four things:

[1.] First, That **God is privy to our most secret sins.** [Psalm 139:1-4; Jer 13:27, and Jer 29:23; Psalm 39:1; 1 Kings 20:39; Job 10:12] His eye is as much upon secret sins, as it is upon open sins: Psalm 90:8, "You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance." God has an eye upon our inmost evils, he sees all that is done in the dark: Jer 23:24, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." Prov 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." To say that God does not see the most secret sins of men, is not only derogatory to his omniscience—but also to his mercy; for

how can God pardon those sins, which he does not see to be sins?

There is no cloud, nor curtain, nor moment of darkness, that can stand between the eyes of God and the ways of men: Prov 5:21, "The ways of men are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his goings." In this scripture Solomon mainly speaks of the ways of the adulterer, which usually are plotted with the most cunning secrecy; yet God sees all those ways. Look! as no boldness can exempt the adulterer from the justice of God, so no secrecy can hide him from the eye of God. Though men labor to hide their ways from others, and from themselves—yet it is but labor in vain to endeavor to hide them from God. Men who labor to hide God from themselves, can never hide themselves from God.

I have read that Paphnutius turned Thais and Ephron, two infamous strumpets, from immorality, only with this argument, "That God sees all things in the dark, when the doors are closed, the windows shut, and the curtains drawn." Heb 4:13, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened (that is, anatomized) even to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." It is an allusion to the priests under the law, who, when they killed an animal for sacrifice, all things that were within the beast were laid open and naked before the priest, that he might see what was sound and what was corrupted. Though evil is done out of the eye of all the world—yet it is naked and manifest in his sight with whom we have to do.

Those sins which lie closest and are most secretly lurking in the heart, are as obvious and odious to God as those which are most fairly written upon a man's forehead. God is **all eye**; so that He sees all—even the most secret turnings and windings of our hearts. Our most secret sins are as plainly seen by him, as anything can be seen by us at noonday: Psalm 139:11-12, "If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you." It is not the thickest clouds which can bar out his observance, whose eyes fill heaven and earth. What is the curtain, or the darkest night, or the double lock, or the secret chamber—to him who clearly observes all things in a perfect nakedness. God has an eye upon the most inward intentions of the heart, and the most subtle motions of the soul.

Those philosophers were wrong, who held the eye and ear of God descended no lower than the heavens. Certainly there is not a creature, not a thought, not a thing—but lies open to the all-seeing eye of God. The Lord knows our all secret sinnings as exactly as our visible sinnings: Psalm 44:21, "He knows the secrets of our hearts." Would not a malefactor speak truly at the trial, did he know, did he believe that the judge had windows which looked into his heart?

Athenodorus, a heathen, could say, that all men ought to be careful in the actions of their life, because God was everywhere, and beheld all that was done.

Zeno, a wise heathen, affirmed that God beheld even the thoughts.

It was an excellent saying of Ambrose, "If you cannot hide yourself from the sun, which is God's minister of light, how impossible will it be to hide yourself from him, whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun." Though a sinner may baffle his conscience—yet he cannot baffle the eye of God's omniscience! Oh! that poor souls would remember, that as they are never out of the reach of God's hand, so they are never from under the view of his eye. God is 'totus oculus', all eye. Jer 16:17, "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes." Job 34:21-22, "His eyes are on the ways of men; he sees their every step. There is no dark place, no deep shadow, where evildoers can hide." Jer 32:19, "Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve."

You know what Ahasuerus, that great monarch, said concerning Haman, when coming in he found him cast upon the queen's couch, on which she sat, "What," says he, "Will he even molest the queen while she is *with me in the house?*" Esther 7:8. "What, will he dare to commit such villany, and *I stand and look on?*" O sirs! to sin in the sight of God, to do wickedly under the eye of God, is a thing that he looks upon as the greatest affront, and as the highest indignity that can possibly be done unto him. What, says God, will you be drunk before me? Will you swear and blaspheme before me? Will you be wanton and unclean before me? Will you be unjust and unrighteous under my eye? Will you pollute my ordinances before my face? Will you despise and persecute my servants in my presence? etc. This, then, is the killing aggravation of all sin—that it is done before the face of God, that it is committed in the royal presence of the King of kings!

The very consideration of God's omnipresence should bravely arm us against sin and Satan; the consideration of his all-seeing eye should make us shun all occasions of sin, and make us shy of all appearances of sin. Shall the eye of the teacher keep the scholar from blotting his copy? Shall the eye of the judge keep the malefactor from thieving and stealing? Shall the eye of the master keep the servant from idling and trifling? Shall the eye of the father keep the child from wandering and gadding? Shall the eye of the husband keep the wife from extravagancies and indecencies?

Shall the sharp eye of a near neighbor, or the quick eye of a bosom-friend—keep you from many enormities and vanities? And shall not the strict, the pure, the jealous eye of an all-seeing God, keep you from sinning in the secret chamber, when all curtains are drawn, doors bolted, and everyone in the house sleeping--but you and your Delilah? Oh! what dreadful atheism is bound up in that man's heart, who is more afraid of the eye of his father, his pastor, his child, his servant, than he is of the eye and presence of the eternal God! Oh! that all whom this concerns, would take such serious notice of it, as to judge themselves severely for it, as to mourn bitterly over it, as to strive mightily in prayer with God both for the pardon of it, and for power against it.

The apostle sadly complains of some in his time who wallowed in secret sins. Eph 5:12, "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." He speaks of such as had lived in secret fornications and uncleanness. There were many that had put on a form of godliness, who yet did allow themselves in the secret actings of abominable wickedness and filthiness, as if there were no God to behold them, nor conscience to accuse them, nor judgment-day to arraign them, nor justice to condemn them, nor hell to torment them! Oh! how infinitely odious must they be in the eyes of a holy God, who can highly court and compliment him in public, and yet are so bold as to provoke him to his face in private. These are like those whores, who pretend a great deal of affection and respect to their husbands abroad, and yet at home will play the harlots before their husbands' eyes.

Such as perform religious duties only to cloak and color over their secret filthinesses, their secret wickednesses; such as pretend to pay their vows, and yet wait for the twilight, Prov 7:13-15; Job 24:15; such as commit wickedness in a corner, and yet with the harlot wipe their mouths, and say, 'What wrong have we done?' such shall at last find the chambers, the stones out of the wall, the beam out of the timber, the seats they sit on, and the beds they lie on—to witness against all their wanton dalliances, and lascivious behavior in secret, Hab 2:11. Heb 13:4, "God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." He will sentence them himself; and why? but because such sinners behave so secretly and craftily, that oftentimes none but God can find them out! Magistrates often neglect the

punishing of such sinners, when their secret wickedness is made known; and therefore God himself will sit in judgment upon them. Though they may escape the eyes of men—yet they shall never escape the judgment of God!

**Heart iniquities** fall not under any human sentence. Usually the sexually immoral are very conniving, and secret and subtle to conceal their abominable filthiness; therefore the harlot is said to be 'subtle of heart,' Prov 7:10. The Hebrew is translated by one as "*having her heart fenced*. For as a city is environed with fortifications, so her heart is fortified round about with subtlety." Or else it may be rendered "fast shut up in the heart, even as close as a besieged city," that is, "most secret in the subtlety of her heart, how open soever she be in the boldness of her outward behavior." So the prophet Agur reckons the way of a man with a maid, and the way of an adulterous woman, among those things which neither himself nor any other man was possibly able to discover and find out; and compares it to the way of three things, which no wit nor industry of man is able to descry. But yet God sees all, and will bring all to the judgement, Prov 30:19-20. But,

[2.] Secondly, Consider that **secret sins shall be revealed**. [In my treatise called "Apples of Gold," I have proved by many arguments that the sins of the saints shall not be brought into the judgment of the great day; and therefore understand this second particular of such people who live and die in their secret sins without repentance and faith in the blood of Christ.]

The most hidden works of darkness shall be openly manifested; for though the actings of sin are in the dark—yet the judgments of sin shall be in the light; Luke 8:17, "For nothing is concealed that won't be revealed, and nothing hidden that won't be made known and come to light." Eccles 12:14, "God shall bring *every* work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Mark, he does not say *some* work—but *every* work; and not only works—but *secrets*; and not only secrets—but *every* secret; and not only secret good things but *evil* things also. Whether good works or wicked works, whether secret or open—all must be brought to judgment. The books of God's omniscience, and man's conscience, shall then be opened; and then secret sins shall be as

legible as if they were written on your forehead; as if they were written with the most glittering sunbeams upon a wall of crystal.

All men's secret sins are printed in heaven, and God will at last read them aloud in the ears of all the world: 1 Cor 4:5, "Therefore don't judge anything prematurely, before the Lord comes, who will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the hearts." Look! as there are a world of particles in the air, which we never see until the sun shines; so there are many thousand thousands of proud thoughts, and unclean thoughts, and worldly thoughts, and malicious thoughts, and envious thoughts, and bloody thoughts, etc., which the world neither sees nor knows! But in the great day, when the intentions of all hearts shall be manifest, then all shall come out; then all shall appear, to the open gaze of all the world. In that great day—all masks, cloaks, and hoods shall be pulled off—and then all shall be made visible! All that ever you have done in the secret chamber, in the dark corner—shall be made known to men and angels, yes, to the whole court of heaven, and to all the world besides! Rom 2:16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." In this great day, God will judge not only our words but our works, not only our open works—but also our secret works and ways.

When Jehoiakim was dead, there was found the superstitious marks, and prints of his sorcery upon his body, 2 Chron 36:8; which shows how deeply idolatry was rooted in his heart, seeing he bore the marks in his flesh during his life. He being a king, kept all hidden; but when he was dead, then all came out, then the marks of his abominable idolatry appeared upon his body. Though sinners, though the greatest of sinners, may hide and keep hidden their horrid abominations for a time—yet there will come a time when all shall be manifested; when all their secret marks and secret abominations shall be obvious to all the world.

But sinners may be ready to object and say, "Let us but alone in our secret sins until that day, and then we shall do well enough." And therefore in the,

[3.] Third place, consider, **That God many times does, even in this life, discover and make known to the world men's secret sins.** God loves to act suitable to his own names. Now, to be a *revealer of*

*secrets*, is one of his names, Dan 2:47; and accordingly, even in this world, he often brings to light the most hidden things of darkness. Of all the glorious attributes of God, there is none which suffers so deeply by secret sins, as the attribute of his omniscience; and therefore in this world God often stands up to vindicate the honor of that attribute, by unmasking of sinners, and by bringing to the light all those secret paths and ways of wickedness, wherein they have long walked undiscovered.

It was for the honor of this blessed attribute of God, that the secret-plotted sin of **Ananias** and **Sapphira**, Acts 5:1-42, was so openly discovered; "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." Joseph's brethren for a long time hid their malice, their craft, their cruelty, their envy, their treachery, in selling their brother into Egypt; but at last by amazing providences, all was brought to light, Gen 42:21-22; Gen 50:15-22. Conscience, which for a time may seem to be asleep—yet will in time awake, and make the sinner know, that he is as faithful in recording, as he is fearful in accusing; and this Joseph's brethren found by sad experience.

Likewise with **Gehazi**, he sins secretly, he lies fearfully; but at last all comes out, and instead of being clothed richly, he and his posterity were clothed with a leprosy forever; and instead of two changes of garments, God hangs them up in chains, as a monument of his wrath to all generations, 2 Kings 5:20, seq.

So **Achan** secretly and sacrilegiously steals a beautiful garment imported from Babylon, two hundred silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound; and hides them in the earth in the midst of his tent, and by reason of this, Israel is defeated before their enemies. But at last Achan is found out, and all comes out, and his golden wedge proved a wedge to cleave him, and his Babylonish garment a garment to shroud him. Joshua makes a bonfire of all that he had secretly and sinfully stolen, and burns him, and his children, and all that he had, in it. Oh how openly, how severely does God sometimes punish men for their most secret iniquity!

The same you may see in that great instance of **David**; 2 Sam 12:9-12, "Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword (this was done in

a secret letter) and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'" 2 Sam 16:22. David was very studious and very industrious to hide his sin, and to save his reputation; but the covering made of Uriah's blood was too short, and too narrow to hide his sin with Bathsheba, and therefore when he had done all he could, his sin was tossed like a ball, from man to man, through court, city, and country.

I have read of Parthenius, who, having traitorously slain Ausonius and his wife—when no man suspected or accused him thereof, he detected and accused himself after this strange manner: as he slept in his bed, suddenly he roared out most pitifully; and being asked what ailed him; he, half asleep, answered, "That Ausonius and his wife, whom he had slain long ago, summoned him to judgment before God." Upon which confession he was apprehended; and, after due examination, stoned to death. Thus the terrors and horrors of his own conscience unveiled that secret wickedness, which none could prove against him.

I have read how that Mahomet the great Turk, had with great rewards, procured two Turks to undertake to kill Scanderbeg. These traitors came to Scanderbeg, making such a show of the detestation both of Mahomet's tyrannical government and vain superstition, that they were both by Scanderbeg and others reputed to be indeed the men they desired to be accounted. Soon after, by a providence, it so happened that these two traitors argued between themselves, by which means the plot came to be discovered; and after due examination and confession of the fact, they were presently condemned and executed.

**Conscience is God's spy in the heart.** 'Conscience,' says Philo, 'is the little tribunal of the soul. Conscience is a thousand witnesses, for or against a man. Conscience is a court of record, and whatever it sees it writes down; and conscience is always as quick in writing as the sinner

can be in sinning.' The very heathen could say that conscience was a god to every man. Conscience, as a scribe, a register—sits in the closet of your hearts, with pen in hand, and makes a journal of all your secret ways and secret crimes, which are above the cognizance of others. Conscience sets down the time when, the place where, the manner how, and the people with whom—such and such secret wickednesses have been committed; and that so clear and evident, that, go where you will, and do what you can, the characters of them shall never be cancelled or erased out, until God appears in judgment. Let a man sin in the most hidden seclusion which human policy can contrive, let him take all the ways he can to hide his sins, to cloak and cover his sin, as Adam did—yet conscience will so play the judge, that it will bring in the evidence, produce the law, urge the penalty, and pass the sentence of condemnation upon him.

There is many a man who makes a fair profession, and who has a great name in the world—who yet is self-condemned, for those secret sins which are not obvious to the eyes of man, nor punishable by the hands of men. Yes, many times in this life, God raises such a hell of horror and terror in many men's consciences, by reason of their secret sins—that they can have no rest nor quiet, neither at bed nor at board, neither lying down nor rising up. Gladly would they conceal their sins, unwilling they are that the world should know how vile they have been in secret; but conscience being upon the rack, and still a-gnawing, accusing, and condemning of them, they can hold no longer. Now all must come out; and now those sins that were most secret and concealed—come to be published upon the housetop.

Some who have been under anguish of conscience, others who have been smitten with a frenzy, and many in their very sleep—have been often the blazers and proclaimers of their own secret filthiness and wickedness. In those cases God has made many a secret sinner cry out with the leper, "Unclean, unclean!" Lev 13:45; and with Judas, before all present, "I have sinned, I have sinned!" Matt 27:4. Many times in this life, God very astonishingly discovers those secret works of darkness, in which people have lived long undiscovered.

A Pythagorean bought a pair of shoes upon trust; the shoemaker dies, he is glad, thinks them gained; but a while after his conscience flies upon

him, and becomes a continual chider and tormentor of him. He hereupon visits to the house of the dead, casts in his money with these words, "There, take your due; you live to me, though dead to all besides." But,

[4.] Fourthly, **Consider that secret sins are in some respects more dangerous than open sins.** Many a man bleeds to death inwardly—while no one perceives it. The more inward and secret the disease is, the more the man is in danger to lose his life. There are no fevers so dangerous as those who prey upon the vitals and inward parts; so there are no sins so dangerous and pernicious to the souls of men as those who are most inward and secret. Secret sins often reign in the souls of men most powerfully, when they are least apparent.

First, Consider that **he who sins secretly, deprives himself of those helps and remedies which, by a divine blessing, might arm him against sin, yes, make him victorious over sin;** namely, the prayers, counsels, reproofs, examples, and encouragements of friends, relations, etc. A man's house may be on fire—but while it is all inside—no help comes. But when the fire flames out, when it catches the outside of the house, then help runs in, then help on all hands is ready. *He who sins in secret debars himself of all public remedy, and takes great pains to damn his soul in secret, and to go to hell in the dark.* But,

Secondly, **Secret sins will make way for public sins.** He who makes no conscience of sinning in the secret chamber, will before long, with Absalom, be ready to spread a tent upon the top of the house, and to go in to his concubines in the sight of all Israel, 2 Sam 12:11. Such as have made no conscience of stealing a few pins or pennies in private, have in time come to be so bold as to steal a purse in broad daylight. **The cockatrice must be crushed in the egg, else it will soon become a serpent.** The very **thought** of sin, if but continually **meditated** on, will break forth into **action**, action into **custom**, custom into **habit**, and then both body and soul are irrecoverably lost to all **eternity!**

If Satan can but wound our heel, as the poets feign of Achilles, he will send death from the heel to the heart. If the subtle Serpent can but wriggle in his tail by a sinful thought, he will soon get in his head by a worse action. Hence it is that Christ calls hatred, murder; and a wanton

eye, immorality. Secret hatred, does often issue in open murder; and secret wanton glances of the eye, do often issue in open immorality. If Amnon is sick with the sinful imaginations of incestuous lust, how will his soul be in pain and travail until he has brought forth! And how many are there that in secret have taken now and then but one cup of liquor, who now may be seen at high noon reeling against every post. Look! as secret diseases in the body, if not cured, will in time openly break forth; so secret sins in the soul, if not pardoned and purged, will in time be openly revealed. Covetousness was Judas' secret sin; and no sooner does an occasion or a temptation present itself—but he is very ready and forward to betray and sell his Lord and Master for thirty pieces of silver before all the world! "Lust having conceived, brings forth sin," James 1:15. First, sin has its *conception*—which is its delight; and then sin has its *birth*—which is its action; and then sin has its *growth*—which is its custom; and then sin has its *end*—which is its damnation!

Thirdly, **Secret sinning puts far more respect and fear upon men, than upon God.** You will be unjust in secret, and wanton in secret, and unclean in secret, and treacherous in secret, etc., and why? Because you are afraid that such or such *men* should know it, or that such and such *friends* should know it, or that such and such *relations* should know it? Ah! poor wretch, are you afraid of the eye of a man, of a man who shall die, like the grass? Isa 51:12, and yet not tremble under God's eye, "whose eyes are as a blazing fire?" Rev 1:14. Ah! how full of atheism is that man's heart, which tacitly says, "If my sins be but hid from the eyes of the world, I do not care though the Lord knows them; though the Lord strictly observes them; though the Lord notes them all down." What is this, O man—but to brave it out with God, and to tempt him, and provoke him to his very face! Ah! sinner, sinner—can *man* damn you? can *man* disinherit you? can *man* fill your conscience with horrors and terrors? can *man* make your life a very hell? can *man* bar the gates of glory against you? can *man* speak you into the grave by a word of his mouth? What is worse—can *man* cast you into endless, easeless, and remediless torments? Oh no—he cannot! Can *God* do all this? Oh yes—God can! Why, then, does not your heart stand more in awe of the eye of the great God, than it does of the eye of a poor, weak, mortal man?

I have insisted the longer on this particular, because there is not any one thing in all the world that does more hinder secret communion with God and secret prayer—than secret sins. And oh that you would all make it your great business to **watch** against secret sins, and to **pray** against secret sins, and to **mourn** over secret sins, and deeply to **judge** and **condemn** yourselves for secret sins, and carefully and conscientiously to **shun** and **avoid** all occasions and provocations that may be as fuel to secret sins!

Certainly there are no men or women that are so sincere and serious in closet-prayer; or that are so frequent, so fervent, so constant in closet-prayer; or that are so delighted, so resolute, so undaunted, or so unwearied in closet-prayer; as those who keep themselves most clear and free from secret sins.

For a close, remember this—that though secret sins are in some respects more dangerous than other sins are—yet in three respects they are not so bad nor so dangerous as other sins are.

First, In that they do not so scandalize religion as open sins do.

Secondly, In that they do not shame, grieve, and wound the hearts of the saints as open sins do.

Thirdly, In that they are not so infectious to others, nor such provocations to others to sin against the Lord as open sins are.

And thus you may see what those things are that you must carefully take heed of, as ever you would addict yourselves to closet-prayer.

And as you must take heed of these five things, so there are several other **things that you must carefully and conscientiously apply yourselves to, as ever you would be found faithful and constant in this great duty, namely, closet-prayer.** Now they are these:

[1.] First, **Lament greatly and mourn bitterly over the neglect of this choice duty.** He who does not make conscience of mourning over

the neglect of this duty, will never make conscience of performing this duty. Oh that your heads were waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears—that you might weep day and night for the great neglect of closet-prayer, Jer 9:1. He who mourns most for the neglect of this duty, will be found most in the practice of this duty. He who makes most conscience to accuse, arraign, and condemn himself for neglecting closet-prayer; he will make most conscience of giving himself up to closet-prayer. It is said of Adam, that he turned his face towards the garden of Eden, and from his heart bitterly lamented his great fall. Oh that you would turn your faces towards your closets, and bitterly lament your rarely going into them. But,

[2.] Secondly, **Habituate yourselves, accustom yourselves, to closet-prayer.** Make private prayer your constant trade. Frequency begets familiarity, and familiarity confidence. We can go freely and boldly into that friend's house whom we often visit. What we are habituated to, we do with ease and delight. A man who is habituated or accustomed to write; to read; to ride; to run; or to play on this or that musical instrument, etc., he does it all with delight and ease. And so a man who does habituate himself to closet-prayer, he will manage it with delight and ease. But,

[3.] Thirdly, **Keep a diary of all your closet-experiences,** Deut 7:18-19; Psalm 66:12. Oh, carefully record and book down all your closet mercies! Oh, be often in reading over your closet experiences, and be often in meditating and in pondering upon your closet experiences! There is no way like this, to inflame your love to closet-prayer, and to engage your hearts in this secret trade of private prayer.

Oh remember that at such a time you went into your closets with hard hearts, and dry eyes; but before you came out of your closets, ah, how sweetly, how graciously, how powerfully were you melted, and humbled before the Lord! Psalm 6:6; Psalm 39:12; Psalm 56:8. Oh remember how that at another time you went into your closets clouded and benighted—but came out of your closets with as glorious a shine of God upon your souls, as Moses had upon his face, when he came down from the mount from communing with God! Exod 34:28-29. Oh remember how often you have gone into your closets with cold, frozen spirits—but before you came

out of your closets, what a fire has God kindled in your souls, what a spirit of burning have you found in your hearts! Luke 24:31-32; Isa 4:4. Oh remember how often you have gone into your closets straitened and shut up—but before you have come out, how have your souls been aflame! Oh remember what power God has given you against corruptions in your closets, and what strength God has given you against temptations in your closets! Oh remember the sweet discoveries of divine love that you have had when in your closets! Oh remember the secret visits, the secret kisses, the secret embraces, the secret whispers, the secret love-tokens, that Christ has given you in your closets! Oh seriously ponder upon these things, and then closet duties will be sweet unto you!

It was a sweet saying of Bernard, "O saint, know you not that your husband Christ is bashful, and will not be familiar in company; retire yourself by meditation into your closet, or into the fields, and there you shall have Christ's embraces," Song 8:11-12. Oh the more any man meditates upon his closet-experiences, the more he shall find his heart engaged to closet duties; the more you ponder upon closet experiences, the sweeter will closet-experiences be to your souls; and the sweeter closet-experiences are to your souls, the more your souls will delight to be with God in your closets.

Pliny tells us of one Messala Corvinus, whose memory was so bad, that he forgot his own name. And I am afraid that many of your memories are so bad, that you forget your closet-mercies, your closet-experiences.

I have read of such a pestilential disease once at Athens, as took away the memories of those who were infected with it, so that they forgot their own names. Oh that I had not cause to fear that some pestilential disease or other, has so taken away the memories of many, that they have quite forgot their closet-experiences. Well, friends, remember this, though stony hearts are bad—yet iron memories are good; and oh that you would all labor after iron memories, that so you may remember and ponder upon your closet-experiences.

I have read of the ancients, how they made use of white and black stones, for these two ends: **first**, they gave them to people at their arraignment before the judges; if they were condemned to death, they gave him a black

stone—but if absolved and set free, a white stone. To which custom the Holy Spirit seems to allude in that Rev 2:17, "To him who overcomes will I give a white stone." A second use of those stones was this, that by them they might keep an account of all the good days or evil days they had met withal in their lives. Hence Giacompo Senzaro having been long in love, and much thwarted about his match, he filled a pot full of black stones, putting only one white stone among them, and being asked the reason, answered, "There will come one white day," meaning his marriage day, "which will make amends for all my black days."

Ah, friends! how often has God given you the white stone in your closets! Certainly you have had more white stones than black stones: your closet mercies and experiences have been more than your public crosses and miseries. O sirs! did you but reckon your good days according to the white stones you have had in your closets, it would make you more in love with closet-prayer than ever. But,

[4.] Fourthly, **Be sure that you do not spend so much of your precious time in public duties and ordinances, as that you can spare none for private duties, for secret services.** Though Pharaoh's cows ate up one another—yet our duties must not eat up one another, Gen 41:4. **Public** duties must not eat up family duties, nor **family** duties must not eat up public duties, nor neither of them must not eat up **closet** duties. The wisdom of a Christian does most eminently sparkle and shine, in giving every duty its proper time and place. He cannot be an excellent Christian, who is all eye to read, or all ear to hear, or all tongue to speak, or all knee to bow, to kneel, to pray, Eccles 8:5. Ah! how many are there that spend so much time in hearing of this man and that, and in running up and down from meeting to meeting, that they have no time to meet with God in their closets. O sirs! your duties are never so amiable and lovely, they are never so sweet and beautiful, as when they are seasonably and orderly performed.

Oh how wise are the men of this world, so to order all their civil affairs, that no one business shall interfere with another. They set apart for each business a convenient proportion of time; they allot an hour for one business, two for another, three for another, etc. Oh that we were as wise for our souls, as wise for eternity, as they are for this world. Oh that our

hearts would so consult with our heads, that we may never lack a convenient time to seek God in private prayer!

That devil that loves to set one man against another, and one nation against another, and one Christian against another; that devil loves to set one duty against another. Hence it is that on the one hand he works some to cry up public prayers, in opposition to secret prayer; and on the other hand he works others to cry up private duties in opposition to all public duties; whereas all Christians stand obliged by God, so to manage one sort of duties, as not to shut out another sort of duties. Every Christian must find time and room for every duty incumbent upon him. But,

[5.] Fifthly, **Love Christ with a more inflamed love.** Oh strengthen your love to Christ, and your love to closet-duties. Lovers love much to be alone, to be in a corner together, Song 7:10-12. Certainly the more any man loves the Lord Jesus, the more he will delight to be with Christ in a corner. There was a great deal of love between Jonathan and David—and according to their love, so was their private converse, their secret communion one with another; they were always best when in the field together, or when in a corner together, or when behind the door together, or when locked up together. And just so would it be with you, did you but love the Lord Jesus Christ with a more raised and a more inflamed love; you would be always best when you were most with Christ in secret.

Divine love is like a rod of myrtle, which, as Pliny reports, makes the traveler that carries it in his hand so lively and cheerful, that he never faints or grows weary. Ah! friends, did you but love the Lord Jesus with a more strong, with a more raised love, you would never faint in closet-duties, nor you would never grow weary of closet-duties. Look! as the Israelites removed their tents from Mithcah to Hashmonah, from sweetness to swiftness—as the words import, Num 33:29—so the sweetness of divine love will make a man move swiftly on in a way of closet-duties. Divine love will make all closet-duties more easy to the soul, and more pleasant and delightful to the soul; and therefore do all you can to strengthen your love to Christ, and your love to closet-work.

It was observed among the primitive Christians, that they were so full of love one to another, that they could be acquainted one with another as

well in half an hour, as in half a year. O sirs! if your hearts were but more full of love to Christ, and closet-duties, you would quickly be better acquainted with them, you would quickly know what secret communion with Christ behind the door means. But,

[6.] Sixthly, **Be highly, thoroughly, and fixedly resolved, in the strength of Christ, to keep close to closet-duties, in the face of all difficulties and discouragements which you may meet with,** Psalm 44:17-20. A man of no resolution, or of weak resolution, will be won with a nut, and lost with an apple. Satan, and the world, and carnal relations, and your own hearts, will cast in many things to discourage you, and take you off from closet prayer; but be nobly and firmly resolved to keep close to your closets, let the world, the flesh, and the devil, do and say what they can.

Daniel was a man of an invincible resolution; he would rather be cast into the den of lions—than he would omit praying in his chamber. Of all the duties of religion, Satan is the most deadly enemy to this duty of secret prayer; partly because secret prayer spoils him in his most secret designs, plots, and contrivances against the soul; and partly because secret prayer is so musical and delightful to God; and partly because secret prayer is of such rare use and advantage to the soul; and partly because it keeps the soul far from pride, vain glory, and worldly applause. Therefore he had rather that a man should pray a thousand times in public in the church, or in the corner of the streets—than that he should pray once in his closet. Therefore you had need to steel your hearts with holy courage and resolution, that whatever suggestions, temptations, oppositions, or objections you may encounter with, that yet you will keep close to closet prayer.

There is not any better bulwark in the day of battle, than a heroic resolution of heart before the day of battle. Sanctified resolutions do exceedingly weaken and discourage Satan in his assaults, they do greatly daunt and dishearten him in all his undertakings against the soul. That man will never long be quiet in his closet, who is not steadfastly resolved to seek the Lord in secret, though all the powers of darkness should make head against him. O sirs! divine fortitude, holy resolutions, will make you like a wall of brass, which no arrows can pierce; they will make you fully

armored, so no shot can hurt; they will either enable you to remove the greatest mountains of oppositions which lie between you and closet-prayer, or else they will enable you to step over them.

Luther was a man of great resolution, and a man who spent much time in closet-prayer. And such another was Nehemiah, who met with so much opposition, that had he not been steeled by a strong and obstinate resolution, he could never have rebuilt the temple—but would have sunk in the midst of his works. Now, he was a man for private prayer, as I have shown in the beginning of this treatise. Who more resolute than David? and who more for secret prayer than David? The same I might say of Paul, Basil, and many others, who have been famous in their generations.

O sirs! sanctified resolutions for closet prayer, will chain you faster to secret prayer, than ever the resolutions Ulysses did chain him to the mast of the ship. It was a noble resolution that kept Ruth close to her mother-in-law, when her sister Orpah only compliments her, kisses her, and takes her leave of her, Ruth 1:10-20. Be but nobly resolved for closet-prayer, and then you will keep close to it, when others only court it, and take their leave of it.

In the Salentine country, there is mention made of a lake, that is still brimful: if you put in never so much, it never runs over; if you draw out never so much, it is still full. The resolution of every Christian for closet-prayer, should be like this lake—still brimful. Come life or death, come honor or reproach, come loss or gain, come liberty or bonds, come what can come—the true-bred Christian must be fully and constantly resolved to keep close to his closet. But,

[7.] Seventhly, **Labor for a greater effusion of the Holy Spirit**; for the greater measure any man has of the Spirit of God, the more that man will delight to be with God in secret: Zech 12:10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication."

Joel 2:28-29; Isa 44:3; mark, in the last of the last days, when men shall be generally under a greater effusion of the Holy Spirit than ever, then they shall be more given up to secret prayer than ever. There will never be

such praying in secret, and such mourning in secret, as there will be when the Lord shall pour out most richly, gloriously, abundantly, of his Spirit upon his poor people. Now, every one shall pour out his tears and his soul before God in secret, to show the soundness of their sorrow, and to show their sincerity by their secrecy.

Certainly, the more any man is now under the blessed pouring out of the Spirit of Christ, the more that man gives himself up to secret communion with Christ. Every man is more or less with Christ in his closet, as he is more or less under the anointings of the Spirit of Christ. The more any man has of the Spirit of Christ, the more he loves Christ, and the more any man loves Christ, the more he delights to be with Christ alone. Lovers love to be alone. The more any man has of the Spirit of Christ, the more his heart will be set to please Christ.

Now, nothing pleases Christ more than the secret prayers of his people: Song 2:14, "O my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is lovely." And therefore such a one will be much in secret prayer. The more any man has of the Spirit of Christ, the more his heart will be set upon glorifying and exalting Christ. Now, nothing glorifies Christ more, nor exalts him more, than secret prayer; and therefore the more any man has of the Spirit of Christ, the more that man will be found in secret prayer.

There are many people who say, they would be more in their closets than they are—but that they meet with many hindrances, many occasions, many diversions, many temptations, many oppositions, many difficulties, many discouragements, which prevent them. Ah, friends! had you a greater measure of the Holy Spirit upon you, none of these things would ever be able to hinder your secret trade heavenward. Had you a more rich anointing of the Spirit upon you, you would never plead, 'there is a lion in the way, a lion in the streets!' Prov 26:13. But were there a thousand lions between you and your closets, you would either step over them, or make your way through them—so that you might enjoy communion with Christ in your closets. But,

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, As ever you would keep close to private prayer,

**Be frequent in the serious consideration of eternity.** Oh see eternity standing at the end of every closet-prayer, and this will make you pray to purpose in your closets.

O sirs! every work you do, is a step to a blessed, or to a cursed, eternity. Every motion, every action in this life, is a step toward eternity. As every step that a traveler takes brings him forward to his journey's end, so every step that a man takes in the secret ways of righteousness and holiness, such as closet duties are, they bring him nearer to his journey's end, they bring him nearer to a blessed eternity. Look! as every step the sinner takes in a way of wickedness, brings him nearer to hell; so every step which a saint takes in a way of holiness, brings him nearer to heaven. Look! as every step that a wicked man takes in the ways of unrighteousness brings him nearer to a cursed eternity, so every step that a godly man takes in a way of righteousness, brings him nearer to a blessed eternity.

Zeuxis, the famous painter, was so exceeding careful and cautious in drawing all his lines, that he would let no piece of his go abroad into the world, until he had turned it over and over, and viewed it on this side and that side, again and again, to see if he could spy any fault in it; and being asked the reason why he was so curious; and so long in drawing his lines, answered, 'I paint for eternity.' O sirs! we all pray for eternity, we fast for eternity, we read for eternity, we hear for eternity, we wait for eternity, we weep for eternity; and therefore oh, how exactly, how wisely, how faithfully, how carefully, how diligently, how unweariedly, should we be in all our closet duties and services; seeing that all we do is in order to eternity! **Friends! you must all before long be eternally blessed, or eternally cursed; eternally happy, or eternally miserable; eternally saved, or eternally damned;** eternally accepted, or eternally rejected. And therefore what infinite cause have you frequently to shut to your closet-doors, and to plead mightily with God in a corner, for the lives of your poor, precious, and immortal souls, that they may be eternally saved in the great day of our Lord Jesus. O sirs! when any hindrances to closet-prayer present themselves to you, seriously remember eternity—and that will remove them.

It is related of one Pachomius, that whensoever he felt any unlawful

desires to arise in his mind, he was accustomed to drive them away with the remembrance of eternity.

One relates a story of an ungodly fellow, who on a certain night could not sleep, who, upon the serious consideration of death and eternity, and the damned lying in hell, could not be at rest—but eternity did still run in his mind; gladly would he have shaken off the thoughts thereof, as gnawing worms. Therefore he followed sports, and hobbies, and merry-meetings, and sought out companions like himself, and sat oftentimes so long at his drunken cups, that he laid his conscience asleep, and so seemed to take some rest; but when he was awakened, his conscience flew in his face, and would still be a-suggesting sad thoughts of eternity to him. Of all things in the world he could not bear it, to be kept awake in the night; but so it happened that being sick, he was kept awake one night, and could not sleep at all, whereupon these thoughts rise in him: "What! is it so tedious then to be kept from sleep one night, and to lie a few hours in the dark? Oh what is it then to be kept in torments and everlasting darkness! I am here in my own house upon a soft bed in the dark, kept from sleep but one night; but to lie in flames and endless misery, how dreadful must that be!" These and such like meditations were the happy means of this young man's conversion.

I have read a notable story of one Theodorus, a Christian young man in Egypt, who, when there was a great deal of feasting, mirth, and music in his father's house, withdrew himself from all the company, and being got alone, he thus thought with himself, "Here is contentment and delight enough for the flesh, I may have what I desire—but how long will this last? This will not hold out long." Then falling down upon his knees before the Lord in secret, he said, "O Lord, my heart is open unto you, I indeed know not what to ask—but only this: Lord, let me not die eternally; O Lord, you know I love you, O let me live eternally to praise you."

If there be any way or means on earth to bring us upon our knees before God in secret, it is the serious and solemn thoughts of eternity. Oh that the fear of eternity might fall upon all your souls! Oh that you would all seriously consider, that after a short time is expired, you must all enter upon an eternal estate! Oh consider that **eternity is an infinite,**

**endless, bottomless gulf, which no line can fathom, no time can reach, no age can extend to, no tongue can express.** It is a duration always present, a being always in being; it is one perpetual day, which shall never see light. O sins! this is, and must be for a lamentation, namely, that eternity is a thing that most men never think of, or else very slenderly. But as ever you would have your hearts chained to your closets and to closet duties, as the men of Tyrus chained their God Apollo to a post, that they might be sure of him; then seriously and frequently ponder upon eternity, and with those forty valiant martyrs, be still a crying out, "O eternity, eternity!"

Mr. Wood, after some holy discourse, fell a-musing, and cried out before all present, for near half a quarter of an hour together, "Forever, forever, forever!" Austin's prayer was, "Rack me, hew me, burn me here—but spare me hereafter, spare me in eternity." Certainly, if Christians would but spare one quarter of an hour every day in the solemn thoughts of eternity, it would make them more in love with closet-prayer than ever, yes, it would make them more fearful of omitting closet-prayer than ever, and more careful and conscientious in the discharge of all closet-duties than ever.

And thus, according to my weak measure, I have given *out* all that at present the Lord has graciously given *in* to my poor soul, concerning this most necessary, most glorious, and most useful point of points, namely, closet-prayer. I shall, by assisting grace, follow this poor piece with my prayers, that it may be so blessed from on high, as that it may work mightily to the internal and eternal welfare—both of reader, hearer, and writer.

## HEAVEN ON EARTH

Thomas Brooks, 1667

A serious discourse concerning a well-grounded assurance.

## Introduction

### **Chapter 1**

Believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance

### **Chapter 2**

Containing several weighty propositions concerning assurance.

I. God denies assurance for a time to his dearest and choicest ones, and that upon many considerable grounds.

II. That the Scripture has many sweet significant WORDS to express that well-grounded assurance

III. Man may have true grace—who has no assurance of the love and favor of God

IV. That God may deny assurance long, and yet give it in to his children at last, after patient waiting.

V. That those choice souls who have assurance may lose it, they may forfeit it.

VI. That the certainty and infallibility of a Christian's assurance cannot be made known to any but his own heart.

VII. That there are some special seasons and times, wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to give to his children a sweet assurance of his favor and love

Two Cautions

### **Chapter 3**

Containing the several Hinderances and Impediments

#### **Chapter 4**

Containing several motives to provoke Christians to be restless until they have obtained a well-grounded assurance

#### **Chapter 5**

Showing the several ways and means of gaining a well-grounded assurance.

#### **Chapter 6**

Showing Seven More Things that Accompany Salvation

(1.) What knowledge that is, which accompanies salvation.

(2.) What faith that is, which accompanies salvation.

(3.) What repentance that is, which accompanies salvation.

(4.) What obedience that is, which accompanies salvation.

(5.) What love that is, which accompanies salvation.

(6.) What prayer that is, which accompanies salvation.

(7.) What perseverance that is, which accompanies salvation.

#### **Chapter 7**

Showing the difference between a true and a counterfeit assurance; between sound assurance and presumption.

#### **Chapter 8**

Several special questions about assurance

A serious discourse concerning a well-grounded **assurance** of men's everlasting happiness and blessedness. Discovering the nature of assurance, the possibility of attaining it, the causes, springs, and degrees

of it; with the resolution of several weighty questions.

"The greatest thing that we can desire—next to the glory of God—is our own salvation; and the sweetest thing we can desire, is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher, than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth. That saints might enjoy **two heavens**, is the project of this book." Joseph Caryl.

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." Col 2:2.

### **Epistle Dedicatory**

To the Generals of the Fleets of the Commonwealth,  
The better anything is, the more communicative it will. There are two sorts of goods; there are goods of the throne, as God, Christ, grace, assurance, etc.; and goods of the footstool, as honor, riches, etc. A man may have enough of the goods of the footstool to sink him, but he can never have enough to satisfy him. Man's happiness and blessedness, his felicity and glory, lies in his possessing the goods of the throne, which that you may, I humbly desire you seriously to view over the ensuing treatise.

It was an excellent saying of Lewis, emperor of Germany, 'Such goods are worth getting and owning, as will not sink nor wash away, if a shipwreck happens; but will wade and swim out with us.' Such are the goods that are here presented in this following discourse. In all storms, tempests, and shipwrecks, they will abide with the soul, they will walk and lie down with the soul, yes, they will go to the grave, to heaven, with the soul: they will in the greatest storms be an ark to the soul.

I have observed in some terrible storms that I have been in, that the mariners' and the passengers' want of assurance, and of those other pearls of price that in this treatise are presented to public view, has caused their countenance to change, their hearts to melt; it has made them to "stagger and reel to and fro like drunken men, like men at their

wits' ends," Psalm 76:5; whereas others who have had assurance, and their pardon in their bosoms, etc., have born up bravely, and slept quietly, and walked cheerfully, and practically have said, as Alexander once did, when he was in a great danger, "Now," says he, "here is a danger fit for the spirit of Alexander to encounter with." So they now, here are storms and dangers fit for assured, pardoned souls to encounter with, etc.

Gentlemen, This following discourse I do not present to you as a thing which needs your protection, for truth stands in the open fields, and it will make the lovers of it to stand, triumph, and overcome. Great is truth, and shall prevail. But, upon these following grounds, I render it to you:

First, You have honored the Almighty, by helping him against the high and mighty; and he has honored you, by owning of you, by standing by you, by acting for you, and by making of you prosperous and victorious over a near enemy, a powerful enemy, an enraged enemy, a resolved enemy, a subtle enemy, a prepared enemy, a lofty enemy; and therefore I cannot but desire to honor you by dedicating the following treatise to the service of your souls, 1 Sam 2:30, "I will honor those who honor Me, but those who despise Me will be disgraced."

Secondly, Because you are my friends, and that cordial love and friendship which I have found from you has stamped in my affections a very high valuation of you.

The ancients painted *friendship* as a fair young man, in a poor garment. His bosom was open, so that his heart might be seen, whereupon was written 'a friend at hand and afar off.' Verily, your undeserved love and respects have made me willing to open my bosom to you in this epistle, and in the following treatise, as to friends that I love and honor. **Faithful friends are an invaluable treasure, and the rarity of them does much enhance their worth.**

Thirdly, Because of its exceeding usefulness and suitableness to your conditions. I have been some years at sea, and through grace I can say, that I would not exchange my sea-experiences for England's riches. I am not altogether ignorant of the troubles, trials, temptations, dangers, and deaths that do attend you. And therefore I have been the more stirred in

my spirit to present the following discourse to you, wherein is discovered the nature of assurance, the possibility of attaining assurance, the causes, springs, degrees, excellencies, and properties of assurance; also the special seasons and times of God's giving assurance, with the resolutions of several weighty questions touching assurance. Further, **in this treatise, as in a glass, you may see these ten special things clearly and fully opened and manifested.**

1. What **knowledge** that is, which accompanies salvation.
2. What **faith** that is, which accompanies salvation.
3. What **repentance** that is, which accompanies salvation.
4. What **obedience** that is, which accompanies salvation.
5. What **love** that is, which accompanies salvation.
6. What **prayer** that is, which accompanies salvation.
7. What **perseverance** that is, which accompanies salvation.
8. What **hope** that is, which accompanies salvation.
9. The difference there is between true assurance, and that which is counterfeit.
10. The wide difference there is between the witness of the Spirit, and the hissing of the old serpent.

Gentlemen and Friends, You have your lives in your hands, there is but a short step between you and eternity. I would gladly have you all happy forever; to that purpose, I humbly beseech you, spare so much time, from your many great and weighty occasions, as to read this treatise, that in all humility I lay at your feet, and follow this counsel that in all love and faithfulness I shall now give unto you. For my design in all is your happiness here, and your blessedness hereafter.

First, **Get and keep communion with God.** Your strength to stand,

and your strength to withstand all assaults—is from your communion with God. Communion with God is that which will make you stand fast, and triumph over all enemies, difficulties, dangers, and deaths. Communion with God will make a man as courageous and bold as a lion, yes, as a young lion which is in his hot blood, and fearless of any creature, Prov 28:1. Now the proverb is, It is more likely that deer will get victory with a lion as their leader; than lions with a leading deer. Joshua, captain of the Lord's battles, must be of a lion-like courage, and what will make them so, but communion with God? It was the saying of the old Earl of Essex, that he was never afraid to fight—except when he was conscious of some sin with which he had provoked God and lost communion with God.

While **Samson** kept his communion with God, no enemy could stand before him, he goes on conquering and to conquer, he lays heaps upon heaps; but when he has fallen in his communion with God, he falls presently, easily, and sadly before his enemies.

So long as **David** kept up his communion with God, no enemies could stand before him; but when he was fallen in his communion with God, he flies before the son of his affections.

**Job** keeps up his communion with God, and conquers Satan upon the ash-heap.

**Adam** loses his communion with God, and falls before Satan in paradise. Communion is the result of union.

Communion is a reciprocal exchange between Christ and a gracious soul. Communion is Jacob's ladder, where you have Christ sweetly descending down into the soul, and the soul by divine influences sweetly ascending up to Christ. Communion with God is a shield upon land, and an anchor at sea; it is a sword to defend you, and a staff to support you; it is balm to heal you, and a cordial to strengthen you. High communion with Christ will yield you two heavens, a heaven upon earth, and a heaven after death. He enjoys nothing, who lacks communion with God; he lacks nothing, who enjoys communion with God; therefore above all gettings, get communion with Christ, and above all keepings, keep communion

with Christ. All other losses are not comparable to the loss of communion with Christ. He who has lost his communion, has lost his comfort, his strength, his all, and it will not be long before the Philistines take him, and put out his eyes, and bind him with fetters of brass, and make him grind in a prison, as they did Samson, Judg 16:20-21.

Secondly, **Make a speedy and a thorough improvement of all opportunities of grace and mercy.** Sleep not in harvest-time; do not trifle away your golden seasons; you have much work to do in a short time. You have a God to honor, a Christ to rest on, a race to run, a crown to win, a hell to escape, a heaven to obtain. You have weak graces to strengthen, strong corruptions to weaken; you have many temptations to withstand, and afflictions to bear; you have many mercies to improve, and many services to perform, etc. Therefore take hold on all opportunities and advantages, whereby you may be strengthened and bettered in your noble part. Take heed of crying, 'Tomorrow, tomorrow!' when God says: "**Today**, if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts," Heb 3:7-8.

Manna must be gathered in the *morning*, and the orient pearl is generated of the *morning* dew. It is a very sad thing for a man to begin to die before he begins to live. He who neglects a golden opportunity, does but create to himself a great deal of misery, as Saul, and many others, have found by sad experience. He who would to the purpose do a good action, must not neglect his season.

The men of Issachar were famous in David's account for wisdom, because they acted seasonably and opportunely, 1 Chron 12:32. God will repute and write that man a wise man, who knows and observes his seasons of doing. Such there have been, who by giving a glass of water opportunely, have obtained a kingdom, as you may see in the story of Thaumastus and king Agrippa.

'Time,' says Bernard, 'would be a precious commodity in hell, and the use of it most gainful; where for one day a man would give ten thousand worlds if he had them.'

One passing through the streets of Rome, and seeing many of the women

playing and delighting themselves with monkeys and baboons, and such like trivial things, asked "whether they had no children to play and delight themselves with?" So when men trifle away their precious time, and golden opportunities, playing and toying with this vanity and that vanity, we may ask whether these men have no God, no Christ, no Scripture, no promises, no blessed experiences, no hopes of heavenly glories—to enjoy and take delight in? Certainly, we should not reckon any time into the account of our lives, but that which we carefully pass, and well spend.

I have read of one Barlaam, who, being asked how old he was, answered, Forty-five years old; to whom Josaphah replied, "You seem to be seventy." "True," says he, "if you reckon ever since I was born; but I count not those years that were spent in vanity."

Most men spend the greatest part of their time on things that are of little or no value; as Domitian, the Roman emperor, spent his time in catching of flies; and Artaxerxes spent his time in making handles for knives; and Archimedes spent his time in drawing lines on the ground when that famous city Syracuse was taken; and Myrmecides spent more time to construct a bee than some men do to build a house.

Sirs, I beseech you remember that it was Cato, a heathen, who said "that account must be given not only of our labor, but also of our leisure." And in affirming this, he affirms no more than what the Scripture speaks. But oh what a sad account, then, have some to make! Well, as Cleopatra said to Mark Antony, "It is not for you to be fishing for gudgeons; but for towns, forts, and castles;" so say I, 'beloved, it is not for you to spend your time about poor, low, contemptible things, but about those high and noble things that make most for the interest of Christ.' Chilo, one of the seven sages, being asked what was the hardest thing in the world to be done, answered, 'To use and employ a man's time well.'

It was Titus, a pagan emperor, who uttered this memorable and praiseworthy apophthegm, 'My friends, I have lost a day!' when he had spent it in company, without doing good.

The Egyptians drew the picture of time with three heads, to represent the

three differences. The first of a greedy wolf, gaping for time past, because it has ravenously devoured even the memory of so many things past recalling; the second of a crowned lion, roaring for time present, because it has the principality of all action, for which it calls aloud. The third of a deceitful dog, fawning for time to come, because it feeds fond men with many flattering hopes, to their own undoing.

I have read of a man who upon his dying bed would have given a world for time, he still crying out day and night, "Call time again, call time again." So Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed cried out, "Time, time, a world of wealth for an inch of time."

One Hermanus, a great courtier in the kingdom of Bohemia, being at point of death, did most lamentably cry out "that he had spent more time in the palace than in the temple, and that he had added to the riotousness and vices of the court, which he should have sought to have reformed," and so died, to the horror of those who were about him.

I have been the longer upon this, because I have been a sad spectator of men's misspending their time and trifling away golden opportunities; and though I thus speak, yet "imitation hope better things of you," to whom I dedicate it, "even such as do accompany salvation," Heb 6:9.

Thirdly, **Take no truths upon trust, but all upon trial.** 1 John 4:1, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." This age is very full of impostors; therefore test the spirits, as jewelers do their stones, or as goldsmiths do their metals. An imitation stone may look as well as a genuine diamond, and many things glisten besides gold.

It was the glorious commendations of the Bereans, "that they searched the Scriptures daily," whether those things that Paul and Silas had delivered "were so;" and this act of theirs made them "more noble than those of Thessalonica," Acts 17:10-11. Christian nobility is the best and truest, where God himself is the top concern, and religion the root; in regard whereof all other things are but shadows and shapes of nobleness.

A father who had three sons was desirous to test their discernment, which he did by giving to each of them an apple that had some part of it rotten. The first eats up his, rotten and all; the second throws all his away, because some part of it was rotten; the third picks out the rotten, and eats that which was good. The third was the wisest. Some in these days swallow down everything, rotten and sound together; others throw away all truth, because everything that is presented to them is not truth; but surely they are the wisest that know how to choose the good and refuse the evil, Isa 7:15.

Fourthly, **Be exemplary to those among whom you live**, and over whom you command. A good leader makes a good follower. **Precepts may instruct, but examples persuade.** Truly, your examples will have a very great influence upon those who are under you. It is natural to inferiors to mind more what their superiors do, than what they say; therefore you had need be angelical in your walkings and actings. You are lights upon a hill, and therefore every eye will be upon you. Those who can find no ears to hear what you **say**, will find many eyes to see what you **do**. Scripture and experience do abundantly evidence that good men's examples have done a world of good in the world, and truly the evil examples of great men especially are very dangerous. The errors and evils of great men bring with them great perturbations and evils to the places and persons where they live. Oh therefore, be exemplary both in lip and life, in word and work, that others "seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven," Matt 5:16. **Oh see that your lives be a commentary upon Christ's life.** Talk not of a good life, but let your life speak, said the philosopher.

Alexander willed that the Grecians and the Barbarians should no longer be distinguished by their garments, but by their manners; so should **Christians be distinguished from all others, by their lives and by their examples**; 2 Sam 23:3, "He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord." An excellent master is always better than an excellent law. Let your laws be ever so good, if the lawmakers are bad, all will come to nothing. The people's eyes are much upon that Scripture, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" John 7:48, etc. Abraham was an example of righteousness in Chaldea, Lot was just in Sodom, Daniel

was an example of holiness in Babylon, Job was an example of uprightness in the land of Uz, which was a land of much profaneness and superstition, Nehemiah was an example of zeal in Damascus, and Moses was an example of meekness among the muttering and murmuring Israelites. Above all examples, Christ was exemplary in all piety and sanctity, in all righteousness and holiness, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And why then should not you be exemplary among those poor creatures, among whom you live?

It was a good law that the Ephesians made, that men should propound to themselves the best patterns, and ever bear in mind some eminent man. The Arabians, if their king be sick or lame, they all feign themselves so.

It was the saying of Trajanus, a Spaniard, the first stranger that reigned among the Italians, 'subjects prove good, by a good king's example.' So do soldiers, so do sailors, by the good examples of their superior commanders. Such commanders as are examples of righteousness and holiness to others, are certainly high in worth, and humble in heart; they are the glory of Christ, and the honor of the Christian religion.

Fifthly, As you are in public places, so **lay out yourselves impartially for the common good** of all who have interest in you, or dependence upon you. So did Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, Ezra, Daniel, but above all, Christ himself. You are more for the people's sake, than the people are for yours. Magistrates are *rulers* over the people, but they are *servants* to the good of the people; as it is the duty of all to serve them, so it is their office to serve all. It is no paradox to affirm, that rulers are the greatest servants. The ancients were accustomed to place their statues of their princes by their fountains, intimating that they were, or at least should be, fountains of the public good.

The Counselor says, "That a man in public place should give his will to God, his love to his master, his heart to his country, his secrets to his friends, his time to business." *It is a base and unworthy spirit, for a man to make himself the center of all his actions.* The very heathen man could say, "A man's country, and his friends, and others, deserve a great part of him." The sun, which is the prince of lights, does impartially serve all, the peasant as well as the prince, the poor as well as the rich, the weak as well

as the strong; you must be like the sun. The Sun of righteousness was of a brave public spirit: he healed others, but was hurt himself; he filled others, but was hungry himself; he laid out himself, and he laid down himself for a public good. "That navigator dies nobly," says Seneca, "who perishes in the storm with the helm in his hand." It is really your praise among the saints, that you have ventured killing, burning, drowning, and all to save the ship of the commonwealth from sinking.

Sirs! Be not weary of public work. It is honor enough that God will make any use of you to carry on his design in the world. He is a faithful paymaster; **heaven at last will make amends for all.** "You shall reap, if you faint not," Gal 6:9. I do truly believe, God will make use of you to do greater things on the sea, than yet have been done. The Lord has now begun to set a foot upon the sea; let his enemies tremble. God will not allow his glory to be buried in the deeps. He is shaking the nations, and will not leave shaking them, until He who is the desire of all nations come. The Lord has said, "That he will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he comes, whose right it is to wear the crown, and the diadem, and he will give it him," Ezek 21:25-27. Until then, there will be little else, but plucking up and breaking down, Jer 45:4. Therefore be courageous, and follow the Lamb wherever he goes. You need fear no enemies, who have Christ the conqueror on your sides.

Sixthly, and lastly, **Make it more and more your chief work to make plentiful provisions for the eternal welfare of your souls.** Your souls are more worth than ten thousand worlds. All is well, if your soul is well; if that be safe, all is safe; if that is lost, all is lost—God, Christ, and glory is lost—if the soul is lost. Though others play the courtiers with their souls, yet do not you. The courtier does all things late: he rises late, and dines late, and sups late, and repents late.

Sirs! Is it madness to feast the slave, and starve the wife? and is it not greater madness to feast the body and starve the soul? to make liberal provision for the body, and none for the soul? Do not they deserve double damnation, who prefer their bodies above their souls? Methinks our souls should be like to a ship, which is made little and narrow downwards, but more wide and broad upwards. Before all, and above all, look to your souls, watch your souls, make provision for your souls. When this is done,

all is done; until this is done, there is nothing done which will yield a man comfort in life, joy in death, and boldness before the judgment.

Callenuceus tells us of a nobleman of Naples, that was accustomed profanely to say, "he had two souls in his body, one for God, and another for whoever would buy it." Truly, they will make but a bad bargain, that, to gain the world, shall sell their souls.

Dear sirs, I had much more to say, but I am afraid that I have already kept you too long from sucking of the honeycomb, from drinking at the fountain. I have held you too long in the porch; and therefore I shall only ask that you will bear with my plainness, and overlook my weakness; remembering that other addresses would savor more of flattery than of sincerity, more of policy than of piety, and would be both unkind in me, and displeasing to you.

Now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and yours with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and make you yet more and more instrumental for his glory, and this nation's good, that your names may be forever precious among his people, that they may bear you still upon their hearts before the Lord. This is the earnest and constant prayer of him who is,

Yours in all Christian service,

Thomas Brooks

### **EPISTLE TO THE SAINTS**

To all saints who hold to Christ the head, and who walk according to the laws of the new creature; grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied from God the Father, though our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved in our dearest Lord,

You are those worthies "of whom this world is not worthy," Heb 11:38. You are the princes "who prevail with God," Gen 32:28. You are those "excellent ones" in whom is all Christ's delight, Psalm 16:3. You are his glory. You are his picked, culled, prime instruments which he will make use of, to carry on his best and greatest work against his worst and

greatest enemies in these latter days. You are "a seal" upon Christ's heart, you are "engraved on the palms of his hand;" your names are written upon his heart, as the names of the children of Israel were upon Aaron's breastplate; you are the "epistle of Christ;" you are the "anointed" of Christ; you have "the spirit of discerning;" you have "the mind of Christ." [Isa 4:5; Rev 17:14, and Rev 19:8,14; Song 8:6; Isa 49:16; Exod 28:29; 2 Cor 2:8; 1 John 2:27; 1 Cor 1:10,12,15-16]

You have the greatest advantages and the choicest privileges to enable you to try truth, to taste truth, to apply truth, to defend truth, to strengthen truth, to uphold truth, and to improve truth. And therefore to whom should I dedicate this following discourse, but to yourselves? You have the next place to Christ in my heart; your good, your gain, your glory, your edification, your satisfaction, your confirmation, your consolation, your salvation—has put me upon casting in my little, little mite into your treasure.

Beloved, you know that in the time of the law, God did as kindly accept of goats' hair and badgers' skins, of turtledoves and young pigeons—they being the best things that some of his children had then to offer—as he did accept of gold, jewels, silk, and purple from others. I hope you will show out the same God-like disposition towards me, in a kind accepting of what is offered in this treatise to your wise and serious consideration. I could wish it better for your sakes, yet such as it is, I do in all love and humility present you with, desiring the Lord to make it an internal and eternal advantage to you.

I shall briefly acquaint you with the **REASONS** which have moved poor me, unworthy I,—who am the least of all saints, who am not worthy to be reckoned among the saints, to present this following discourse to public view; and they are these that follow:

First, **To answer the desires, and gratify the earnest and pious requests of several precious souls**, who long to have these things printed upon their hearts, by the hand of the Spirit, which are printed in this book. God speaks aloud through the serious and affectionate desires of the saints; and this has made me willing to answer their desires. If great men's desires are to be looked upon as commands, why should good

men's desires be looked upon with a squint eye? Seneca, a heathen, could say 'that the very looks of a good man delight me.' How much more then should the desires and requests of a good man overcome me?

Secondly, The good acceptance which my labors of the like nature have found among those who fear the Lord, especially that treatise called "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices," has encouraged me to present this to public view, not doubting but that the Lord will bless it to the good of many, as I know he has done the former. Which that he may, I shall not cease to pray, that my weak service may be accepted of the saints, and that their "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all discernment," Phil 1:9-11. That they may approve things that are excellent; that they may be sincere, and without offence until the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Thirdly, **It is exceeding useful to the saints at all times, but especially in such changing times**, in times wherein everyone calls out, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night? and the watchman answers, The morning comes, and also the night," Isa 21:11-12. Ah! Christians, the Lord is a-shaking heaven and earth; he is a-staining the pride of all glory; he is a-staining his garments with the blood of his enemies; [Joel 3:16; Hag 2:6; Isa 23:9; Isa 58:2-3] he is renting and tearing, he is burning and breaking, he is pulling up and throwing down, Jer 45:4-5. Now in the midst of all these convolutions and revolutions, thrice happy are those souls who have gained a well-grounded assurance of celestial things, Heb 10:34. Such souls will not faint, sink, nor shrink in an hour of temptation. Such souls will keep their garments pure and white, and will follow the Lamb wherever he goes, Rev 3:4, and Rev 14:4.

Assurance is a believer's ark, where he sits, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all distractions and destructions, combustions and confusions. They are doubly miserable, who have neither heaven nor earth, temporals, nor eternal, made sure to them in changing times, Psalm 23:3-4; Rev 6:12.

The fourth ground of my presenting this treatise to public view, is, that **little well-grounded assurance which is to be found among**

**most Christians.** Most Christians living between fears and hopes, and hanging, as it were, between heaven and hell, sometimes they hope that their state is good, at other times they fear that their state is bad: now they hope that all is well, and that it shall go well with them forever; anon they fear that they shall perish by the hand of such or such a corruption, or by the prevalency of such or such a temptation; and so they are like a ship in a storm, tossed here and there, etc. Now that these weak souls may be strengthened, that these unstable souls may be established, that these disconsolate souls may be comforted, etc., I have presented this tract to the world, not doubting but that if the Lord shall draw out their spirits to a serious perusal of it, they shall find, through the blessing of Jehovah, that it will contribute very much to their attaining of a full assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness, as also to the keeping and maintaining of that full and blessed assurance; which that it may, I shall follow it with my prayers.

Fifthly, I have published this following discourse, **remembering that my life is but a vanishing vapor, James 4:14, and that the time of my sojourn in this world will be but short**, Psalm 39:12. Man's life is so short, that Austin doubts whether to call it a dying life, or a living death. Man's life is but the shadow of smoke, the dream of a shadow. This present life is not life, but a motion, a journey towards life (Bernard.) The life of a Christian is rather a step towards life, than life. Yet do I believe that that is not a death, but life, that joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not a life, but death, that separates the living man from Christ.

I know I shall not speak long to friends, saints, or sinners; therefore I was the more willing to take the opportunity of **preaching to you when I am dead**. As Abel by his faith, he being dead, yet speaks, Heb 11:4, so this treatise may speak and live, when I shall return to my long home, and fall asleep in the bosom of Christ. [Eccles 12:5; Acts 7:60] The prophets and apostles, though they are now in heaven—yet by their doctrines, examples, and writings, they still preach to the saints on earth.

Zisca desired his skin might serve the Bohemians in their wars, when his body could no more do it. Oh that poor I, who have been but a little serviceable to the saints in my life, might by this, and my former weak labors, be much serviceable to them after my death! **BOOKS** may

preach, when the author **cannot**, when the author **may** not, when the author **dares**, yes, and which is more, when the author **is** not!

Sixthly, **To testify my cordial love and affection to all the true lovers of Christ**, and to let them know that they are all, though under different forms, precious in my eyes, and very near and dear unto my heart. I bless God I am, and I desire more and more to be, one with everyone who is one with Christ, Phil 4:21; Col 1:4; 2 Thess 1:3. I would sincerely have as free, as large, and as sweet a heart towards saints, as Christ has. For a wolf to worry a lamb is usual, but for a lamb to worry a lamb is unnatural; for Christ's lilies to be among thorns, is ordinary, but for these lilies to become thorns, to tear and fetch blood of one another, is monstrous and strange. Ah, Christians! can Turks and Pagans agree? can Herod and Pilate agree? can Moab and Ammon agree? can bears and lions, can wolves and tigers agree? yes, which is more, can a legion of devils agree in one body? and shall not the saints agree—who must live together in heaven at last?

Pancirolus tells us, that the most precious pearl the Romans had, was called 'union'. Oh the union of saints is an unvaluable pearl! The heathen man, by the light of nature, could say, "That the thickest wall of a city in peace, and the safest stronghold in war, is unity. Truly all saints are one in Christ, all saints partake of the same spirit, promises, graces, and privileges. All saints are fellow-members, fellow-soldiers, fellow-travelers, fellow-heirs, fellow-sufferers, and fellow-citizens; and therefore I cannot, dare not but love them all, and prize them all; and to evidence it, I have dedicated this treatise to the service of their souls.

Seventhly and lastly, **To fence and fortify the souls of real, serious Christians against those brainsick notions**, and those airy speculations, and imaginary revelations, and enthusiastical fancies, etc., with which many are sadly deluded and deceived.

Thus have I given you a brief account of the reasons which have prevailed with me to publish this treatise to the world, and to dedicate it to yourselves. **Let your hearts dwell on truth, as the bee does upon the flower; every Scriptural truth being a flower of paradise, which is more worth than a world.**

Now the God of all grace fill your hearts and souls with all the fruits of righteousness and holiness, that you may attain unto a full assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness; which that you may is the sincere, earnest, and constant desire of him who is your soul's servant,  
Thomas Brooks.

## THE PREFACE

To be in a state of true grace, is to be miserable no more; it is to be happy forever. A soul in this state is a soul near and dear to God. It is a soul much beloved, and very highly valued by God. It is a soul housed in God. It is a soul safe in God's everlasting arms. It is a soul fully and eminently interested in all the highest and noblest privileges. [Psalm 144:15; Mal 3:17; Rom 8:16-17; Deut 33:26-27; 1 Cor 3:22-23] The being in a state of grace makes a man's condition happy, safe, and sure. But the seeing, the knowing of himself to be in such a state, is that which renders his life sweet and comfortable. The being in a state of grace will yield a man a heaven hereafter, but the seeing of himself in this state will yield him both a heaven here and a heaven hereafter; it will render him doubly blessed, blessed in heaven, and blessed in his own conscience.

Now **assurance** is a reflex act of a gracious soul, whereby he clearly and evidently sees himself in a gracious, blessed, and happy state; it is a sensible feeling, and an experimental discerning of a man's being in a state of grace, and of his having a right to an eternal crown of glory; and **this rises from the seeing in himself the special, peculiar, and distinguishing graces of Christ**, in the light of the Spirit of Christ, or from the testimony and report of the Spirit of God, "the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit, that he is a son, and an heir-apparent to glory," Rom 8:16-17.

It is one thing for me to have grace, it is another thing for me to see my grace; it is one thing for me to believe, and another thing for me to believe that I do believe; it is one thing for me to have faith, and another thing for me to know that I have faith. Now assurance flows from a clear, certain, evident knowledge that I have grace, and that I do believe, etc.

Now this assurance is the beauty and apex of a Christian's happiness in

this life. It is usually attended with the strongest **joy**, with the sweetest **comforts**, and with the greatest **peace**. It is a pearl that most want, a crown that few wear. His state is safe and happy, whose soul is adorned with grace, though he sees it not, though he knows it not.

Assurance is not of the essence of a Christian. It is required to the **well-being**, to the comfortable and joyful being of a Christian; but it is not required to the **being** of a Christian. A man may be a true believer, and yet would give all the world, were it in his power, to **know** that he is a believer. To have grace, and to be sure that we have grace, is glory upon the throne, it is heaven on this side heaven.

Every unsettled Christian is a terror to himself, yes, his life is a very hell; fears and doubts are his chief companions, and so he judges himself unfit and unworthy to live, and yet he is afraid to die; and truly this is the sad condition of most Christians.

A man may be God's, and yet not know it; his estate may be good, and yet he not see it, Eph 1:13; 1 John 5:13; Gal 4:6. It is one thing to be an heir, and another thing to know that one is an heir. The child in the womb or in the arms, may be an heir to a crown, and yet understands it not. But more of these things you will find in the following discourse—to which I refer you.

Showing that believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness. **By the following ten arguments it will evidently appear, that believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.**

First, **The GROUND on which the apostle Paul builds his assurance**, is not any special revelation—but such a foundation as is common to all believers, as clearly appears from Rom 8:32-34, "He who did not spare his own Son—but gave him up for us all--how will he not

also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

It is clear from these words, that this blessed apostle had not that glorious assurance that he speaks of in the two last verses of this chapter [Rom 8:38-39] by immediate revelation, for he concludes it from such arguments as are general or common to all the godly; and therefore it roundly follows,

First, That **believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.** So Hezekiah's assurance did spring from a principle which is common to all believers, 2 Kings 20:3. Consequently,

Secondly, **It is the very scope and end of the Scripture to help believers to a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.** "These things," says John, "have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life," 1 John 5:13. These precious souls did believe, and they had eternal life, in respect of the promise of eternal life, Titus 1:2, and in respect of Christ their head, who had taken up their rooms aforehand in heaven, and who as a public person does represent all his people, Eph 2:6; and they had eternal life in respect of the beginnings of it; for what is **grace** but glory begun? and what is **glory** but grace perfected? **Grace** is glory in the bud, and **glory** is grace at the full. Now, though they had eternal life in all these respects, yet they did not know it; though they did believe, yet they did not believe that they did believe; therefore the apostle, in those precious epistles of his, does make it his business, by variety and plenty of arguments, to help all—but especially such as are weak in the faith, to a well-grounded assurance of their eternal welfare. Surely glory is nothing else but a bright constellation of graces; happiness is nothing but the quintessence of holiness.

Assurance produces such strong consolations, as swallows up all worldly griefs. As Moses' serpent did the sorcerers' serpents, or as the fire does

the fuel.

It is the very drift and design of the whole Scripture, to bring souls first to an acquaintance with Christ, and then to an acceptance of Christ, and then to build them up in a sweet assurance of their actual interest in Christ: which made Luther to say, "That he would not live in paradise, if he might, without the word—but with the word he could live in hell itself." Gregory calls the Scripture, the heart and soul of God. No histories are comparable to the histories of the Scripture for,

- 1, Antiquity;
- 2, rarity;
- 3, variety;
- 4, brevity;
- 5, perspicuity;
- 6, harmony;
- 7, verity.

The word evidences truth, it unmasketh falsehood; it fights against folly, it opens the God's heart of mercy, and it assures believing souls of eternal felicity. That is a precious word in Hebrews 6:18, "God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged." God has given us his word, his oath, his seal, that our consolation may be strong, and that our salvation may be sure.

Now, what comfort can a believer have without assurance? It is the assurance of my interest in the land of Canaan, in gospel cordials, in precious promises, and in a precious Christ, which comforts and delights my soul. It is not enough to raise strong consolation in my soul, barely to know that there are mines of gold, mountains of pearl, heaps of treasures, a land flowing with milk and honey; but it is the knowledge of my personal interest in these, which raises joy in my soul. To know that there are such things, and that I have no interest in them, is rather a vexation than a consolation to me. To know that there is a feast of choicest delicacies—but not a taste for me; that there are pleasant fountains and streams—but I must perish for thirst in a wilderness; to know that there are royal robes for such and such—but I must die in my rags; to know that there is a pardon for such and such—but I must be turned off the ladder

of life; to know that there is eternal glory for such and such—but I must still lie with Lazarus at Dives' door; such knowledge as this may well add to my vexation—but it will not add to my consolation.

It was rather matter of sorrow than joy to the men of the old world, to know that there was an ark, when they were shut out; and to the Israelites, to know that there was a brazen serpent set up, whereby others were cured, when they died with the stinging of the fiery serpents. Spira cried out, 'Christ is to me a grief, a torment, because I despised him, I rejected him, and I have no part in him.'

So how can it comfort me to know that there is peace in Christ, and pardon in Christ, and righteousness in Christ, and riches in Christ, and happiness in Christ, etc., for others—but none for me! Ah, this knowledge will rather be a hell to torment me than a ground of joy and comfort to me. But now **God has in the Scripture discovered who they are that shall be eternally happy**, and how they may reach to an assurance of their felicity and glory; which made Luther to say, "That he would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible." The Bible is a Christian's magna charta, his chief evidence for heaven. Men highly prize, and carefully keep their charters, privileges, conveyances, and assurances of their lands; and shall not the saints much more highly prize, and carefully keep in the closet of their hearts, the precious word of God, which is to them instead of all assurances for their maintenance, deliverance, protection, confirmation, consolation, and eternal salvation.

Thirdly, **Other believers have in an ordinary way attained to a sweet assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.** "We know," says the apostle, in the name of the saints, "that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," 2 Cor 5:1-2. Their assurance sets them in triumph upon the throne. We have a house, a house above, a house in heaven, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We have a house, a heavenly house, a house made by the greatest wisdom and the highest love; a house, that for honor, pleasures, riches, safety, stability, glory, and perpetuity, transcends all the royal palaces in the world. It is a house "not

made with hands—but eternal in the heavens."

So the church: Solomon's Song 2:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." I know, says the spouse, that Jesus Christ is mine. I can with the greatest confidence and boldness affirm it: he is my head, my husband, my Lord, my Redeemer, my Justifier, my Savior; "and I am his. I am as sure that I am his, as I am sure that I live. I am his by purchase, and I am his by conquest; I am his by donation, and I am his by election; I am his by covenant, and I am his by marriage. I am wholly his; I am peculiarly his; I am universally his; I am eternally his. This I well know, and the knowledge thereof is my joy in life, and my strength and crown in death. [Eph 1:22-23; 1 Cor 1:30; 1 Cor 6:20; Psalm 110:3; John 10:29; John 15:16; Ezek 16:8; Hos 2:19-20]

So the church: Isa 63:16, "You, Lord, are our Father; from ancient times, Your name is our Redeemer." David could say, "The Lord is my portion forever," Psalm 73:25-26; and at another time he could sweetly sing it out, "I am yours, save me!" Psalm 119:94. Job could look through the darkest cloud, and see that his Redeemer lives, Job 19:25. Thomas cries out, "My Lord, and my God!" John 20:28. And Paul trumpets it out, "That nothing could separate him from the love of Christ," Rom 8:38-39; and that he had "fought a good fight, and finished his course; and that there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim 4:7-8.

By what has been said, it clearly appears that other believers have obtained assurance in an ordinary way, and therefore believers now may attain to a sweet assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness. Certainly, God is as loving, and his affections of compassion are as strong towards believers now, as ever they were to believers of old; and it makes as much for the honor of God, the lifting up of Christ, the stopping of the mouths of the wicked, and the rejoicing of the hearts of the righteous—for God to give assurance now, as it did for God to give it then.

Fourthly, **God has by promise engaged himself to assure his people of their happiness and blessedness.** "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly," Psalm 84:11. If he will withhold no good thing, then certainly

he will not always withhold assurance, which is the great good thing, the only thing, the chief thing, the peculiar thing that believers seek after. So Ezek 34:30-31, "Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. And you my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, says the Lord God." So John 14:21,23, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." "If any man loves me," says Christ, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Now has the Lord spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? Men say and unsay, they eat their words as soon as they have spoken them—but will God do so? Surely not! He is faithful, who has promised, "All the promises of God in him are yes, and in him amen," 2 Cor 1:20; that is, they are stable and firm, and shall really be made good. The promises are a precious book, every leaf drops myrrh and mercy, therefore sit down and suck at these breasts, warm yourself at this fire. [Isa 64:4; 1 Cor 2:9; Psalm 21:3; Isa 65:24]

God has been always as good as his word, yes, he has sometimes been better than his word; he has ever performed, and he has over performed. He promised the children of Israel only the land of Canaan—but he gave them, besides the whole land of Canaan, two other kingdoms which he never promised, Ah! how often has God blessed us with his bounties, and has given us in such mercies as have been as far beyond our hopes as our deserts. How has God, in these days of darkness and blood, gone beyond the prayers, desires, hopes, and confidences of his people in this land, and beyond what we could read in the book of the promises.

Satan promises the best—but pays with the worst! He promises honor—and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure—and pays with pain; he promises profit—and pays with loss; he promises life—and pays with death. But God pays as he promises, all his payments are made in pure gold; therefore take these promises wherein God has engaged himself to assure you of his love, and spread them before the Lord, and tell him that it makes as well for his honor as your comfort, for his glory as for your peace, that he should assure you of your everlasting happiness and

blessedness.

**Fifthly, There is in all the saints the springs of assurance, and therefore they may attain to assurance.**

Precious **FAITH** is one spring of assurance, and this is in all the saints, though in different degrees, 2 Pet 1:1. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them who have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." Faith in time will, of its own accord, raise and advance itself to assurance. Faith is an appropriating grace; it looks upon **God**, and says with David, "This God is my God forever and ever, and he shall be my guide unto the death," Psalm 48:14. It looks upon **Christ**, and says with the spouse, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 7:10. It looks upon an **immortal crown**, and says with Paul, Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory," 2 Tim 4:8. It looks upon the **righteousness of Christ**, and says, "This righteousness is mine to cover me." It looks upon the **mercy of Christ**, and says, "This mercy is mine to pardon me." It looks upon the **power of Christ**, and says, "This power is mine to support me." It looks upon the **wisdom of Christ**, and says, "This wisdom is mine to direct me." It looks upon the **blood of Christ**, and says, "This blood is mine to save me," etc. I may say of faith, as Luther says of prayer: it has a kind of omnipotency in it, it is able to do all things.

As faith, so **HOPE** is another spring of assurance. Col 1:27, "Christ in you," says Paul, "the hope of glory." So Heb 6:19, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain." Hope takes fast hold upon heaven itself, upon the holy of holies. A Christian's hope is not like that of Pandora, which may fly out of the box, and bid the soul farewell, as the hope of hypocrites do; no, it is like the morning light, the least beam of it shall commence into a complete sunshine; it shall shine brighter and brighter until perfect day. The hypocrite's hope is like the morning dew, Job 8:13-14, "the hope of the godless will perish. His source of confidence is fragile; what he trusts in is a spider's web."

When Alexander went upon a hopeful expedition, he gave away his gold; and when he was asked what he kept for himself, he answered, 'the hope

of greater and better things.' So a Christian will part with anything rather than with his hope; he knows that hope will keep the heart both from aching and breaking, from fainting and sinking; he knows that hope is a beam of God, a spark of glory, and that nothing shall extinguish it until the soul is filled with glory. Souls which are big in hope, will not be long without sweet assurance. God loves not to see the hoping soul go always up and down sighing and mourning for lack of a good word from heaven, for lack of possessing what it hopes in time to enjoy. Hold out hope and patience "a little longer, and he who has promised to come, will come, and will not tarry," Heb 10:37.

Again, A **GOOD CONSCIENCE** is another spring of assurance: 2 Cor 1:12, "For our rejoicing is this—Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." So 1 John 3:21, "Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence towards God." A good conscience has sure confidence; he who has it sits, Noah-like, in the midst of all disruptions and turmoils, in sincerity and serenity, uprightness and boldness. A good conscience and a good confidence go together.

What the probationer-disciple said to our Savior, Matt 8:19, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go," that a good conscience says to the believing soul—"I will follow you from duty to duty, from ordinance to ordinance; I will stand by you, I will strengthen you, I will uphold you, I will be a comfort to you in life, and a friend to you in death; though all should leave you, yet I will never forsake you." **A good conscience will look through the blackest clouds, and see a smiling God.** Look! as an evil conscience is attended with the greatest fears and doubts, so a good conscience is attended with the greatest clearness and sweetness. And as there is no hell in this world compared to an evil conscience; so there is no heaven in this world compared to a good conscience. He who has a good conscience has one of the choicest springs of assurance, and it will not be long before God will whisper such a man in the ear, and say unto him, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!" Matt 9:2.

Again, real **LOVE TO THE SAINTS** is another spring of assurance, and

this spring is a never-failing spring. This spring is in the weakest as well as in the strongest saints: 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He who loves not his brother abides in death." The apostle does not say, We think, we hope, etc., that we are translated from death to life—but "we know" that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren. We know certainly; we are as certain of it as we are certain that we live. Love to the brethren is not the cause of our passing from a natural state to a spiritual state, from hell to heaven—but an evidence thereof. I confess it is very sad to consider how this precious stream of love is even dried up in many.

It was accustomed to be a proverb, 'one man is a God to another;' but now it may be truly said, 'one man is a devil to another.' He who lacks love to his brethren, lacks one of the sweetest springs from whence assurance flows. A greater hell I would not wish any man, than to live and not to love the beloved of God.

Now is it not as easy a thing as it is pleasant—for a man who has several sweet springs in his garden, to sit down, draw water, and drink? John 4:14. O believing souls! there are springs, there are wells of living water not only near you—but in you; why, then, do you, with Hagar, sit down sorrowing and weeping, Gen 21:15-19, when you should be a-tasting or a drinking not only of the springs above you—but also of the springs within you? A man who has fruit in his garden may both delight his eye and refresh his spirit with tasting of it, Gal 5:22-23. Certainly we may both eye and taste the fruits of the Spirit in us, they being the first fruits of eternal life. I think none but mad souls will say that grace is that forbidden fruit that God would have us neither see nor taste. We ought not so to mind a Christ in heaven, as not to mind "Christ in us the hope of glory," Col 1:27. Christ would not have his spouse so to mind her own blackness, as to forget that she is all fair and glorious within, Song 1:5; Song 4:7, and Psalm 45:11.

Sixthly, **The Holy Spirit exhorts us "to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,"** 2 Pet 1:10, and presses us to look to the obtaining of a "full assurance." Therefore believers may attain unto an assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness: "Therefore brethren," says the apostle, "give diligence to make your calling and

election sure; for if you do these things, you shall never fall." The Greek word translated "give diligence" signifies two things: (1.) All possible haste and speed; (2.) All manner of seriousness and intention in doing. Make it your main business, your chief study, your greatest care, to "make your calling and election sure," says the apostle. When this is done, your all is done. Until this is done, there is nothing done. And to show the necessity, utility, excellency, and possibility of assurance, the apostle says it is the one thing necessary; it is of an internal and eternal concern to make firm and sure work for your souls.

Assurance is a jewel of that worth, a pearl of that price, that he who will have it must work, and sweat, and weep, and wait to obtain it. He must not only use diligence—but he must use all diligence; not only dig—but he must dig deep, before he can come to this golden mine. Assurance is that "white stone," that "new name," that hidden manna, which none can obtain but such as labor for it as for life. Assurance is such precious gold, that a man must win it before he can wear it. Win gold, and wear gold, is the language both of heaven and earth.

The riches, honors, languages, and favors of this world cannot be obtained without much trouble and effort, without rising early and going to bed late; and do you think that assurance, which is more worth than heaven and earth, can be obtained by cold, lazy, heartless services? [Psalm 127:1-2; Luke 5:6; Prov 14:23] If you do, you do but deceive your own souls. There are five things that God will never sell at a cheap rate: Christ, truth, his honor, heaven, and assurance. He who will have these must pay a good price for them, or go forever without them.

And as Peter exhorts you to "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," so Paul presses you to look to the obtaining of full assurance, which does clearly evidence that there is a possibility of attaining unto a full assurance of our happiness and blessedness in this life. And "we desire," says the apostle, "that everyone of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that you be not slothful—but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb 6:11-12. We must not only strive after assurance—but we must strive and show all diligence to the attaining of that rich and full assurance which will scatter all fears and doubts, which will make a soul

patient in waiting, courageous in doing, and cheerful in suffering, and which will make a heaven in a man's heart on this side heaven, and make him go singing into paradise, despite all of life's calamities and miseries.

And certainly it can never stand with the holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness of God, to put his people upon making their calling and election sure, and upon obtaining full assurance, if there were not a possibility of obtaining a full and well-grounded assurance of their happiness and blessedness in this life; and therefore it does undeniably follow that they may attain unto a blessed assurance of their felicity and glory while they are in this valley of misery. The contrary opinion will make a man's life a hell here, though he should escape a hell hereafter.

Seventhly, **The Lord has, in much mercy and love, propounded in his word the ways and means whereby believers may obtain a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness;** and therefore it may be obtained. Take three scriptures to evidence this.

The first is in 2 Pet 1:13. If you turn to the words, you shall find that the Lord does not only press them to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure;" but he shows them plainly the way and means whereby this may be done, namely, by adding "to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," etc.

The second scripture is that 1 Cor 11:28, "But let a man examine himself; and so let eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." By examination the soul comes to see what right it has to Christ and all the precious things of his house; and believingly to eat so of that bread of life, that heavenly manna, as that it may live forever.

The third scripture is that 2 Cor 13:5, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves; know you not your own selves how that Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" or unapproved, or rejected. By a serious examination of a man's own estate, he may know whether he has faith or not, **whether he is Christ's spouse or the devil's strumpet**, whether there be a work of grace upon his heart or not. And certainly it cannot stand with the glorious wisdom, unspotted

righteousness; and transcendent holiness of God, to put men upon the use of such and such means in order to the obtaining of such and such an end, if that end could not be obtained by the use of the means prescribed, Exod 15:11, "Lord, who is like You among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?"

Man, who has but a spark of that wisdom, righteousness, and holiness which is in God, will not not labor to use of such or such means for the obtaining of health, wealth, or the like—unless there is a proper tendency in the use of those means prescribed to reach such ends. [cf. Job 38:6,18,21,33] And will God, who is wisdom, righteousness, and holiness in the abstract? Surely not! God is one infinite perfection in himself—which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures; and therefore it is impossible that God should act below the creature, which he should do if he would put the creature upon the use of those means that would not reach the ends for which the means were used.

Thus you see clearly by this seventh argument that believers may in this life attain to a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.

**Eighthly, It was the principal end of Christ's institution of the sacrament of the Supper that he might assure them of his love,** and that he might seal up to them the forgiveness of their sins, the acceptance of their persons, and the salvation of their souls, Matt 26:27-28. The nature of a seal is to make things sure and firm among men; so the supper of the Lord is Christ's broad seal, it is Christ's privy-seal, whereby he seals and assures his people that they are happy here, that they shall be more happy hereafter, that they are everlastingly chosen and beloved of God, that his heart is set upon them, that their names are written in the book of life, that there is laid up for them a crown of righteousness, and that nothing shall be able to separate them from him who is their light, their life, their crown, their all in all. [Dan 6:8; Matt 27:66; 2 Tim 4:8; Col 3:11]

In this sacrament Christ comes forth and shows his love, his heart, his affections, his blood—that his children may no longer say, Does the Lord Jesus love us? does he delight in us? etc.; but that they may say with the

spouse, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 7:10. The Hebrew word signifies, 'His desirous affection is towards me, as the wife's greatest affection is towards her dear husband.'

Many precious Christians there are who have lain long under fears and doubts, sighing and mourning; who have run from minister to minister, and from one duty to another, etc., and yet could never be persuaded of the love of Christ to their poor souls; but still their fears and doubts have followed them, until they have waited upon the Lord in this glorious ordinance, by which the Lord has assured them of the remission of their sins, and the salvation of their souls. In this ordinance God has given them manna to eat, and a white stone, and new name, which no man knows but he who receives it, Rev 2:17. Tell me, you precious, believing souls, whether you have not found God in this ordinance often whispering of you in the ear, saying, "Sons and daughters, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!" Matt 9:2. I know you have.

Those scriptures that do expressly require saints to be abundant and constant in rejoicing and in praising of God, to have always harps in their hands, and hallelujahs in their mouths, do clearly evidence that believers may attain to a well-grounded assurance in this life. How can they rejoice and glory in God, that do not know whether he will be an everlasting friend—or an everlasting enemy to them, whether he will always breathe out love—or wrath upon them? How can they but hang their harps on the willows, who do not know but that they may live in a strange land, Psalm 137:2; yes, in a land of darkness all their days? How can they be cheerful or thankful, who do not know but that they may at last hear that heartbreaking, that conscience-wounding, that soul-slaying sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Matt 25:41.

Now, there is no duty in the whole book of God that is more frequently and abundantly pressed upon believers than this of joy and rejoicing, of praise and thanksgiving, as all know who know anything of the Scripture: 1 Thess 5:16, "Rejoice evermore." God would not have his children always a-putting finger in the eye. Ah, Christians! remember what Christ has done for you, and what he is still a-doing for you in heaven, and what he will do for you to all eternity—and you will not be able to spend your days

in whining and mourning. It would be an endless business to cite every scripture wherein this duty is enjoined. It is a duty that is much pressed in both Testaments, and as little practiced by all whimpering Christians.

Psalm 32:11, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart." Psalm 33:1, "Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; for praise is lovely for the upright." 'The word notes a fair and lovely grace, for which a thing is to be liked and desired.' Ainsworth.

Christians, are not your mercies greater than your miseries? Yes! Are your greatest sufferings comparable to the least spark of grace or beam of glory revealed in you or to you? No! Will not one hour's being in the bosom of Christ recompense you for all your trouble and travail? Yes. Why, then, do you spend more time in sighing than in rejoicing; and why do you, by your not rejoicing, sadden those precious hearts that God would not have saddened, and gladden those graceless hearts that God would not have gladdened? Their joy lasts forever, whose object of joy remains forever.

A beautiful face is at all times pleasing to the eye—but then especially when there is joy manifested in the countenance. Joy in the face puts a new beauty, and makes that which before was beautiful, to be exceeding beautiful. It puts a luster and glory upon beauty; so does joy in the face, heart, and life of a Christian, cast a general splendor and glory upon him, and the ways of God wherein he walks. The joy of the Lord is not only the strength—but also the beauty and glory of Christians, Neh 8:10.

Joy and rejoicing is a consequence and effect of assurance, as many believers by experience find; and therefore, without all question, believers may attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness, else it would be impossible that they should "rejoice evermore;" so that by this argument, as by the former, it clearly appears that believers may in this life be assured of their eternal well being. Katherine Brettergh, under the power of assurance, cries out, "Oh the joys, the joys, the inconceivable joys my heart is filled with!"

Tenthly, The tenth and last argument, to prove that believers may in this

life attain to a well-grounded assurance, is this, That **God would never have made such a broad difference in the Scripture** between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between the righteous and the wicked, between saints and sinners, between sons and slaves, sheep and goats, between lions and lambs, between wheat and chaff, light and darkness, etc., **if it were impossible for men to know which of these two estates they are in.** [Gen 3:15; Ezek 18:19, seq.; Matt 25:1, seq.; Matt 3:12; 2 Cor 6:14] Therefore they may know whether they are in a state of life or in a state of death, in a state of misery or in a state of felicity, in a state of wrath or in a state of love, Matt 13:1, seq.

Oh! it is much below the grace of God, it is repugnant to the wisdom of God, to make such a wide difference between his own children and Satan's, John 8:44, if it were not possible for every child to know his own father. "You shall call me *my father*." Isa 63:16, "Doubtless You are our Father, even though Abraham does not know us and Israel doesn't recognize us. You, Lord, are our Father; from ancient times, Your name is our Redeemer." The saints' motto is, 'No father is like our Father!' The weakest saint can say, "Abba, Father!" Rom 8:15; the Lord will not leave his children comfortless, or as orphans, or fatherless children, as it is in the Greek. God has no child so young—but can more or less call him Father. Though the salvation of believers does not depend upon their knowledge of God to be their father, yet their consolation does; therefore the Lord will not be only a father to Israel—but he will make Israel know that he is his father: Jer 3:4, "Will you not from this time cry unto me, *My Father, you are the guide of my youth?*" We say he is a wise child, who knows his father; such wise ones believers are.

By these ten arguments it does evidently appear, that believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness. I shall apply this a little, and then close up this chapter.

**USE.** This precious truth thus proved, looks sourly upon all those who affirm that believers cannot in this life attain unto a certain well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness—as papists and Arminians: all know that their writings and teachings, are in arms against this Christ-exalting, and soul-cheering doctrine of

assurance. "I know no such thing as assurance of heaven in this life," says Grevinchovius the Arminian. Assurance is a pearl that they trample under feet; it is a beam of heaven that has so much light, brightness, and shining glory in it, that their bleary eyes cannot behold it.

Assurance is glory in the bud, it is the suburbs of paradise, it is a cluster of the land of promise, it is a spark of God, it is the joy and crown of a Christian; the greater is their impiety and folly who deny assurance, who cry down assurance under any names or notions whatever. They are rather tormenters than comforters who say, 'poor souls may know that there is a crown of righteousness—but they must not presume to know that they themselves shall have the honor to wear that crown; and that makes God like King Xerxes, who crowned his helmsman in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening of the same day.

Arminians are not ashamed to say, that God may crown a man one hour, and uncrown him in the next; they blush not to say that a man may be happy and miserable, under love and under wrath, an heir of heaven and a firebrand of hell, a child of light and a child of darkness—and all in an hour. Oh what miserable comforters are these! What is this but to torment the weary soul? to dispirit the wounded spirit, and to make them most sad whom God would have most glad? Ah! how sad is it for men to affirm, that wounded spirits may know "that the Sun of righteousness has healing in his wings," Mal 4:2; but they cannot be assured that they shall be healed. The hungry soul may know that there is bread enough in his Father's house—but cannot know that he shall taste of that bread, Luke 15:17. The naked soul may know that Christ has robes of righteousness to cover all spots, sores, defects, and deformities of it—but may not presume to know that Christ will put these royal robes upon it, Rev 3:18. The impoverished soul may know that there be unsearchable riches in Christ—but cannot be assured that ever it shall partake of those riches, Eph 3:8. All that these men allow poor souls, is guesses and conjectures that it may be well with them. They will not allow souls to say with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God," John 20:18; nor with Job to say, "My Redeemer lives," Job 19:25; nor with the church, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 7:10. And so they leave souls in a cloudy, questioning, doubting, hovering condition, hanging, like Mahomet's tomb

at Mecca, between two loadstones; or like Erasmus, as the papists paint him, hanging between heaven and hell. They make the poor soul a terror to itself.

What more uncomfortable doctrine than this? What more soul-disquieting, and soul-unsettling doctrine than this? You are this moment in a state of spiritual life—you may the next moment be in a state of spiritual death; you are now gracious—you may the next hour be graceless; you are now in the promised land—yet you may die in the wilderness; you are today a habitation for God—you may tomorrow be a synagogue of Satan; you have today received the white stone of absolution—you may tomorrow receive the black stone of condemnation; you are now in your Savior's arms—you may tomorrow be in Satan's paws; you are now Christ's freeman—you may tomorrow be Satan's bondman; you are now a vessel of honor—you may suddenly become a vessel of wrath; you are now greatly beloved, you may soon be as greatly loathed; this day your name is fairly written in the book of life—tomorrow the book may be crossed out, and your name blotted out forever. This is the Arminians' doctrine, and if this be not to keep souls in a doubting and trembling, and shivering condition, what is it?

Well, Christians, remember this is your happiness and blessedness, that "none can pluck you out of your Father's hand," John 10:29; that you are "kept," as in a garrison, or as with a guard, "by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet 1:5. "That the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but the kindness of the Lord shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you," Isa 54:10. "That Christ ever lives to make intercession for you," Heb 7:25; and that men and devils are as able, and shall as soon, make a world, dethrone God, pluck the sun out of the firmament, and Christ out of the bosom of the Father—as they shall pluck a believer out of the everlasting arms of Christ, or rob him of one of his precious jewels! Deut 33:26-27.

I shall close up this chapter with an excellent saying of Luther: "The whole Scripture," says he, "Both principally aim at this thing, that we should not doubt—but that we should hope, that we should trust, that we should believe, that God is a merciful, a bountiful, a gracious, and a

patient God to his people."

**Containing several weighty propositions concerning assurance.**

**I.** The first proposition that I shall lay down concerning assurance is this, That **God denies assurance for a time to his dearest and choicest ones, and that upon many considerable grounds.**

(1.) As, first, **for the exercise of their grace.** A gracious soul would always be upon mount Tabor, looking into Canaan; he would always be in his Father's arms, and under his Father's smiles; he would always be in the sunshine of divine favor; he would always have the heavens open, that he might always see his Christ and his crown; he would with Peter be always upon the mount; he is loath to walk through the valley of darkness, through the valley of Baca. As the king of Sodom said once to Abraham, "Give me the people, and take the goods to yourself," Gen 14:21. Just so, gracious souls are apt to say, "Give me joy, give me peace, give me assurance; and take trials, afflictions, and temptations to yourselves!" But really—what use would there be of the stars, if the sun did always shine? Why, none. Why, no more use would there be of your graces, if assurance should be always continued; therefore the Lord, for the exercise of his children's faith, hope, patience, etc., is pleased, at least for a time, to deny them assurance, though they seek it by earnest prayer, and with a flood of penitent tears. If saints should always have assurance, they would be too apt to say, 'it is good for us to be here.'

(2.) The Lord denies assurance to his dearest ones, **that he may keep them in the exercise of those religious duties that are most costly and contrary to flesh and blood**—such as mourning, repenting, self-judging, self-loathing, self-abhorring, and self-searching; as Lam 1:16, "For these things I weep: my eye, my eye runs down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me." Lam 3:2-3, "He has led me, and brought me into darkness, not into light. Surely against me he is turned; he turns his hand against me all the day." Lam 3:17, "And you have removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot

prosperity." Now, what this sad dealings of God puts the church upon you may see in Lam 3:40. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." That is, "Bring back my soul," or "fetch again my soul," that is comfort, refresh, and rejoice me as in former times. These two Hebrew words are joined together, to intimate to us that diligent, narrow, and accurate inquiry that they should make into their ways, to search as men do into the bowels of the earth, for the discovery of rich mines and treasures.

And if you look throughout the book, you shall find the church much in self-examining, self-judging, self-loathing, etc., upon this ground, that God had hidden his face, and drawn a curtain between him and them, and stood at a distance from them, and would not speak comfortably and friendly to them.

Now, if you ask me **why God will put his children upon those duties of religion which are most costly and contrary to flesh and blood?** I answer,

1. That his strength and power may appear in their weakness, 2 Cor 12:7-9.
2. To discover not only the *reality*—but also the *strength* of their graces. A *little* grace will put a man upon those religious duties that are easy and pleasing to flesh and blood, and rather profitable and pleasurable; but it must be *strength* of grace that puts man upon those services that are costly and cross to the *old man*.
3. That they may be more fully and eminently conformable to Christ their head, who, from first to last, who, even from the cradle to the cross—was most exercised in those duties and services that were most costly and cross to flesh and blood, as is most evident to all who study the writings of the Holy Spirit, more than the writings of men.
4. Because in the performance of such duties they do in a more singular way bear up the name and credit, the honor and glory of God, Christ, and the gospel in the world. The very world will cry out, "Ah, these are Christians indeed!"

5. Because the more they are in the exercise of such duties, the greater at last will be their reward, Heb 11:7.

6. That Satan's plots and designs may be the better prevented, and the wicked world more justly condemned, who do not only despise the hardest duties of religion—but also neglect the easiest, Matt 25:4-6.

(3.) The third reason why God denies assurance to his most precious ones, is **that they may be the more clearly and fully convinced of that exceeding sinfulness and bitterness that is in sin**, "Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of me," declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty." Jeremiah 2:19.

"Ah Lord," says the soul which is sighing and mourning under the lack of assurance, "I see now that sin is not only evil—but the greatest evil in the world, in that it keeps me from an assurance of my interest in you, who is the greatest good in the world, and from an assurance of that favor of yours—which is better than life, and from the light of your sweet countenance—which is better than food, and wine, and oil; and from those joys and comforts—which can only make a paradise in my soul, Psalm 4:7; Psalm 63:3-4. Ah, Lord! now I find sin not only to be bitter—but to be the very quintessence of bitterness. Ah! no bitterness so bitter as sin—which keeps my soul from that sweet assurance, which is not only the top and crown of mercy—but also the sweetener of all mercy, misery, and glory. Oh what unspeakable evil do I now see in that evil which keeps me from the most desirable good! Oh what bitterness do I now find in that which Satan, the world, and my own deluded heart, told me I should find sweetness in? Ah, now I find by experience, that to be true, which long since the faithful messengers of the Lord have told me; namely, that sin debases the soul of man, that it defiles and pollutes the soul of man, that it renders the soul most unlike to God, who is the *optimum maximum*—the best and greatest; who is *omnia super omnia*—all, and above all; and renders it most like to Satan, who is a very sea and sink of sin! Ah, now I find by experience, that sin has robbed the soul of the image of God, the holiness of God, the beauty of God, the glory of God, the righteousness of God, and that keeps the soul from wearing this

golden chain of assurance!"

"The deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:13. Sin has its original from a deceitful subtle serpent, and is the ground of all the deceit in the world, and is the great deceiver of souls. Yes, sin is *peccatum est Deicidium*—sin is a killing of God. "But they kept shouting--Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Luke 23:21

(4.) A fourth reason why God denies assurance to his dearest ones, is, because **they seek assurance more for themselves—than they do for his honor and glory**; more that they may have joy without sorrow, comfort without torment, peace without trouble, sweet without bitter, light without darkness, and day without night—than that God may be exalted and admired, and his name alone made great and glorious in the world. The glory of God must consume all other ends, as the sun puts out the light of the fire.

Many Christians are like the bee which flies into the field to seek honey to eat—but brings it not into the master's hive. So they seek for assurance, that they may feed upon that sweet honeycomb, more than to fill their Lord and master's hive with thanks and praise.

That servant who minds his wages more than his work—must not wonder if his master is slack in paying; no more should he who minds his comfort more than obedience, who minds assurance more than divine honor—wonder that God delays the giving in of assurance, though it be sought with many prayers and tears. He who is most tender for God's honor, shall find by experience that God is most mindful of his comfort. God will not see that soul sit long in sackcloth and ashes, who makes it his business to set God up upon his throne. He who minds God's glory more than his own good, shall quickly find that God will even obscure his own glory to do him good. If we are not lacking in giving God glory—he will not long be lacking in giving us joy.

It was a notable saying of Nazianzen, "Let me be cast into the sea, let me lose my peace—rather than the name of Christ should suffer;" so tender was he of the honor and glory of Christ.

(5.) A fifth reason why God denies assurance to his children, is, **That when they have it, they may the more highly prize it, the more carefully keep it, the more wisely improve it, and the more affectionately and effectually bless God for it.** None sets such a price upon light, as he who has lain long in a dungeon of darkness. Just so, none sets such a price upon assurance, as those children of light who have walked most in spiritual darkness. Ah! how sweet was the light to Jonah, that had been in the belly of hell, Jon 2:2. Just so, is assurance to those who, through slavish fears and unbelief, "have made their beds in hell," as the psalmist speaks, Psalm 139:8. Gold which is fetched from afar, and dearly bought—is most esteemed. Just so, is that assurance which costs the soul most pains and patience, most waiting and weeping, most striving and wrestling—is most highly valued, and most wisely improved. Socrates prized the king's countenance above his coin, his good looks above his gold. Just so, do saints prize assurance above all worldly enjoyments.

As, by the lack of *temporals*—God teaches his people the better to prize them, and improve them when they enjoy them. Just so, by the lack of *spirituals*—God teaches his people the better to prize them, and improve them when they enjoy them. Ah! how sweet was Canaan to those who had been long in the wilderness! How precious was the gold and earrings to Israel, who had been long in bondage in Egypt; and the gifts and jewels to the Jews that had been long in bondage in Babylon! Just so, is assurance precious to those precious souls who have been long without it—but at last come to enjoy it, Num 14:33-34; Exod 11; Ezra 1.

After the Trojans had been sailing and wandering a long time in the Mediterranean Sea, as soon as they espied land—they cried out with exulting joy, "Italy, Italy!" Just so, when poor souls shall come to enjoy assurance, who have been long tossed up and down in a sea of sorrow and trouble—how will they with joy cry out, "Assurance, assurance, assurance!" "The longer I wait for the empire," said the emperor's son, "the greater it will be." Just so, the longer a saint waits for assurance, the greater at last it will be.

(6.) The sixth reason why God denies assurance to his dearest ones, at least for a time, is, **That they be kept humble and low in their own**

**eyes**; as the enjoyment of mercy gladdens us—so the lack of mercy humbles us. David's heart was never more humble, than when he had a crown only in hope—but not in hand. No sooner was the crown set upon his head, but his blood rises with his outward good, and in the pride of his heart he says, "I shall never be moved," Psalm 30:6.

Hezekiah was a holy man, yet he swells big under mercy. (2 Chron 32. The whole chapter is worthy of reading.) No sooner does God lift up his house higher than others—but he lifts up his heart in pride higher than others. When God had made him high in honors, riches, victories, yes, and in spiritual experiences—then his heart flies high, and he forgets God, and forgets himself, and forgets that all his mercies were from God's *free* mercy, that all his mercies were but *borrowed* mercies. Surely, it is better to lack any temporal mercy—than a humble heart; it is better to have no temporal mercy—than lack a humble heart. "As I get good by my sins, so I get hurt by my graces," said Mr. Fox, they being accidental occasions of pride to him. Augustine says that the first, second, and third virtue of a Christian—is humility.

A little, little mercy, with a humble heart—is far better than the greatest mercies with a proud heart. I had rather have Paul's poor coat with his humble heart—than Hezekiah's lifted-up heart with his treasures and royal robes. Well, Christians, remember this, God has two strings to his bow; if your hearts will not lie humble and low under the sense of sin and misery, he will make them lie low under the lack of some desired mercy. The lack of assurance tends to bow and humble the soul, as the enjoyment of assurance does to raise and rejoice the soul; and therefore do not wonder why precious souls are so long without assurance, why Christ's chariot, *assurance*, is so long a-coming, Judg 5:28. God has two hands—a hand *open* and a hand *shut*; and he makes use of both to keep souls humble.

(7.) The seventh and last reason why God denies assurance, for a time, even to his dearest ones, is, **That they may live clearly and fully upon Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ may be seen to be all in all.** It is natural to the soul to rest upon everything below Christ; to rest upon creatures, to rest upon graces, to rest upon duties, to rest upon divine manifestations, to rest upon celestial consolations, to rest upon gracious

evidences, and to rest upon sweet assurances. Now the Lord, to cure his people of this weakness, and to bring them to live wholly and solely upon Jesus Christ, denies comfort, and denies assurance, etc., and for a time leaves his children of light to walk in darkness. Christians, this you are always to remember, that though the *enjoyment of assurance* makes most for your consolation; yet the *living purely upon Christ in the lack of assurance*, makes most for his exaltation. There s no Christian compared to him who, in the lack of *visible* divine consolations—can live upon an *invisible* God; who in thick darkness—can live upon God as an everlasting light. *All good is in the chief good.* Christ is all things to Christians. He is —bread to feed them, a fountain to refresh them, a physician to heal them, a rock to shelter them, a light to guide them, and a crown to crown them!

He is happy that believes upon seeing, upon feeling—but thrice happy are those who believe when they do not see; who love when they do not know that they are beloved; and who in the lack of all comfort and assurance, can live upon Christ as their only all. [Heb 11:27; Isa 60:19; Mic 7:7-9; John 20:28-29] He who has learned this holy art, cannot be miserable; he who is ignorant of this are cannot be happy.

**II. The second proposition is this, That the Scripture has many sweet significant WORDS to express that well-grounded assurance by, which believers may attain to in this life.**

Sometimes it is called a **persuasion**.

(1.) There is a **natural** persuasion: natural principles may persuade a man that there is a God, and that this God is a great God, a beauteous God, etc.—but this will not make a man happy;

(2.) there is a **moral** persuasion;

(3.) there is a **traditional** persuasion;

(4.) there is a **divine** persuasion which flows from divine principles and causes.

"For I am **persuaded**, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39.

It is rendered **a clear and peculiar manifestation of Christ to the soul**, John 14:21-24.

It is often rendered, **to know**, as 1 John 3:14,19,24, and 1 John 5:13,19, etc.

But the word that the Scripture does most fully express this by **full assurance**. That is, when the soul, by the Spirit and word, is so fully persuaded of its eternal happiness and blessedness, that it is carried, like Noah's ark, above all waves, doubts, and fears; and, Noah-like, sits still and quiet; and can, with the apostle Paul, triumph over sin, hell, wrath, death, and Satan.

This is sometimes called "full assurance of **understanding**;" sometimes it is called "full assurance of **hope**;" and sometimes it is called full assurance of **faith**;" because these are the choice and pleasant springs from whence assurance flows, Col 2:2; Heb 6:11,18-19; Heb 10:22.

Now though this full assurance is earnestly desired, and highly prized; and the lack of it much lamented; and the enjoyment of it much endeavored after by all saints—yet it is only obtained by a few. Assurance is a mercy too good for most men's hearts; it is a crown too weighty for most men's heads. Assurance is optimum maximum—the best and greatest mercy; and therefore God will only give it to his best and dearest friends.

The emperor Augustus in his great feasts, gave trifles to some—but gold to others. Just so—honors, riches and worldly pleasures are the trifles which God gives to the worst of men. But assurance is that "tried gold," Rev 3:18, that God only gives to tried friends. Among those few who have a share or portion in the special love and grace of God, there are but a very few who have an assurance of his love. Most saints, I believe, can

give a loud testimony to this truth. I shall rejoice when their experiences shall confute it.

It is one mercy for God to love the soul; and another mercy for God to assure the soul of his love. God writes many a man's name in the book of life, and yet will not let him know it until his hour of death—as the experience of many precious souls does clearly evidence. Assurance is a flower of paradise that God sticks but in a few men's bosoms. It is one thing to be an heir of heaven—and another thing for a man to know or see himself an heir of heaven. The babe may be heir to a crown, a kingdom—and yet not understand it. Just so many a saint may be heir to a crown, a kingdom of glory—and yet not know it. As the babes which passes the pangs of the first-birth do not presently cry, "Father, father;" so the newborn babes in Christ, who have passed the pangs of the second-birth, do not presently cry "Abba, Father;" they do not presently cry out, "Heaven, heaven is ours! Glory, glory is ours!" Rom 8:16-17; 1 Pet 2:2.

**III. The third proposition is this, That a man may have true grace—who has no assurance of the love and favor of God, or of the remission of his sins and salvation of his soul.**

A man may be truly holy—and yet not have assurance that he shall be eternally happy. A man may be God's—and yet he not know it; his estate may be good—and yet he not see it; he may be in a safe condition—when he is not in a comfortable condition. All may be well with him in the court of *glory*—when he would give a thousand worlds that all were but well in the court of *conscience*. The blind man in the Gospel called his faith—unbelief.

The Canaanite woman showed much love, wisdom, zeal, humility, and faith; yes, such strength of faith as makes Christ admire her, and yield to her, grace her, and gratify her; and yet she had no assurance that we read of, Matt 15:22,29.

So Paul, speaking of the believing Ephesians, says, "In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Eph 1:13.

First, they **heard** the word; and then

secondly, they **believed**; and then

thirdly, they were **sealed**; that is, fully assured of a heavenly inheritance, of a purchased possession.

So 1 John 5:13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." So Isa 50:10, "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God." So Mic 7:8-9, "Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light. Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the Lord's wrath, until he pleads my case and establishes my right. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness."

Asaph was a very holy man, a man eminent in grace; and yet he was without assurance, as may be seen at large, Psalm 77. Heman, doubtless, was a very precious soul, and yet from his youth up, he was even distracted with terrors, Psalm 88. There are thousands of Christians who are in a state of grace, and shall be saved—who lack assurance and the proper effects of it—as high joy, pure comfort, glorious peace, and vehement longings after the coming of Christ. [Isa 8:17; Isa 49:14-16; Isa 54:6-11]

Assurance is requisite to the *well-being* of a Christian—but not to the *being* in a state of grace. It is requisite to the consolation of a Christian—but not to the salvation of a Christian. It is requisite to the well-being of grace—but not to the mere being of grace. Though a man cannot be saved without faith—yet he may be saved without assurance. God has in many places of the Scripture declared, that without faith there is no salvation—but God has not in any one place of the Scripture declared, that without assurance there is no salvation. God never said, "Except you be assured I will pardon you—I will never pardon you; except you are assured I will save you—I will never save you." This is language God never spoke; and why, then, should men speak it?

A man must first be saved before he can be assured of his salvation, for he cannot be assured of that which is not. And a man must have saving grace before he can be saved, for he cannot be saved by that which he has not. Again, a man must be ingrafted into Christ, before he can be assured of forgiveness or salvation—but this he cannot be before he has faith, therefore—there may be grace where there is no assurance. Christ went to heaven in a cloud, and the angel went up to heaven in the smoke and flame of the sacrifice; and so I doubt not but many precious souls do ascend to heaven in clouds and darkness, Acts 1:9; Judg 13:20.

**Now a man may have grace, and yet lack assurance; and this may arise from these causes.**

(1.) First, **From his caviling spirit, and from his siding with the old man against the new, with the flesh against the spirit, with corruption against grace**, with the house of Saul against the house of David, with the work of Satan against the work of God. Sin is Satan's work; grace and holiness are God's work; yet such is the weakness, yes, madness of many poor souls, that they will fall in and side with Satan's work, rather than with God's, against their own souls. Cease caviling, you weak soul, and say, "O Lord, forgive what I have been, correct what I am, direct what I shall be."

Ah! Christians, will you condemn that judge for injustice and unrighteousness, who shall open his ears to the complaints of the plaintiff—but stops his ears against the answers of the defendant; and will you not condemn yourselves for that you do with both ears hear what sin and Satan has to say against the soul—but have not one ear open to hear what the Spirit, what grace, what the new man, what the noble part of man, what the regenerate man, can say for the justification, satisfaction, and consolation of the soul.

Just before John Prostiborski was laid on the rack, he, with a heroic indignation, cut out his tongue, and cast it away. Being demanded why he did so, set down his answer with a quill on the wall: "I did it because I would not be brought by any tortures, to say anything that is false." Ah! caviling souls, I had almost said that you were better cut out your tongues than allow them to be caviling against the grace of God, the image of God,

which is stamped upon you.

Let me tell you, O you caviling soul! that it is your wisdom and your duty to remember that command of God, which does prohibit you from bearing false witness against your neighbor. That same command does enjoin you not to bear false witness against the work of grace upon your own heart, against the precious and glorious things that God has done for your soul. And you should make as much conscience of bearing false witness against anything the Lord has wrought *in* you, and *for* you, as you do make conscience of bearing false witness against your neighbor. It cannot but be sad with the soul—but be night with the soul—when it makes much conscience of the one, and no conscience of the other.

Many heathens have been so loving and faithful one to another, that they would rather die, than they would bear false witness one against another. How dare you then, caviling souls, to bear false witness against your own souls, and the gracious work of the Lord upon them! If this is not the way to keep off assurance, and keep the soul in darkness, yes, in a hell—I know nothing.

(2.) In the second place, a man may have grace, and yet lack assurance; **which may arise in from the exceeding littleness and weakness of his grace.** [Matt 14:30-31; Mark 9:24] A little candle yields but a little light, and a little grace yields but a little evidence. Great measures of grace carry with them great and clear evidences—but little measures of grace carry with them but little evidence. Some stars are so small that they are scarce discernible. Just so, some saints' graces are so small, that they can hardly see their graces to be graces. A little fire will yield but a little heat; a little grace will yield but a little comfort, a little evidence. A little grace will yield a man a heaven hereafter—but it is a great deal of grace that must yield us a heaven here. A little stock will bring in but a little profit; a little grace will bring in but a little peace. A little jewel yields but a little luster; no more does a little grace. This is the reason why Christians who have but a little grace, have but a little of the shine and luster of assurance; they have but little spiritual joy and comfort.

Yet that the spirits of weak Christians may not utterly faint, let me give them this HINT, namely—that the weakest Christian is as much justified,

as much pardoned, as much adopted, and as much united to Christ—as the strongest Christian. The weakest Christian has as much interest and propriety in Christ, as the highest and noblest Christian who breathes; though he cannot make so much advantage and improvement of his interest and propriety as the strong Christian, who has a greater degree of grace.

The babe in the cradle has as much propriety in the father as he who is grown up to ripe years, though he cannot make such improvement of it as the other. A *child's* hand may receive a pearl, as well as the hand of a *giant*. Just so, may a weak faith receive Christ—as well as a strong faith.

Hierom observes upon the beatitudes, that there are many of the promises made to weak grace: Matt 5:3-4,6, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: blessed are those who mourn: blessed are those who hunger and thirst." Weak saints, remember this: the *promise* is a ring of gold, and *Christ* is the precious tried stone in that ring; and upon that stone must you rest, as you would have grace to thrive, and your souls to be safe and happy. Weak souls, remember this: as Joseph sent chariots to bring his father and his brethren to him, Gen 45, so God would have your weak graces to be as chariots to bring you to himself, who is the nourisher, strengthener, and increaser of grace. He who makes his graces to be servants and handmaids to convey him to Christ, the fountain of grace—he shall find the greatest sweetness in grace, and the greatest increase of grace.

(3.) Thirdly, A man may have true grace, and yet lack assurance, and **this may arise from the resurrection of old sins**. Ah! when those sins which were long since committed, and long since lamented, and long since loathed, and long since crucified; when those old sins, which has cost a soul many prayers and many tears, and many sighs, and many groans, and many complaints, when those sins which have been long buried shall be again revived, and meet the soul, and stare upon the soul, and say to the soul, "We are yours, and we will follow you; we are yours, and we will haunt you!" Ah, how will this cause a man's countenance to be changed, his thoughts to be troubled, his joints to be loosed, and his heart to be amazed!

David and Job meeting with the sins of their youth, long after they were lamented and pardoned, makes their hearts startle and tremble, Psalm 25:7; Job 13:26. Upon the new risings of old sins, the soul begins to question all, and thus to expostulate the case: "Surely my estate is not good, my pardon is not sealed; if it is, why are these sins revived, and remembered? Has not God engaged himself in the promises of grace, that those sins which are pardoned, shall never be remembered? Isa 43:25; Jer 31:34, and surely if these sins are not pardoned, I have reason to fear that others are not pardoned; and if my sins he not pardoned, how shall I escape being destroyed? Surely my repentance was not sound, my sorrow was not sincere; the blow, the wound I gave sin, was not mortal. If it was sincere, how does it come to pass, that it now meets me like an armed enemy?" Thus, these new risings of old sins keeps many a man's soul and assurance asunder.

(4.) Fourthly, A man may have grace and yet lack assurance, and **this may arise from his falling short of that maturity which the word requires, and that other saints have attained to.** "Ah!" says such a soul, "surely I have no grace! Oh how short do I fall of such and such righteous rules, and of such and such precious Christians! Ah! how clear are they in their light! How strong are they in their love! How high are they in their attainments! How are their hearts filled with grace, and their lives with holiness! All their motions towards God, and towards man, speak out grace, grace; they pray indeed like saints, and live indeed like angels"

Now many poor souls, comparing themselves with the perfect rule of righteousness found in Scripture, and with those who are in the highest forms in Christ's school, and who are the noblest and choicest patterns for purity and sanctity, and finding such a vast disproportion between their hearts and the rule, between their actions and lives, and the actions and lives of others—they are apt to sit down saddened and discouraged. Remember this—though your consolation depends upon degrees of grace, yet your salvation depends upon the truth of grace.

Suetonius reports of Julius Caesar, that seeing Alexander's statue, he fetched a deep sigh, because he at that age had done so little. Just so, many precious souls sit down sighing and weeping—that they have lived

so long, and done so little for God, and for their own internal and eternal good. This wounds and sinks their spirits, that they are so unlike to those in grace, whom they desire to be like unto in glory; and that they are so far below such and such in spirituals, whom they are so far above in temporals.

(5.) Fifthly, A man may have true grace and yet lack assurance, and **this may arise from that smoke and clouds, those fears and doubts which corruption raises in the soul.** Just so, that the soul cannot see those excellent graces which otherwise might be discerned. Though there may be many precious gems and jewels in the house, yet the smoke may hinder a man from seeing them sparkle and shine. So though there may be many precious graces in the souls of saints, yet corruption may raise such a dust, such a smoke in the soul, that the soul is not able to see them in the beauty and glory. The well of water was near Hagar—but she saw it not until her eyes were opened by the Lord, Gen 21:19-20. So grace is *near* the soul, yes, *in* the soul sometimes, and yet the soul does not see it, until God opens the eye and shows it. "The Lord was in this place," says Jacob, "and I knew it not," Gen 28:16. So many a precious soul may say, grace was in my heart, and I knew it not, I saw it not.

Blessed Bradford in one of his epistles says thus, "O Lord, methinks I feel it so with me, sometimes as if there were no difference between my heart, and the heart of the wicked; my mind is as blind as theirs, my spirit as stout, stubborn, and rebellious as theirs, and my thoughts as confused as theirs, and my affections as disordered as theirs, and my services as formal as theirs," etc. Ah, Christians! have not many of your souls found it so? Surely yes! No wonder then, that though you have grace, yet you have not seen it sparkling and shining in your souls; as some have thought that their fields have had no corn, because they have been so full of weeds; and that their heap has no wheat, because nothing has appeared but chaff; and that their pile has no gold, because it has been covered with much dross. So some have thought that their hearts have been void of grace, because they have been so full of fears and doubts. **Peter** at one time believes and walks, at another time he doubts and sinks, Matt 14:30. **Abraham** believes and offers up Isaac at one time, he fears and falls at another time. "Say you are my sister, lest they kill me,"

Gen 20:2. So **David** and **Job**, they had their shufflings, tremblings, faintings, shakings, and questionings, Psalm 116:11; Psalm 31:22. It is not always high water with saints, sometimes they are reduced to a very low ebb. The best of saints are like the ark, tossed up and down with waves, with fears and doubts; and so it will be until they are quite in the bosom of Christ.

(6.) Lastly, A man may have grace, and yet not see it, yet not know it; and **this may arise from his non-searching, his non-examining, his non-ransacking, of his own soul.** There is gold in the mine, and men might find it, if they would but dig and search diligently after it. Worthless daisies grow in sight upon the surface of the earth—but the precious and richest rarities are hidden within the bowels of the earth. You are wise, and know how to apply it.

There is grace in the heart, and you might see it, if you would but take the candle of the Lord, and look narrowly after it. Look! as many a man upon a diligent search may find his temporal estate to be better than he fears; so many choice souls upon a diligent search may find their spiritual estate to be far better than they conceived or judged it to be. Therefore souls, cease from complaining, cease from rash judging and dooming of yourselves to hell, and be diligent in inquiring what the Lord has done, and what the Lord is a-doing, in you and for you. Compare the books together, compare his working upon you and others together. What! Have you no light, no love, no longings, no hungerings, no thirstings after God? What! Have you no sighing, no complaining, no mourning, under the sense of sin, and under the lack of divine favor? Surely if you search, you will find some of these things; and if you do, prize them as jewels that are more worth than a world. God will not despise "the day of small things," [Zech 4:10] and will you? Will you, dare you, say that that is little, which is more worth than heaven? **The least spark of grace shall at last be turned into a crown of glory!** Well! remember this, that as the least grace, if true and sincere, is sufficient to salvation, so the sense of the least grace should be sufficient to your consolation.

**IV.** The fourth proposition is this, namely, **That God may deny assurance long, and yet give it in to his children at last, after patient waiting.** God appears to David, and brings him out of "a

horrible pit and sets his feet upon a rock, and puts a new song into his mouth," Psalm 40:1-4.

After the church in the Canticles had run through many hazards and hardships, many difficulties and dangers, she finds "him whom her soul loved," Song 3:5.

The prophet sits down and bewails his sad condition thus: Psalm 69:3,20, "I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried: my eyes fail while I wait on my God. And I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity—but there was none; and for comforters—but I found none." Yes, but at last God appears, and then says he: "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving," Psalm 69:30.

Job sighs it out: "I go east, but he is not there. I go west, but I cannot find him. I do not see him in the north, for he is hidden. I turn to the south, but I cannot find him." Job 23:8-9. But after this sighing, he sings it out: "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Job 23:10. Experience does abundantly evidence, that this is the manner of God's dealing with abundance of those precious souls of whom this world is not worthy. I could say much to this point from my own knowledge—but I must forbear lighting a candle to see the sun at noon.

Mr. Frogmorton was as holy and as choice a preacher as most was in England in those days, and he lived seven and thirty years without assurance, and then died, having assurance but an hour before he died. He died in full assurance of the justification of his person, the remission of his sins, and the salvation of his soul. God denied assurance a great while to Mr. Glover, though he sought it with many prayers and tears; and yet when he was in sight of the fire, the Lord shined forth in his favor so sweetly upon him, that he cries out to his friend, "He is come, he is come!" So Mrs. Katherine Bretterge, after many bitter conflicts with Satan the day before she died, she had sweet assurance of that unshakable kingdom, of those incorruptible riches, and of that unfading crown of righteousness.

I have read of three martyrs that were bound and brought to the stake,

and one of them falls down upon the ground, and wrestles earnestly with God for the sense of his love, and God gave it him then at that instant, and so he came and embraced the stake, and died cheerfully and resolutely a glorious martyr.

Now God does delay the giving in of assurance to his dearest ones, and that partly **to let them know that he will be waited on, and that assurance is a jewel worth waiting for.** The least smile from God when our hour-glass is running out, will make our souls amends for all their waiting.

And partly that we may know that **God is free in his workings,** and that he is not tied to any preparations or qualifications in the creature—but is free to come when he will, and go when he will, and stay as long as he will, though the soul sighs it out, "How long, Lord, how long will it be before my mourning is turned into rejoicing?"

Again, God delays the giving in of assurance, not because he delights to keep his children in fears and doubts, nor because he thinks that assurance is too rare, too great, too choice a jewel to bestow upon them; but it is either because he thinks **their souls do not stand at a sufficient distance from sin; or because their souls are so taken up and filled with creature enjoyments** as that Christ is put to lodge outside; or else it is because they pursue not after assurance with all their might; they give not all diligence to make their calling and election sure; or else it is because their hearts are not prepared, are not low enough, for so high a favor. [Isa 59:1-2; Jer 5:25; Luke 2:7; 2 Pet 2:5]

Now God's delaying assurance upon these weighty grounds should rather work us to admire him, to justify him, and quietly to wait for him—than to have any hard thoughts of him, or to think it unkind in him, or impatiently to say, "Why is his chariot so long a-coming?" Judg 5:28.

**V.** The fifth proposition is this, **That those choice souls who have assurance may lose it, they may forfeit it.** The freshness and greenness, the beauty, luster, and glory of assurance may be lost.

It is true, believers cannot lose the **root** of grace; yet they may lose

assurance, which is the beauty and fragrancy, the crown and glory of grace, 1 John 3:9; 1 Pet 1:5. These two lovers, grace and assurance, are not by God so nearly joined together but that they may by sin on our side, and justice on God's, be put asunder. *The keeping of these two lovers, grace and assurance, together, will yield the soul two heavens, a heaven of joy and peace here, and a heaven of happiness and blessedness hereafter; but the putting these two lovers asunder will put the soul into a hell here, though it escape a hell hereafter.* This Chrysostom knew well, when he professed that the lack of the enjoyment of God would be a far greater hell to him than the feeling of any punishment. It is very rare, for a soul that ever had a well-grounded assurance not to experience this truth sooner or later. A separation between the body and the soul will not so torment the soul as separation between grace and assurance.

As you would keep your Christ, as you would keep your comfort, as you would keep your crown, keep grace and assurance together, and neither by lip nor life, by word nor works, let these be put asunder. It is possible for the best of men so to blot and blur their evidences for felicity and glory, as that they may not be able to read them nor understand them. They may so vex and grieve the Spirit either by gross enormities, or by refusing his comforts and cordials, or by neglecting or slighting his gracious actings in themselves, or by misjudging his work, as calling faith fancy, or sincerity hypocrisy, etc., or by fathering those brats upon him that are the children of their own distempered hearts, as that he may refuse to witness their interest in him, though he be a witnessing Spirit, and refuse to comfort them, though he be the only Comforter. The Holy Spirit is a very sensitive being.

The best believer may have his summer-day turned into a winter-night, his rejoicing into sighing, his singing into weeping, his wedding-ropes into mourning garments, his wine into water, his sweet into bitter, his manna, his angels' food, into husks, his pleasant grapes into the grapes of Sodom, his fruitful Canaan, his delightful paradise, into a dry and barren wilderness. Look! as faith is often attended with unbelief, and sincerity with hypocrisy, and humility with vainglory, so is assurance with fears and doubts.

Blessed Hooker lived near thirty years in close communion with God,

without any considerable withdrawals of God all that while; and yet, upon his dying bed, he went away without any sense of assurance, or discoveries of the smiles of God, to the wonder of the expectation of many precious souls.

Look! as many a man loses the sight of the city when he comes near to it, so many a choice soul loses the sight of heaven, even then when he is nearest to heaven. **Abraham**, you know, had assurance in an extraordinary way concerning his protection from God; and yet says Abraham, "Say you are my sister; for otherwise they will kill me," Gen 12:13, and Gen 20:2. Ah! how had the freshness, the greenness, the beauty and glory of his assurance worn off—that he should, out of slavish fears, expose his wife to other men's lusts, and himself and others to God's displeasure; that he should wound four at once, the honor of God, his wife's chastity, his own conscience, and Pharaoh's soul.

**David**, you know, sometimes sings it out sweetly: "I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." Psalm 18:1-2. At other times you have him sighing it out: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? why are you disquieted in me? why have you forgotten me?" Psalm 42:5. "For your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down upon me. Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart." Psalm 38:2-6. "You hid your face, and I was troubled," Psalm 30:7. "Restore to me the joy of my salvation, that the bones that you have broken may rejoice," Psalm 51:12.

His heart was more often out of tune than his harp. He begins many of his psalms sighing, and ends them singing; and others he begins in joy, and ends in sorrow. So that one would think, that those psalms had been composed by two men of a contrary temperaments. Yes, it is very observable, that though David had assurance in an extraordinary way

that he should be king, being anointed by that great prophet Samuel, yet the luster and glory of this assurance wears off; and he, overcome by slavish fears, cries out, that "All men are liars," (even Samuel as well as others), and that "he shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." It is true, says David, I have a crown, a kingdom in a promise; but I must swim to the crown through blood, I must win the crown before I wear it; and the truth is, I am likely to die before I attain it. Yes, and after he was king, when king Jesus did but hide his face, he was sorely troubled; so that neither his glorious throne, nor his royal robes, nor his golden crown, nor his glistening courtiers, nor his large revenues, nor his cheerful temper, nor his former experiences, could quiet him or satisfy him when God had turned his back upon him. Look! as all candles cannot make up the lack of the light of the sun, so all temporal comforts cannot make up the lack of one spiritual comfort.

So **Job** sometimes sings it out, "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high; and my Redeemer lives," etc., Job 16:19, and Job 19:25. At other times you have him complaining, "The arrows of the Almighty stick fast in me, and their poison drinks up my spirit," Job 6:4; "The terrors of God set themselves in array against me." And Job 29:2-5, you have him sighing it out thus: "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me!" etc. "The whole life of a good Christian is an holy wish," said one.

Now, by all these clear instances, and by many other saints' experiences, it is evident that **the choicest saints may lose their assurance, and the luster and glory of it may decay and wither.** What the soul should do in such a case, and how it should be recovered out of this sad state, I shall show you towards the close of this discourse.

**VI.** The sixth proposition is this, **That the certainty and infallibility of a Christian's assurance cannot be made known to any but his own heart.** He can say as the blind man once said, "This I know, that once I was blind—but now I see," John 9:25. Once I was a slave—but now I am a son; once I was dead—but now I am alive; once I was darkness—but now I am light in the Lord; once I was a child of wrath, an heir of hell—but now I am an heir of heaven; once I was Satan's slave—but now I am God's freeman; once I was under the spirit of bondage—but now I am under the spirit of adoption—which seals up to me the remission of my sins, the justification of my person, and the salvation of my soul. [Rom 8:6,11,13; Eph 5:8, and Eph 2:3; John 8:36; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 1:1,13; Eph 1:13-14] All this I know, says the assured saint; but I cannot make you know it certainly and infallibly if you would give me a thousand worlds. Can you compass the heavens with a span, or contain the sea in a nutshell? Only then may you fully evidence your assurance to others.

What I have found and felt, and what I do find and feel, is wonderfully beyond what I am able to express. I am as well able to count the stars of heaven, and to number the sand of the sea, as I am able to declare to you the joy, the joy, the unconceivable joy, the assurance, the glorious assurance, that God has given me.

Severinus, the Indian saint, under the power of assurance, was heard to say, O my God! do not so over-joy me; if I must still live, and have such consolations, take me to heaven, etc. So say souls under the power of assurance: Lord! we are so filled with joy and comfort, with delight and content, that we are not able to express it here on earth; and therefore take us to heaven, that we may have that glory put upon us, that may enable us to declare and manifest those glorious things that you have wrought in us.

Parents do by experience feel such soundings, such meltings, such rollings, such sweet workings of their affections and hearts towards their children, that for their lives they cannot to the life describe to others what it is to be a father, to be a mother; what it is to have such depths of affections towards children. Assurance is that white stone that none knows but he who has it: Rev 2:17, "To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows, but he who receives it." White stones were in great use among the Romans.

(1.) In white stones they used to write the names of such as were victorious and conquerors. Just so, in that text, "To him who overcomes, will I give a white stone."

(2.) They used to acquit the innocent in courts of justice, by giving them a white stone; and so here the white stone points out absolution and remission. They gave black stones to note their condemnation.

(2.) They used to give a white stone to those who were chosen to any places of honor. Just so, the white stone of assurance is an evidence of our election, of our being chosen to an unshakable kingdom, incorruptible riches, and an unfading crown of righteousness. And thus much for this sixth proposition, namely, that the certainty and infallibility of a Christian's assurance cannot be made known to any but his own heart, Heb 12:28; Matt 6:20; 1 Pet 1:4.

**VII.** The seventh proposition is this, **That there are some special seasons and times, wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to give to his children a sweet assurance of his favor and love,** and they are these that follow.

I. First, Sometimes, I say not always, **at first conversion,** the Lord is pleased to make out sweet manifestations of his love to the penitent soul. When the soul has been long under guilt and wrath, when the soul has been long under the frowns and displeasure of God, and has long seen the gates of heaven barred against him, and the mouth of hell open to receive him; when the soul has said, 'Surely there is no hope, there is no help, surely I shall lose God, Christ and heaven forever!' then God comes in

and speaks peace to the soul, then he says, "I will blot out your iniquities for my name's sake, and will remember your sins no more!" Isa 43:25. "Hark, soul, hark!" says Christ, "My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways as your ways. My thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace and thoughts of love. Hark, soul! here is mercy to pardon you, and here is grace to adorn you; here is righteousness to justify you; here is eyesalve to enlighten you, and gold to enrich you, and white raiment to clothe you, and balm to heal you, and bread to nourish you, and wine to cheer you, and happiness to crown you, and myself to satisfy you!" Ah, souls! have not some of you found it so? surely you have. [1 Cor 1:30; Rev 3:18; Isa 25:6]

God deals sometimes with rebellious sinners, as princes do with those who are in open rebellion against them. You know princes will put such rebels hard to it: they shall fare hard, and lie hard; chains, and racks, and what not, shall attend them; and yet after the sentence is passed upon them, and they are upon the last step of the ladder of life, and all hope of escape is gone, then the prince's pardon is put into their hand. So the Lord brings many poor souls to the last steps of the ladder, to a hopeless condition, and then he puts their pardon into their bosoms; then he says, "Be of good cheer, I have received you into favor, I have set my love upon you, I am reconciled to you, and will never be separated from you."

You know how God dealt with **Paul**: after he had awakened and convinced him, after he had unhorsed him and overthrown him, after he had amazed and astonished him—then he shows himself graciously and favorably to him, then he takes him up into the third heaven, and makes such manifestations of his love and favor, of his beauty and glory, of his mercy and majesty, as he is not able to utter!

So upon the **prodigal's** return, the fattened calf is killed, and the best robe is put upon his back, and the ring is put on his hand, and shoes on his feet, Luke 15:22-23. Some understand by the robe, the royalty of Adam, others, the righteousness of Christ; and by the ring, some understand the pledges of God's love, rings being given as pledges of love; some the seal of God's Spirit, men using to seal with their rings. I think in this parable God sets forth his goodness and our happiness in restoring to us more by the death of the second Adam, than we lost by the sin of the

first Adam.

Among the Romans, the ring was an ensign of virtue, honor, and nobility, whereby those who wore them were distinguished from the common people. I think the main thing intended by all these passages, is to show us, that God sometimes upon the sinner's first conversion and returning to him, is graciously pleased to give him some choice and signal manifestations of his love and favor, of his goodwill and pleasure, and that upon these following grounds:

(1.) The first ground, **That they may not be swallowed up of sorrow, under the pangs and throes of the new birth.** An awakened conscience is like Prometheus's vulture, it lies ever gnawing. Ah! did not the Lord let in some beams of love upon the soul, when it is Magormissabib, a terror to itself; when the heart is a hell of horror, the conscience an Aceldama, a field of black blood; when the soul is neither quiet at home nor abroad, neither at bed nor board, neither in company nor out of company, neither in the use of ordinances nor in the neglect of ordinances; how would the soul faint, sink, and despair forever! But now when it is thus night with the soul, the Lord sweetly comes in and tells the soul, that all is well, that he has found a ransom for the soul, that the books are crossed, that all debts are discharged, and that his favor and love upon the soul is fixed, Job 33:24. And so God by his sweet and still voice, speaking thus to the soul, quiets and satisfies it, and keeps it from sinking and despairing.

(2.) The second ground. God gives in assurance sometimes at first conversion, **that he may the more raise and inflame their love and affections to him.** Ah! how does a pardon given when a man is ready to be condemned, draw out his love, and raise his affections to that prince that shows affections of mercy, when he is upon the brink of misery! So when a poor sinner is upon the last step of the ladder, upon the very brink of hell and misery, now for God to come in and speak peace and pardon to the soul, ah! how does it inflame the soul, and works the soul to a holy admiration of God, and to a spiritual delighting in God!

King Antigonus, pulling a sheep with his own hands out of a dirty ditch, drew his subjects exceedingly to commend him and love him. So King

Jesus, pulling poor souls out of their sins, and as it were out of hell, cannot but draw them to be much in the commendations of Christ, and strong in their love to Christ. Christ has nothing more in his eye, nor upon his heart, than to act towards his people in such ways and at such seasons as may most win upon their affections. And therefore it is, that sometimes he gives the strongest consolation at first conversion.

(3) The third ground, Christ sometimes at first conversion grants to his people the sweetest manifestations of his love, **that they may be the more active, fervent, abundant, and constant in ways of grace and holiness**. He knows that divine manifestations of love will most awaken, quicken, and engage the soul to ways of piety and sanctity.

Look! What wings are to the bird, oil to the wheels, weights to the clock, a reward to the coward, and the loadstone to the needle—that are the smiles and discoveries of God to a poor soul at his conversion. The manifestations of divine love puts heat and life into the soul, it makes the soul very serious and studious how to act for God, and live to God, and walk with God. "Ah!" says a soul under the beams of divine love, "it is my food and drink, it is my joy and crown to do all I can, for that God who has done so much for me—as to know me in darkness, and to speak love to me when I was most unlovely; to turn my mourning into rejoicing, and my hell into a heaven."

(4.) The fourth ground. Christ sometimes at first conversion gives his people the sweetest manifestations of his love, **to fence and fortify them against Satan's fiery temptations**. Before Christ shall be led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, the Spirit of the Lord shall descend upon him like a dove, and he shall hear a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my *beloved* Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt 3:16-17. *Beloved* is an emphatical word here, and signifies that infinite affection, delight, and content that God the Father did take in Christ—that so he may be strong in resisting, and glorious in triumphing over all the assaults and temptations of Satan, Eph 6:16. So many times at first conversion, the Lord makes out sweet manifestations of his love to the soul—that so the soul may stand fast, and not give ground, and in the sense of divine love may so handle the shield of faith, as to quench all the fiery darts of the devil.

The Lord knows that when he sets upon the delivering of a poor soul from the kingdom of darkness, and translating it into the kingdom of his dear Son—that Satan will roar and rage, rend and tear, as he did him, Mark 9:25-26, "When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. 'You deaf and mute spirit,' he said, 'I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.' The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said—He's dead." No sooner did Jesus Christ look with an eye of love, pity, and compassion upon the boy—but the devil in his rage and wrath falls a-renting and tearing of him, as mad dogs do things they fasten upon. This poor child had never so sore a fit, as now he was nearest the cure.

When rich mercy and glorious power is nearest the soul, then Satan most storms and rages against the soul, Col 1:13. *Pharaoh* in his furious and violent pursuing after Israel, when he saw that God would bring them from under his power, *was a type of Satan*. The more the affections of Christ do work towards a sinner, the more furious will Satan assault that sinner. Therefore divine wisdom and goodness does the more eminently shine in giving the poor soul some sight of Canaan, and some bunches and clusters of of that land, upon its first coming out of the wilderness of sin and sorrow.

But that no soul may mistake this last proposition, give me leave to premise these **TWO CAUTIONS**.

[1.] The first caution. That **God manifests his love only to some at their first conversion, not to all**. Though he dearly loves every penitent soul, yet he does not manifest his love at first conversion to every penitent soul. God is a free agent, to work where he will, and when he will, and to reveal his love how he will, and when he will, and to whom he will. It is one thing for God to work a work of grace upon the soul, and another thing for God to show the soul that work. A man may enjoy the warmth and heat of the sun, when he cannot see the sun. Just so, a man may have grace when he cannot see that he has grace.

God oftentimes works grace in a silent and secret way, and takes

sometimes five, sometimes ten, sometimes fifteen, sometimes twenty years; yes, sometimes more, before he will make a clear and satisfying report of his own work upon the soul. Though our graces be our best jewels, yet they are sometimes, at first conversion, so weak and imperfect, that we are not able to see their luster. The **existence** of grace makes our estates safe and sure, the **seeing** of grace makes our lives sweet and comfortable.

[2.] The second caution. **A man may at first conversion have such a clear glorious manifestation of God's love to him, and of his interest in God, and his right to glory, that he may not have the like all his days after.** I have conversed with several precious souls who have found this true by experience, and upon this very ground have questioned all, and strongly doubted, whether that they have not taken Satan's delusions for divine manifestations.

The fattened calf is not slain every day, the robe of kings is not every day put on every day. Every day must not be a festival day, a marriage day; the wife is not every day in the bosom, the child is not every day in the arms, the friend is not every day at the table—nor the soul every day under the manifestations of divine love.

Jacob did not every day see the angels ascending and descending; Stephen did not every day see the heavens open, and Christ standing on the right hand of God; Paul was not every day caught up to heaven, nor was John every day enrapt up in the Spirit. No saint can every day cry out, I have my Christ, I have my comfort, I have my assurance. Job had his harp turned into mourning, and his organ into the voice of those who weep, Job 30:31. The best of saints are sometimes put to hang their harps upon the willows, and cry out, "Has God forgotten to be gracious, and will he be favorable no more?" Psalm 137:2; Psalm 77:7-9.

II. There is a second special season or time wherein the Lord is pleased to give to his children a sweet assurance of his favor and love, and that is, **when he intends to put them upon some high and hard, some difficult and dangerous service.** Oh then he gives them some sweet taste of heaven beforehand; now he smiles, now he kisses, now he embraces the soul, now he takes a saint by the hand, now he causes his

goodness and glory to pass before the soul, now he opens his bosom to the soul, now the soul shall be of his court and counsel, now the clouds shall be scattered, now it shall be no longer night with the soul, now the soul shall sit no longer mourning in the valley of darkness, now Christ will carry the soul up into the mount, and there reveal his glory to it, that it may act high and brave, noble and glorious in the face of difficulties and discouragements. Divine love has a compulsive faculty, it is very powerful to put the soul upon acting in the highest and hardest services for Christ.

Christ did intend to put Peter, James, and John upon hard and difficult service, and therefore brings them up into a high mountain, and there gives them a vision of his beauty and glory; there they see him transfigured, metamorphosed, or transformed; there they see his face shining as the sun, and his raiment glistening, Matt 17:1-6. In the mount he shows them such beams of his deity, such sparkling glory, as did even amaze them, transport them, and astonish them; and all this grace and glory, this goodness and sweetness Christ shows them, to hearten and encourage them to own him and his truth, to stand by him and truth, to make him and his truth known to the world, though hatred, bonds, and contempt did attend them in so doing.

Thus God dealt with Paul before he put him upon that hard and dangerous service that he had cut out for him, Acts 9:1-23. He takes him up into heaven, and sheds abroad his love into his heart, and tells him that he is a chosen vessel; he appears to him in the way, and fills him with the Holy Spirit, that is, with the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Holy Spirit, and straightway he falls upon preaching of Christ, upon exalting of Christ, to the amazing and astonishing of all who heard him. And as he had more clear, full, and glorious manifestations of God's love and favor than others, so he was more frequent, more abundant, and more constant in the work and service of Christ than others, 2 Cor 11:21-33.

And this has been the constant dealing of God with the patriarchs, as with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc., and with the prophets, as with Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. It is sufficient to point at these instances, they are so notoriously known to all who know anything of the scripture in power. As he in Plutarch said of the Scythians, that although they had

no music nor vines among them, yet, as better things, they had gods. So the saints, though they may lack this and that outward encouragement in the service of God, yet they shall enjoy his presence, that is better than all other things in the world.

When he has put them upon weighty services—he has shed abroad his love into their hearts, he has set his seal upon their spirits, and made them to know that he has set them as a seal upon his hand. He has assured them of his countenance, and of his presence, and of his assistance. He has told them, though others should desert them, yet he will stand by them, and strengthen them, and support them, and uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness. He has told them that his **power** should be theirs to defend them, and his **wisdom** should be theirs to direct them, and his **goodness** should be theirs to supply them, and his **grace** should be theirs to heal them, and his **mercy** should be theirs to pardon them, and his **joy** should be theirs to strengthen them, and his **promise** should be theirs to cheer them, and his **Spirit** should be theirs to lead them. And this has made them as hold as lions, this has made them steadfast, and stand close to the work of God in the face of all dangers and difficulties; this has made them, with stout Nehemiah, scorn to desist or fly from the work of the Lord; this has made their bows to abide in strength, though the archers have shot sore at them. Now there are considerable reasons why God is pleased to give his children some sweet tastes of his love, some assurance of his favor, when he puts them upon some hard and difficult service, and they are these that follow.

(1.) The first reason, **That they may not faint nor falter in his service—but go through it resolutely and bravely**, in the face of all difficulties and oppositions. When God put Joshua upon that hard service of leading and governing his people Israel, he assures him of his love and of his presence: "I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous." Joshua 1:5-6 And this makes him hold on and hold out in the service of the Lord bravely and resolutely, in the face of all discouragements: "Choose whom you will serve, whether your fathers' gods or the gods of the Amorites; but as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord," Josh 24:15. So when the Lord put Paul upon such service that occasioned bonds and afflictions to wait for him in every city, Acts

20:23, he gives him a taste of heaven beforehand, and lifts up the light of his countenance upon him, and this makes him resolute and bold in the work of the Lord. Now Paul will not consult with flesh and blood, Gal 1:15-17; now it is not reproaches, nor stripes, nor prisons, nor whips, nor perils, nor deaths, that can make him look back, having put his hand to the Lord's plough. Oh! the beamings forth of divine love upon his soul filled him with that courage and resolution that, with Shammah, one of David's worthies, he stands and defends the field, when others fall, and fly, and flee the field, 2 Tim 4:16-17.

(2.) The second reason: God gives his people some tastes of his love, some sense of his favor, when he puts them upon hard and difficult services, because **otherwise he would not only act below himself, as he is a wise God, a faithful God, a powerful God, a merciful God, a righteous God**, etc.—but also act below his poor weak creatures. And to imagine that ever the great God will act below the wisdom of those who are foolish, is the greatest madness and blasphemy in the world. For what husband will put his wife, what father will put his child, what master will put his servant, what captain will put his soldier, what prince will put ambassadors, upon hard and difficult services—but they will smile upon them, and speak kindly to them, and make large promises to honor their persons, and kindly to accept, and nobly to reward their services, etc. Surely none. And will God? Will God, who will not give his glory to those who have the most glorious beings, allow his glory to be clouded and eclipsed by the prudent actings of weak worms? Surely not! Isa 42:8, and Isa 48:11.

(3.) The third reason: God lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people when he puts them upon hard and difficult services, **that they may never repent of listing themselves in his service**. Ah! did not the Lord warm the hearts of his people with the glorious beams of his love, when he puts them upon hard work—they would be ready, when they meet with oppositions and hazards, to give up all, and to sit down lamenting and repenting that ever they were engaged in his service. They would be as peevish and froward as Jonah, and with him venture drowning, to throw off God's service. Ah! but now the Lord, by letting his goodness drop upon their hearts, and by putting a pledge-penny into

their hands—he causes them to go cheerfully on in his work, without sighing or repenting. The kisses and embraces of God do put such life, such spirit, such mettle into their souls, as makes them bid defiance to the greatest dangers, and as crowns them conquerors of the greatest difficulties. Ah! says a soul that has walked some turns in paradise, What is dross to gold! what is darkness to light! what is hell to heaven! No more are all difficulties and oppositions to me, who has found the sweetness of divine grace, and have had the happiness to lie in the bosom of God!

Diocletian, the worst and last persecutor in all the ten persecutions, observed, "that the more he sought to blot out the name of Christ, the more it became legible; and the more he sought to block up the way of Christ, the more it became passable; and whatever of Christ he thought to root out, it rooted the deeper, and rose the higher in the hearts and lives of the saints, among whom he had scattered the beams of his love and the rich pearls of his grace." Such souls as have once been in the arms of God, in the midst of all oppositions, they are as men made all of fire walking in stubble; they consume and overcome all oppositions; all difficulties are but as whetstones to their fortitude. The moon will run her course, though the dogs bark at it. Just so, will all those choice souls who have found warmth under Christ's wings, run their Christian race in spite of all difficulties and dangers. The horse neighs at the trumpet, the leviathan laughs at the spear. Just so, does a saint, under the power of assurance, laugh at all hazards and dangers which he meets with in the Lord's service. The sense of God's love and goodness makes him to triumph over the greatest difficulties.

(4.) The fourth reason, and lastly: God gives his people some tastes of his love when he puts them upon hard and difficult services, **that the mouths of the wicked may be stopped**. Should God lay heavy burdens upon his people's shoulders, and not put under his fingers to give some ease; should God double their quota of brick, and yet deny them straw; should God engage them against a potent enemy, and then desert them; should God send them upon some weighty embassy, and not give proportionable encouragements to them—what would the world say? Exod 32:12; Num 14:12-16. Would they not say that he is a hard master, and that his ways are not equal? Would they not say, Verily they

are liars who say he is glorious in **power**, and wonderful in **counsel**, and infinite in **mercy**, and admirable in **goodness**, and rich in **grace**, and unsearchable in his **understanding**? For surely were he, he could not, he would not, put his children upon such hard and dangerous services—but he would own them, and stand by them; he would assist them, and smile upon them; he would be as careful to bring them bravely off, as he has been ready to bring them freely on. Oh! he could not see them in garments rolled in blood—but his affections would yearn towards them, and he would arise, and have mercy on them.

III. Then, thirdly, **WAITING times are times wherein God is pleased to give his people some secret tastes of his love, and to lift up the light of his countenance upon them:** "I waited patiently for the Lord," says David, "and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God," Psalm 40:1-3. After God had exercised David's patience in waiting, he sweetly breaks in upon him, and knocks off his bolts, and opens the prison doors, and takes him by the hand, and leads him out of the horrible pit of confusion, in which he was, and causes his love and goodness so to beam forth upon him as causes his heart to rejoice, and his tongue to sing.

So after devout Simeon had waited for the consolation of Israel, that is, for Christ's coming, the Holy Spirit falls upon him, and leads him to a sight of Christ in the temple, and this makes the good old man sing, 'Now, let your servant depart in peace,' Luke 2:23-33. Ah! says Simeon, I have lived long enough! now I have got Christ in my heart, and Christ in my arms, who is my light, my life, my love, my joy, my crown; let me depart, according to your word.

Ah! saints, I appeal to you, have not many of you found by experience the sweet breathings of Christ upon you, even while you have been waiting at the door of mercy? while you have been weeping and waiting, has not the Lord Jesus come in and said, "Peace be to you! Waiting souls, be of good cheer, it is I! Be of good cheer, your sins are pardoned!" Surely you have.

Has not God made that word good unto you, "Wait on the Lord, be of

good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Psalm 27:14. Yes! And has he not made that good to you, "They shall not be ashamed, who wait for me." Isa 49:23; These words, "shall not be ashamed," in the Hebrew dialect, do not simply import that such shall not be brought to shame, or shall not perish—but that he shall be advanced to great dignity and glory, to everlasting happiness and blessedness; that is, they shall not be deceived, or disappointed of their hopes and expectations, that wait for me. Yes! And have you not found that word made sweet to your souls, "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious: blessed are all they that wait for him"? Yes!

And has not the Lord made that word good to you, "The Lord is good unto those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him." Lam 3:25. Yes! Waiting souls, remember this assurance is yours—but the time of giving it is the Lord's; the jewel is yours—but the season in which he will give it is in his own hand; the gold chain is yours—but he only knows the hour wherein he will put it about your necks. Well! wait patiently and quietly, wait expectingly, wait believingly, wait affectionately, and wait diligently, and you shall find that scripture made good in power upon your souls, "Yet a little while, and he who shall come will come, and will not tarry," Heb 10:37. He will certainly come, he will seasonably come, he will suddenly come. Well! I will say but this—if assurance of God's love be not a jewel worth a waiting for, it is worth nothing.

IV. Fourthly, **SUFFERING times are times wherein the Lord is pleased to give his people some sense of his favor.** "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven!" Matthew 5:11-12. When they are in sufferings for righteousness' sake, for the gospel's sake—then usually God causes his face to shine upon them. Now they shall hear best news from heaven—when they bear worst from earth. God loves to smile most upon his people when the world frowns most. When the world puts their iron chains upon their legs, then God puts his golden chains about their necks. When the world puts a bitter cup into their hands, then God drops some of his honey, some of his goodness and sweetness into it. When the world is ready to stone them, then God gives them the white stone. When the

world is a-tearing their good names, then he gives them a new name, that none knows but he who has it, a name that is better than that of sons and daughters. When the world cries out, "Crucify them, crucify them," then they hear that sweet voice from heaven, "These are my beloved ones, in whom I am well pleased." When the world clothes them with rags, then the Lord puts on his royal robes, and makes a secret proclamation to their spirits, "Thus shall it be done to the men whom the King is pleased to honor." When the world gives into one hand a cup of water, God gives into the other a cup of nectar, a cup of ambrosia. When the world gnashes upon them, and presents all tortures before them, then the Lord opens paradise to them, as he did to Stephen.

When Paul and Silas were in prison for the gospel's sake, then God fills them with such unspeakable joy, that they cannot but be singing when others were sleeping, Acts 16:23-24. God turns their prison into a palace, a paradise, and they turn his mercies into praises. Paul and Silas found more pleasure than pain, more joy than sorrow, more sweet than bitter, more day than night—in the prison. God will make some beams of his goodness and glory to break through stone walls, to warm and glad the hearts of his suffering ones.

'Methinks,' said one, 'I tread upon pearls,' when he trod upon hot burning coals: and 'I feel no more pain than if I lay in a bed of down;' and yet he lay in flames of fire.

When John was banished into the isle of Patmos, "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," Rev 1:9-10, then he is filled with the Spirit, and has the choicest manifestations, and the most glorious revelations that ever he had all his days. Now God makes him one of his court and counsel, and tells him what glorious and mighty things shall be in the latter days. Now he is in a spiritual rapture and ecstasy, and carried above himself, and above all outward things, to attend those glorious visions that God would make known to him.

It was God's lifting up the light of his countenance, which made the martyrs to sing in the fire, to clap their hands in the flames, and to tread upon hot burning coals as upon beds of roses. This made one say, when he felt the flame come to his beard, "What a small pain is this, to be

compared to the glory to come? What is a drop of vinegar put into an ocean of wine? What is it for one to have a rainy day, that is going to take possession of a kingdom?" The smiles of God made another to sing under dreadful sufferings, "I am a Christian!" In Tertullian's time, the persecuted Christians sang, "Your cruelty is our glory!"

This made a French martyr to say, when the rope was about his fellow's neck, "Give me that golden chain, and dub me a knight of that noble order!" This made another to desire, when he was to die, the favor of having his chains buried with him, as the ensigns of his honor.

This made Basil say, "Fire, sword, prison, famine—are all a pleasure, a delight unto me." This made Paul to rattle his iron chains, and to glory in it, more than worldly men glory in all their outward glory.

This made Theodoret to complain, that his persecutors did him wrong, when they took him off the rack, and ceased tormenting of him; for, said he, "All the while I was on the rack, methought there was a young man in white, an angel stood by me, who wiped off the sweat; and I found a great deal of sweetness in it, which now I have lost."

Sufferings are the ensigns of heavenly nobility. No wonder then that the saints are so joyful under them.

To conclude, the smiles of God upon the prisoners of hope, is that which makes them more cheerful and delightful in their sufferings, than Jesus Christ was in his.

When Faninus, an Italian martyr, was asked by one, why he was so merry at his death, since Christ himself was so sorrowful: "Christ," said he, "sustained in his soul all the sorrows and conflicts with hell and death, due to us, by whose sufferings we are delivered from sorrow, and fear of them all; and therefore we have cause of rejoicing in the greatest sufferings."

Now there are these special reasons to be given, why the Lord is pleased in suffering times to visit his people with his loving-kindness, and to lift up the light of his countenance upon them.

(1.) The first reason. **That their patience and constancy under suffering may be invincible.** God knows right well, that if his left hand in suffering times be not under his people, and his right hand over them, if he does not give them some sips of sweetness, some relishes of goodness, they would quickly grow impatient and inconstant. Oh, but now the smiles of God, the gracious discoveries of God—makes their patience and constancy invincible, as it did Vincentius, who by his patience and constancy angered his tormentors; therefore they stripped him stark naked, whipped his body all over to a bloody gore, sprinkled salt and vinegar over all his wounds, set his feet on burning coals, then cast him naked into a loathsome dungeon, the pavement whereof was sharp shells, and his bed to lie on a bundle of thorns. All which this blessed martyr received, without so much as a groan, breathing out his spirit in these words, "Vincentius is my name, and by the grace of God I will be still Vincentius, in spite of all your torments." Persecution brings death in one hand and life in the other; for while it kills the body it crowns the soul.

The most cruel martyrdom is but a detour to escape death, to pass from life to life, from the prison to paradise, from the cross to the crown.

We may see, by an eye of faith, the blessed souls of suffering saints fly to heaven, like Elijah in his fiery chariot.

John Huss, martyr, had such choice discoveries of God, and such sweet influences of the Spirit, as made his patience and constancy invincible. When he was brought forth to be burned, they put on his head a crown of paper, painted over with ugly devils; but when he saw it, he said, "My Lord Jesus Christ, for my sake, did wear a crown of thorns; why should not I then for his sake wear this light crown, be it never so ignominious? Truly I will do it, and that willingly." And as they tied his neck with a chain to the stake, smiling, he said, "That he would willingly receive the same chain for Jesus Christ's sake, who he knew was bound with a far worse chain for his sake." Well! remember this, their names who by a patient suffering are written in red letters of blood in the church's calendar—are written in golden letters in Christ's register, in the book of life.

(2.) The second reason. A second reason why the Lord lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people in suffering times, and that is, **for the confirmation of some, for the conversion of others, and for the greater conviction and confusion of their adversaries**, who wonder, and are like men amazed, when they see the comfort and the courage of the saints in suffering times. Paul's choice conduct in his bonds, was the confirmation of many. "Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly," Phil 1:14. And as the sufferings of the saints do contribute to the confirmation of some, so by the blessing of God they contribute to the conversion of others. "I beseech you," says Paul, "for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds," Philem 10. It was a notable saying of Luther, "The church converts the whole world by blood and prayer." They knew it could be but a short journey between the cross and paradise, between that short storm and an eternal calm.

Basil affirms, "that the primitive saints showed so much heroic zeal and constancy, that many of the heathen turned Christians." Just so, that choice spirit which the saints have showed in their sufferings, when Christ has overshadowed them with his love, and "stayed them with flagons, and comforted them with apples," Song 2:5, has maddened, grieved, vexed, and extremely tormented their tormentors. It would be too tedious to give you an account of all particular persecutors in this case, whom the courage, faith, and patience of the saints have tired out and made weary of their lives, and also bred wonder and astonishment in beholders and readers.

Lactantius boasts of the braveness of the martyrs in his time: "Our children and women, not to speak of men, do in silence overcome their tormentors, and the fire cannot so much as fetch a sigh from them."

Hegesippus reports an observation of Antoninus the emperor, namely, "That the Christians were most courageous and confident always in earthquakes, while his own heathen soldiers were at such times most fearful and dispirited." Certainly no earthquakes can make any heartquakes among the suffering saints—so long as the countenance of God shines upon their face, and his love lies warm upon their hearts. The

suffering saint may be assaulted—but not vanquished; he may be troubled—but can never be conquered; he may lose his head—but he cannot lose his crown, which the righteous Lord has prepared and laid up for him, 2 Tim 4:7-8.

The suffering saint shall still be master of the day; though they kill him, they cannot hurt him; he may suffer death—but never conquest. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death," Rev 12:11. They love not their lives—who love Christ and his truth more than their lives; they slight, despise, and despise their lives, when they stand in competition with Christ. In these words you see that the saints by dying do overcome: "They may kill me," said Socrates of his enemies, "but they cannot hurt me." A saint may say this and more. The herb heliotropium does turn about and open itself according to the motion of the sun. Just so, do the saints in their sufferings, according to the internal motions of the Sun of righteousness upon them. 'O Lord Jesus,' said one, 'I love you more than all goods, more than all my friends, yes, more than my very life.'

(3.) The third reason, A third reason why the Lord causes his goodness to pass before his people, and his face to shine upon his people in suffering times, and that is, **for the praise of his own grace, and for the glory of his own name.** God would lose much of his own glory, if he did not stand by his people, and comfort them and strengthen them, in the day of their sorrows. Ah, the dirt, the scorn, the contempt, that vain men would cast upon God, Exod 32:12; Num 14:13. Look! **as our greatest good comes through the sufferings of Christ—so God's greatest glory that he has from his saints comes through their sufferings!**

"If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you," 1 Pet 4:14. It makes much for the glory of God, that his people are cheered and comforted, quickened and raised, spiritualised and elevated—in the day of their sufferings. Oh the sight of so noble a spirit in the saints, causes others to admire God, to lift up God, to fall in love with God, and to glorify God; for owning his people, and for being a light to them in darkness, a joy to them in sorrow, and a

palace to them in prison. [Dan 3:28-30; Dan 6:25-27]

God is very sensible of the many praises and prayers that he would lose, did he not cause his love and his glory to rest upon his people in suffering times. There is nothing that God is so tender of—as he is of his glory; and that his heart is so much set upon—as his glory; and therefore he will visit them in a prison, and feast them in a dungeon, and walk with them in a fiery furnace, and show kindness to them in a lion's den, that everyone may shout and cry, Grace, grace! [Isa 48:11; Gen 39:20; Dan 6:10; Zech 4:7] God loves to act in such ways of grace towards his suffering ones, as may stop the mouths of their enemies, and cause the hearts of his friends to rejoice.

#### **IV. BELIEVING times are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon his people.**

When his children are in the exercise of faith, then the Lord is pleased to make known his goodness, and to seal up to them everlasting happiness and blessedness: Eph 1:13, "In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—in Him when you believed—were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit;" or in whom believing you were sealed, that is, as you were in the very exercise and actings of faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the Lord made sure, and sealed up to you your adoption, your reconciliation, your pardon, and everlasting inheritance.

He who honors Christ by believing, by fresh and frequent acts of faith upon Christ, him will Christ certainly honor and secure by setting his seal and mark upon him, and by assuring of him of an unshakable kingdom, incorruptible riches, and an unfading crown of glory. Ah Christians! you wrong two at once, Christ and your own souls, while you thus reason: "Lord, give me first assurance, and then I will believe in you and rest upon you;" whereas your great work is to believe, and to hold on believing and acting of faith on the Lord Jesus, until you come to be assured and sealed up to the day of redemption. This is the surest and shortest way to assurance.

That is a remarkable passage of the apostle in Rom 15:13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound

in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." "The God of hope," says the apostle, "shall fill you with all joy and peace in believing." That is, while you are in the exercise and actings of faith, the God of hope shall fill you with that joy that is "unspeakable and full of glory," and with that "peace that passes understanding." It signifies to be filled with joy and peace, as the sails of a ship are filled with wind.

Faith is the key which unlocks paradise, and lets in a flood of joy into the soul. Faith is an appropriating grace, it appropriates all to itself; it looks upon **God**, and says with the psalmist, "This God is my God forever and ever," Psalm 63:1, and Psalm 48:14. It looks upon **Christ** and says, "My beloved is mine, and his desires are towards me," Song 7:10. It looks upon the precious **promises** and says, These "precious promises" are mine, 2 Pet 1:4. It looks upon **heaven** and says, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim 4:8; and this fills the soul with joy and peace. **Faith has an influence upon other graces**, it is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearl, it puts strength and vivacity into all other virtues. It made Abraham to rejoice; and it made Noah sit still and quiet in the midst of a deluge.

Faith is the first pin which moves the soul; it is the spring in the watch which sets all the golden wheels of love, joy, comfort, and peace a-going. Faith is a root-grace, from whence springs all the sweet flowers of joy and peace. Faith is like the bee, it will suck sweetness out of every flower; it will extract light out of darkness, comforts out of distresses, mercies out of miseries, wine out of water, honey out of the rock, and meat out of the eater, Judg 14:14. 1 Pet 1:8, "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." Upon the exercise of faith, their hearts are filled with joy, with unspeakable joy, with glorious joy. Faith sees in Christ, a fullness of abundance; and this fills the heart with glorious joy.

Ah, Christians! believing, believing is the ready way, the safest way, the sweetest way, the shortest way, the only way to a well grounded assurance, and to that unspeakable joy and peace which flows from it, as the effect from the cause, the fruit from the root, the stream from the fountain. There is such assurance, and such joy that springs from the

fresh and frequent actings of faith, that cannot be expressed, that cannot be painted. No man can paint the sweetness of the honeycomb, the sweetness of a cluster of Canaan, the sweetness of paradise, the fragrancy of the rose of Sharon. As the *being* of things cannot be painted, and as the *sweetness* of things cannot be painted—no more can that assurance and joy which flows from believing be painted or expressed; it is too great and too glorious for weak man to paint or set forth. There is in Christ not only the fullness of a *vessel*—but the fullness of a *fountain*; and this makes the heart of a saint leap, when he sees it by an eye of faith.

When Abraham believed in hope against hope, Rom 4:18, and when in the face of all dangers and difficulties, he put forth such noble and glorious acts of faith, as to conclude that "the Lord himself would provide a lamb for a burnt-offering," Gen 22:8, and that "in the mount he would be seen," Gen 22:14; God is so taken with the actings of his faith and the effects of it, that he swears by himself, that "in blessing he would bless him;" that is, I will certainly bless him, and will bless his blessing to him; "and in multiplying, he would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore," Gen 22:17. Now the angel of the Lord, namely, the Lord Jesus, as his own words show, Gen 22:12,15-16, calls unto Abraham, out of heaven, not once but twice; and now he shows his admirable love in providing a ram, even to a miracle, for a burnt offering. "The Lord will provide," should be every saint's motto in straits and troubles.

And thus you see that believing times are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to reveal his love, and make known his favor to his people, and to look from heaven upon them, and to speak again and again in love and sweetness to them.

**V. Hearing and receiving times, are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to cause his face to shine upon his people.**

When they are a-hearing the word of life and a-breaking the bread of life, then God comes in upon them, and declares to them that love that is better than life: Acts 10:44, "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word." As Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit, that is, the graces of the Holy Spirit, namely, the joy, the comfort, the love, the peace, etc., of the Holy Spirit, fell upon them. So in

Gal 3:2, "This only would I learn of you, received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" By the Spirit here, Calvin and Bullinger and other expositors, do understand the joy, the peace, the assurance that is wrought in the heart by the hearing of faith, that is, by the doctrine of the gospel; for in these words of the apostle, hearing is put for the thing heard, and faith for the doctrine of the gospel, because the gospel is the ordinary means of working faith. "Faith comes by hearing," says the apostle, Rom 10:17.

So 1 Thess 1:5-6, "For our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." In these words you have a divine power attending Paul's ministry, a power convincing, enlightening, humbling, raising, delighting, reforming, renewing, and transforming of those who heard him. Also you have the sweet and blessed testimony of the Spirit attending his ministry, and assuring them of their effectual calling and election, upon whom the word came in power, and raising up their spirits to joy in the midst of sorrow.

Ah! you precious sons and daughters of Zion, who have sat waiting and trembling at Wisdom's door, tell me, tell me—has not God rained down manna upon your souls while you have been hearing the word? Yes! Has not God come in with power upon you, and by his Spirit sealed up to you your election, the remission of your sins, the justification of your persons, and the salvation of your souls? Yes, without controversy, many saints have found Christ's lips, in this ordinance, to drop honey and sweetness, marrow and fatness.

And as Christ in hearing times, when his people are a-hearing the word of life, does lift up the light of his countenance upon them. Just so, when they are a-receiving the **bread of life**, he makes known his love to them, and their interest in him. In this feast of fat things, the master of the feast, the Lord Jesus, comes in the midst of his guests, saying, "Peace be here."

This ordinance is a cabinet of jewels; in it are abundance of spiritual

springs, and rich mines, heavenly treasures. Here the beams of his glory do so shine, as that they cause the hearts of believers to burn within them, and as scatters all that thick darkness and cloud that are gathered about them. When saints are in this wine-cellar, Christ's banner over them is love; when they are in this Canaan, then he feeds them with milk and honey; when they are in this paradise, then they shall taste of angels' food; when they are at this gate of heaven, then they shall see Christ at the right of the Father; when they are before his mercy-seat, then they shall see the affections of mercy rolling towards them. In this ordinance they see that, and taste that, and feel that of Christ—which they are not able to declare and manifest to others. In this ordinance saints shall see the truth of their graces, and feel the increase of their graces, and rejoice in the clearness of their evidences. In this ordinance Christ will seal up the promises, and seal up the covenant, and seal up his love, and seal up their pardon sensibly to their souls.

There are many precious souls who have found Christ in this ordinance, when they could not find him in other ordinances, though they have sought him sorrowingly. Every gracious soul may say, 'I believe life eternal—but I receive, I eat life eternal.' Many a **cold** soul has been warmed in this ordinance, and many a **hungry** soul has been fed with manna in this ordinance, and many a **thirsty** soul has been refreshed with wine upon the lees in this ordinance, and many a **dull** soul has been quickened in this ordinance. In this ordinance, weak hands and feeble knees have been strengthened, and fainting hearts have been comforted, and questioning souls have been resolved, and staggering souls have been settled, and falling souls have been supported.

I do not say that ever a dead soul has been enlivened in this ordinance, this being an ordinance appointed by Christ, not to beget spiritual life where there was none—but to increase it where the Spirit has formerly begun it. Every wicked soul who takes the cup may say, 'the cup of life is made my death,' 1 Cor 11:27.

Ah, Christians! if you will but stand up and speak out, you must say, that in this ordinance, there has been between Christ and you such mutual kisses, such mutual embraces, such mutual opening and closing of hearts, as has made such a heaven in your hearts as cannot be expressed, as

cannot be declared. Christ in this ordinance opens such boxes of precious ointment, as fill the saints with a spiritual savor; he gives them a cluster of the grapes of Canaan, which makes them earnestly look and long to be in Canaan. The Christians in the primitive times, upon their receiving the sacrament, were accustomed to be filled with that zeal and fervor, with that joy and comfort, with that faith, fortitude, and assurance—which made them to appear before the tyrants with transcendent boldness and cheerfulness. Now there are these reasons why God is pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon his people, when they are a-hearing the word of life, and a-breaking the bread of life.

(1.) The first reason. **That they may highly prize the ordinances.** The choice discoveries which God makes to their souls in them, works them to set a very high price upon them. Oh! says our souls, we cannot but prize them—for what of God we have enjoyed in them, Psalm 84:10-11.

Many there are that are like old Barzillai, who had lost his taste and hearing, and so cared not for David's feasts and music, 2 Sam 19:32, seq. So many there are that can see nothing of God, nor taste nothing of God in ordinances: they care not for ordinances, they slight ordinances. This age is full of careless Gallios, Acts 17, who care nothing for these things.

Oh! but souls who have seen, and heard, and tasted of the goodness of the Lord in ordinances—they dearly love them, and highly prize them! "I have esteemed your word," says Job, "above my necessary food," Job 23:12. And David sings it out: "The law of your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" [Psalm 119:72]. Luther prized the word at such a high rate that he says he would not live in paradise, if he might, without the word—but with the word he could live in hell itself, Psalm 27:4.

(2.) The second reason. God lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people in ordinances, **that he may keep them close to ordinances and constant in ordinances.** The soul shall hear good news from heaven when it is waiting at wisdom's door, Prov 8:34-35. God will acquaint the soul with spiritual mysteries, and feed it with the droppings of the honeycomb—that the soul may cleave to them as Ruth did to

Naomi, and say of them as she said of her: "Where these go, I will go; where these lodge, I will lodge," Ruth 1:15-17; and nothing but death shall make a separation between ordinances and my soul.

After Joshua had a choice presence of God with his spirit in the service he was put upon, he makes a proclamation, "Choose this day whom you will serve. As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord." Josh 24:15. Let the outcome be what it will, I will cleave to the service of my God; I will set my soul under God's care, I will wait for him in his temple, Mal 3:1; I will look for him in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, Rev 2:1; I have found him a good master; I will live and die in his service; I have found his work to be better than wages; I have found a reward, not only for keeping—but also "in keeping his commandments," as the psalmist speaks, Psalm 19:11. The sweet views and visits, the choice hints, the heavenly fellowship which has been between the Lord Jesus and my soul, in his service—has put such great and glorious engagements upon my soul that I cannot but say with the servant in the law, "I love my master, and I will not leave his service, because it is well with me; my ear is bored, and I will be his servant forever," Exod 21:5; Deut 15:16-17.

(3.) The third reason why the Lord causes the beams of his love, and the brightness of his glory to shine forth upon his people in ordinances is, **To fence and strengthen their souls against all those temptations that they may meet with from Satan and his instruments, that lie in wait to deceive**, and by their cunning craftiness endeavor with all their might to work men first to have low thoughts of ordinances, and then to neglect them, and then to despise them.

Now the Lord by the sweet discoveries of himself, by the kisses and love-tokens that he gives to his people in ordinances, does so endear and engage their hearts to them, that they are able not only to withstand temptations—but also to triumph over temptations, through him who has loved them, and in ordinances manifested his presence, and the riches of his grace and goodness, to them. The sweet converse, the blessed turns and walks, which the saints have with God in ordinances, makes them strong in resisting, and happy in conquering of those temptations that tend to lead them from the ordinances; which are Christ's banqueting-house, where he sets before his people all the dainties and sweets of

heaven, and bids them eat and drink abundantly, there being no danger of surfeiting in eating or drinking of Christ's delicacies. Truly, many a soul has surfeited of the world's dainties, and died forever; but there is not a soul that has had the honor and happiness to be brought into Christ's banqueting-house, and to eat and drink of his dainties—but they have lived forever. Chrysostom says, that by the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we are so armed against Satan's temptations, that he flees from us as if we were so many lions which spit fire.

(4.) The fourth reason why the Lord is pleased to give his people some sense of his love, and some taste of heaven in ordinances, is, **That he may fit and ripen them for heaven, and make them look and long more after a perfect, complete, and full enjoyment of God.** Souls at first conversion are but rough-cast—but God, by visiting of them, and manifesting of himself to them in his ways, does more and more fit those vessels of mercy for glory, Isa 64:5. Ah! Christians, tell me, do not those holy influences, those spiritual breathings, those divine incomes—which you meet with in ordinances, make your souls cry out with David, "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, even for the living God! When shall I come and appear before the presence of God?" Psalm 42:1-2.

So in Psalm 63:1-2, "O God, you are my God, early will I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water: to see your power and your glory, so as I have seen you in the sanctuary." (The Greeks derive their word for *desire* from a root that signifies to *burn*. Now, if one should heap ever so much fuel upon a fire, it would not quench it—but kindle it the more. So nothing can satisfy the desires of a saint but a full celestial enjoyment of God.) In these words you have David's strong, earnest, and vehement desires; here you have desire upon desire; here you have the very flower and vigor of his spirit, the strength and sinews of his soul, the prime and top of his inflamed affections—all strongly working after a fuller enjoyment of God.

Look! as the espoused maid longs for the marriage day; the apprentice for his freedom; the captive for his ransom; the condemned man for his pardon; the traveler for his inn; and the mariner for his haven. Just so, does a soul, who has met with God in his ordinances, long to meet with

God in heaven. It is not a drop, it is not a lap and away, a sip and away—which will suffice such a soul. It is not *drops*—but *swimming* in the ocean, which will satisfy a soul that has looked into paradise. That soul will never be quiet, until it sees God face to face, until it is quiet in the bosom of God. The more a saint tastes of God in an ordinance, the more are his desires raised and whetted, and the more are his teeth set on edge for more and more of God.

Plutarch says, that when "once the Gauls had tasted of the sweet wine which was made of the grapes of Italy, nothing would satisfy them but *Italy, Italy.*" So a soul that has tasted of the sweetness and goodness of God in ordinances, nothing will satisfy it—but more of that goodness and sweetness. A full enjoyment of God is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory. A little mercy may save the soul—but it must be a great deal of mercy which must satisfy the soul. The least glimpse of God's countenance may be a staff to support the soul, and an ark to secure the soul, and a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to guide the soul; but it must be much, very much of God, which must be enough to satisfy the soul.

(5.) The fifth reason. The fifth and last reason why the Lord is graciously pleased to give his people some sense of his love, and some assurance of his favor in ordinances, is, **That they may have wherewithal to silence and stop the mouths of wicked and ungodly men**, whose words are stout against the Lord; who say, it is in vain to serve God, and what profit is there in keeping his statutes and ordinances, and in walking mournfully before the Lord Almighty? Mal 3:13-14. Now the Lord causes his face to shine upon his people in ordinances, that they may stand up, and bear him witness before the wicked world, that he is no hard master, that he reaps not where he sows not. The saints, by the gracious experiences that they have of the sweet breathings of God upon them in ordinances, are able to confute, muzzle, halt, or button up the mouths of vain and wicked men, who say unto the Lord, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" Job 21:14-15.

In ordinances he kisses them, and there he gives them his love, and

makes known his goodness and glory—that his children may, from their own experiences, be able to confute all the lies and clamors of wicked men against God and his ways. And blessed be God, who has not left himself without witness—but has many thousands who can stand up before all the world and declare, that they have seen "the beauty and glory of God in his sanctuary," that they have met with those joys and comforts in the ways of God, that do as far surpass all other joys and comforts, as light does darkness, as heaven does hell, that they have met with such heart-meltings, such heart-humblings, such heart-revivings, such heart-cheerings—as they have never met with before, in all their days.

Ah! say these souls, "One day in his courts, is better than a thousand" years elsewhere, Psalm 84:10. Oh we had rather with Moses lose all, and be whipped and stripped of all—than lose the sweet enjoyments of God in ordinances. Oh in them, God has been light and life, a joy and a crown to our souls. God is tender of his own glory, and of his children's comfort; and therefore he gives them such choice aspects, and such sweet visits in ordinances, that they may have arguments at hand to stop the mouths of sinners, and to declare from their own experience, that all the ways of God are ways of pleasantness, and that all his paths drop fatness, Prov 3:17; Psalm 65:11.

And thus much for the reasons, why God lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people in ordinances. Before I pass to the next particular, it will be necessary that I lay down these **CAUTIONS**, to prevent weak saints from stumbling and doubting, who have not yet found the Lord giving out his favors, and making known his grace and love, in such a sensible way to their souls, in breaking the bread of life, as others have found.

(1.) The first caution. Now, the first caution I shall lay down is this, **That even believers may sometimes come and go from this ordinance, without that comfort, that assurance, that joy, that refreshment that others have, and may meet with.** And this may arise, partly from their unpreparedness and unfitness to meet with God in the ordinance, 2 Chron 30:19-20; 1 Cor 11:20-34; and partly from their playing and dallying with some bosom sin; or else it may arise from their not stirring up themselves to lay hold on God, as the prophet Isaiah

complains, "No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins." Isa 64:7.

Or else it may arise from the Spirit's standing at a distance from the soul. It may be, O soul, that you have set the Comforter, the Spirit a-mourning; and therefore it is, that he refuses to comfort you, and to be a sealing and witnessing Spirit unto you. You have grieved him with your sins, and he will now vex you by his silence; you have thrown the cordials away; you have trampled his manna under your feet; and therefore it is that he has veiled his face, and changed his countenance and demeanor towards you. You have been unkind to the Spirit; and therefore he behaves towards you as an enemy, and not as a friend, Psalm 77:2; Gen 31:5.

(2.) The second caution is this, **That though God does in this ordinance withhold comfort and assurance from you, yet you must hold on in the duty, you must wait at hope's hospital.** At this heavenly pool, you must lie—until the angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus, comes and breathes upon you; at these waters of the sanctuary you must lie—until the Spirit moves upon your soul. You must not neglect your work—though God delays your comfort. You must be as obedient in the lack of assurance, as you are thankful under the enjoyment of assurance. The longer mercy is a-coming, the greater, the sweeter, and the better usually it is when it comes. Many a child has got a Benjamin's portion, a Hannah's portion, a double portion—by waiting. Just so, has many a saint got a worthy portion, a double portion of comfort and assurance—by waiting. Accordingly, wait patiently, and work heartily.

Laban often changed Jacob's wages, yet Jacob never changed nor neglected his work. Though God should change your wages, your comforts into discomforts, your spring into an autumn, etc., yet you must never change nor neglect your work, which is obeying, believing, and waiting—until God, in his ordinances, shall lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and turn your night into day, and your mourning into rejoicing. God is the same, and the commands of the gospel are the same; and therefore your work is the same, whether it be night or day with your soul, whether you are under frowns or smiles, in the arms or at the feet of God.

(3.) The third caution is this, Many of the precious sons and daughters of Zion have had and may have so much comfort and sweetness, so much life and heat, so much reviving and quickening, so much marrow and fatness in this ordinance—as may clearly evidence the special presence of God with their spirits. And yet, **they would give a world, were it in their power, for those strong comforts and full assurance, that others enjoy in this ordinance.** In this ordinance, Christ *looks* upon one and *kisses* another; he gives a *nod* to one, and his *hand* to another. Some in this ordinance shall have but *sips* of mercy, others shall have *large draughts* of mercy; some in this ordinance shall see but the back-parts of Christ, others shall see him face to face, Lam 1:16; to one he gives *silver*, to another he gives *gold*; to one he gives but a *glass* of consolation, to another he gives *flagons* of consolation, Song 2:5; some shall have but *drops*, others shall swim in the *ocean*; some shall have a *large harvest*, others shall have but a *few gleanings*, and yet they, if rightly valued, are more worth than a world.

The Sun of righteousness is a free agent, and he will work and shine forth as he pleases, and on whom he pleases. Who are you who dare say to Christ, "What are you doing?"

Remember—the least star gives light, the least drop moistens, the least pearl sparkles, and the least particle of special grace saves.

Ah! Christians, you may not, you must not say, We have not met with Christ in the sacrament, because we have not met with joy and assurance in the sacrament; for you may enjoy very much of Christ in that ordinance, and yet not so much as may boil up to full assurance, and make you go away singing, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Song 2:16. We may enjoy the warmth and heat of the sun, when we cannot see the sun. Just so, souls may enjoy much of Christ, by holy influences, in the sacrament, when they cannot see Christ in the sacrament.

VI. Sixthly, **Times of personal AFFLICTIONS are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to vouchsafe to his people sweet manifestations of his love and favor.** When his hand is heavy on them, then he lifts up the light of his countenance upon them: Psalm

71:20-21, "Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again." So Psalm 94:19, "When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul."

Ah, Christians! has not God by all afflictions lifted up your souls nearer heaven, as Noah's ark was lifted up nearer and nearer heaven by the rising of the waters higher and higher? The ball in the emblem says 'the harder you beat me down in afflictions, the higher I shall bound in affection towards heaven and heavenly things.' Just so, **afflictions do but elevate and raise a saint's affections to heaven and heavenly things.**

When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did and how he felt himself, he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, "These are God's gems and jewels, wherewith he decks his best friends; and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world."

Afflictions are blessings. God's corrections are our instructions, his lashes our lessons, his scourges our schoolmasters, his chastisements our corrections. And to note this, the Hebrews and Greeks both express *chastening* and *teaching* by one and the same word, because the latter is the true end of the former. The proverb is, 'Pain gives wisdom; and vexation gives understanding.' I bless God I know several precious souls of whom this world is not worthy, who have found more of God in afflictions than in any other gracious dispensation. Manasseh got more by his iron chain than ever he got by his golden crown.

Ah, you afflicted sons and daughters of Zion, have you not had such sweet discoveries of **God**, such sensible demonstrations of his love, such affections working in him towards you? Have you not had such gracious visits, and such glorious visions—which you would not exchange for all the world? Yes! Have you not had the precious presence of God with you, quieting and stilling your souls, supporting and upholding your souls, cheering and refreshing your souls? Yes! And have you not had the Lord applying precious promises, and suitable remedies, to all your maladies?

Have you not found God a-bringing in unexpected mercy in the day of your adversity, suitable to that promise, Hos 2:14, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her" (or, I will speak earnestly to her heart, as the Hebrew reads it)? Yes!

Have you not found that God has so sweetened and sanctified afflictions to you, as to make them a means to discover many **sins** which lay hidden, and to purge you from many sins that cleaved close unto you, and to prevent you from falling into many sins which would have been the breaking of your bones, and the loss of your comfort? Yes! Have you not found that you have been like the walnut tree, the better for beating; and like the vine, the better for bleeding; and like the naughty child, the better for whipping? Yes! Musk, says one, when it has lost its sweetness, if it be put into the sink among filth, it recovers it. So do afflictions recover and revive decayed graces.

Have you not found afflictions to revive, quicken, and recover your decayed **graces**? Have they not inflamed that love that has been cold, and put life into that faith that has been dying, and quickened those hopes which have been withering, and put spirit into those joys and comforts which have been languishing? Yes! Oh, then, stand up and declare to all the world that times of affliction have been the times wherein you have seen the face of God, and heard the voice of God, and sucked sweetness from the breasts of God, and fed upon the delicacies of God, and drunk deep of the consolations of God, and have been most satisfied and delighted with the presence and incomes of God.

When Hezekiah in his greatest affliction lamentingly said, Isa 38:9-20, "I shall go mourning to my grave, I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living. He will cut me off with pining sickness, he will break all my bones. Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove; my eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." So now God comes in a way of mercy to him, and prints his love upon his heart: Isa 38:17, "You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption;" or rather, as the Hebrew reads it, "You have loved my soul from the grave, for you have cast all my sins behind your back." Ah, says Hezekiah, I have now found that in my afflictions, your affections have been most strongly carried towards me, as towards one

whom you are exceedingly taken with. Oh, now you have warmed me with your love, and visited me with your grace; you have made my darkness to be light, and turned my sighing into singing, and my mourning into rejoicing.

So when Habakkuk's belly trembled, and his lips quivered, and rottenness entered into his bones, and all creature comforts failed, yet then had he such a sweet presence of God with his spirit, as makes him to rejoice in the midst of sorrows: "Yet," says he, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab 3:16-18. And thus you see it clear, that in times of affliction God makes sweet manifestations of his love and favor to his children's souls.

VII. Seventhly, **PRAYING times are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to give his people some sweet and comfortable assurance of his love and favor towards them.** Prayer crowns God with honor and glory that is due to his name; and God crowns prayer with assurance and comfort. Usually the most praying souls are the most assured souls. There is no service wherein souls have such a near, familiar, and friendly fellowship with God, as in this of prayer; neither is there any service wherein God does more delight to make known his grace and goodness, his mercy and bounty, his beauty and glory, to poor souls, than this of prayer. Bernard, a man very much in prayer Lord, said. 'I never go away from prayer without you.'

**The best and the sweetest flowers of paradise, God gives to his people when they are upon their knees. Prayer is the gate of heaven, a key to let us into paradise.** When John was weeping, in prayer doubtless, the sealed book was open to him. Many Christians have found by experience, praying times to be sealing times, times wherein God has sealed up to them the remission of their sins, and the salvation of their souls. They have found prayer to be a shelter to their souls, a sacrifice to God, a sweet savor to Christ, a scourge to Satan, and an inlet to assurance. God loves to lade the wings of prayer with the choicest and chief blessings. Ah! how often, Christians, has God kissed you at the beginning of prayer, and spoke peace to you in the midst of prayer, and filled you with joy and assurance, upon the close of prayer!

Dan 9:17-24, is full to the point in hand; I shall only cite the words of the four last verses: "And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yes, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give you skill and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications, the commandment came forth, and I am come to show you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." In these words you see, while Daniel was in prayer, the Lord appears to him and gives him a divine touch, and tells him that he is "a man greatly beloved," or as the Hebrew has it, "a man of desires, that is, one that is very pleasing and delightful to God."

So Acts 10:1-4. "At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God." Praying Cornelius, you see, is remembered by God, and visited sensibly and evidently by an angel, and assured that his prayers and good deeds are not only an odor, a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God—but also that they shall be gloriously rewarded by God. So when Peter was praying, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and had his mind elevated, and all the faculties of his soul filled with a divine revelation, Acts 10:9-16.

Just so, when Paul was a-praying, he sees a vision, Acts 9:11-16, Ananias a-coming and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight. Paul had not been long at prayer before it was revealed to him, that he was a chosen vessel, before he was filled with the voice and comforts of the Holy Spirit. Just so, our Savior was transfigured as he was praying, Matt 17:1-2. Thus you see, that praying times are times wherein the Lord

is graciously pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon his people, and to cause his grace and favor, his goodness and kindness, to rest on them, as the spirit of Elijah did rest on Elisha, 2 Kings 2:15.

**OBJECTION.** But some may object and say, **We have been at the door of mercy, early and late, for assurance, and yet we have not obtained it;** we have prayed and waited, and we have waited and prayed, we have prayed and mourned, and we have mourned and prayed, and yet we cannot get a good word from God, a smile from God; he has covered himself with a cloud, and after all that we have done, it is still night with our souls; God seems not to be at home, he seems not to value our prayers; we call, and cry and shout out for assurance, and yet he shuts out our prayer; we are sure that we have not found praying times to be times of assurance to our souls, etc., Lam 3:8. Now to this objection I shall give these answers:

**ANSWER 1.** First, That it may be you have been more earnest and vehement for assurance, and the effects of it, namely, joy, comfort, and peace—than you have been for grace and holiness, for communion with God, and conformity to God. It may be your requests for assurance have been full of life and spirits; when your requests for grace and holiness, for communion with God, and conformity to God, have been lifeless and spiritless. If so, no wonder that assurance is denied you. **Assurance makes most for your comfort—but holiness makes most for God's honor.** Man's holiness is now his greatest happiness, and in heaven man's greatest happiness will be his perfect holiness. Assurance is the daughter of holiness; and he who shall more highly prize, and more earnestly press after the enjoyment of the daughter than the mother, it is not a wonder if God shuts the door upon him, and crosses him in the thing he most desires. The surest and the shortest way to assurance is to wrestle and contend with God for holiness. When the stream and cream of a man's spirit runs after holiness, it will not be long night with that man; the Sun of righteousness will shine forth upon that man, and turn his winter into summer, and crown him with the diadem of assurance, Mal 4:2. The more holy any person is, the more excellent he is. All corruptions are diminutions of excellency. The more mixed anything is, the more it is abased, as if gold and tin be mixed; and the more pure it is

as mere gold, the more glorious it is.

Now the more divinely excellent any man is, the more fit he is to enjoy the choicest and highest favors. Assurance is a jewel of that value, which he will bestow it upon none but his excellent ones, Psalm 16:3. Assurance is that tried gold, which none can wear but those who win it in a way of grace and holiness, Rev 3:18. It may be, if you had minded, and endeavored more after communion with God, and conformity to God, you might before this time have looked upward, and seen God in Christ smiling upon you, and have looked inward into your own soul, and seen the Spirit of grace witnessing to your spirit that you were a son, an heir—an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, Rom 8:15-17. But you have minded more your own comfort than Christ's honor; you have minded the blossoms and the fruit—assurance and peace—more than Christ the root; you have minded the springs of comfort, more than Christ, the fountain of life; you have minded the beams of the sun, more than the Sun of righteousness; and therefore it is but a righteous thing with God to leave you to walk in a valley of darkness, to hide his face from you, and to seem to be as an enemy to you.

**Answer 2.** But secondly, I answer, It may be you are not yet fit for so choice a mercy, you are not able to bear so great a favor. Many heads are not able to bear strong waters. Why, the very quintessence of all the strong consolations of God are wrung out into this golden cup of assurance; and can you drink of this cup, and not stammer nor stagger? Believe it, assurance is meat for strong men; few babes, if any, are able to bear it, and digest it. The apostle says, Heb 5:12,14, that "strong meat belongs to those who are of full age" (or that are comparatively perfect, or full-grown), "even those who, by reason of use" (Greek, by reason of habit, which is got by continual custom and long practice), "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The Greek word properly signifies such an exercise as wrestlers, or such as contend for victory, do use, which is with all their might and strength, being trained up unto it by long exercise.

It may be, O complaining Christian, that you are but a babe in grace, 1 Cor 3:1-3; perhaps you are not yet got beyond the breast, or, if you are, yet you are not past the spoon. Ah! Christian, if it be thus with you, cease

complaining of lack of assurance, and be up and growing; be more aged in grace and holiness, and you shall find assurance growing upon you. Divine wisdom sparkles much in this, in giving milk to babes—who are more carnal than spiritual; and meat, that is assurance, to strong men—who have more skill and will, who have a greater ability and choicer faculty to prize and improve this jewel assurance than babes have. The Hebrew word signifies both weight and glory; and truly, glory is such a weight, that if the body were not upheld by which glorious power that raised Jesus Christ from the grave, if it were not born up by everlasting arms—it were impossible that we could bear it, Deut 33:27. Now assurance is the top of glory, it is the glory of glory. Then certainly they had need be very glorious within—who shall be crowned with such a weight of glory as assurance is, Psalm 45:13. Well I remember this, it is mercy to lack mercy until we are fit for mercy, until we are able to bear the weight of mercy, and make a divine improvement of mercy.

**Answer 3.** Thirdly, You must distinguish between delays and denials. God may delay us, when he does not deny us; he may defer the giving in of a mercy, and yet, at last, give the very mercy begged. Barren Hannah prays, year after year, for a mercy. God delays her long—but at last gives her her desire; and the text says expressly, that her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam 1:18. After many prayers and tears, the Lord comes in, and assures her, that she should have the desire of her soul; and now she mourns no more—but sits down satisfied, comforted, and cheered. After much praying, waiting, and weeping, God usually comes with his hands and heart full of mercy to his people. He loves not to come empty-handed, to those who have sat long with wet eyes at mercy's door.

Christ tries the faith, patience, and constancy of the **Canaanite woman**, Matt 15:21-29; he deferred and delayed her, he reproached and repulsed her; and yet at last is overcome by her, as not being able any longer to withstand her importunate requests. "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you, even as you will." Christ puts her off at first—but gives in to her at last; at first a good word, a good look is too good for her—but at last good words and good looks are too little for her: "Be it unto you, even as you will." At first Christ carries himself to her as a churlish stranger—but at last as an amorous lover. Though at first he had not an ear to hear her,

yet at last he had a heart to grant her, not only her desires—but even what else she would desire over and above what she had desired.

God heard **Daniel** at the beginning of his supplications, and his affections of love were working strongly towards him—but the angel Gabriel does not inform Daniel of this until afterwards, Dan 9:15-25. Praying souls, you say that you have prayed long for assurance, and yet you have not obtained it. Well, pray still. Oh pray and wait, wait and pray; "the vision is for an appointed time—but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab 2:3. God has never, God will never—fail the praying soul; in the long run, you shall be sure to obtain that assurance that will richly recompense you for all your praying, waiting, and weeping; therefore hold up and hold on praying, though God does delay you, and my soul for yours, you shall reap in due season such a harvest of joy and comfort, as will sufficiently pay you for all your pains, Gal 6:9.

Shall the farmer wait patiently for the precious fruits of the earth, James 5:7; and will not you wait patiently for assurance, which is a jewel more worth than heaven and earth? Praying souls, remember this. It is but foolishness to think that men shall reap as soon as they sow—that they shall reap in the evening when they have but sowed in the morning. Titus Vespasian never dismissed any petitioner with a tear in his eye, or with a heavy heart; and shall we think that the God of compassions will always dismiss the petitioners of heaven with tears in their eyes? Surely no.

VIII. Eighthly, **Sometimes before the soul is deeply engaged in sore conflicts with SATAN**, the Lord is graciously pleased to visit his people with his loving-kindness, and to give them some sweet assurance, that though they are tempted, yet they shall not be worsted; though they are tried, yet they shall be crowned, 1 John 10:28; though Satan does roar as a lion upon the soul, yet he shall not make a prey of the soul; for the Lion of the tribe of Judah will hold it fast, and none shall pluck it out of his hand, Rev 5:5.

God first fed Israel with manna from heaven, and gave them water to drink out of the rock, before their sore fight with Amalek, Exod 17:8, etc. Before Paul was buffeted by Satan, he was caught up into the third

heaven, where he had very glorious visions and revelations of the Lord, even such as he was not able to utter, 2 Cor 12:1-8. Before Jesus Christ was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, to question and doubt of his Sonship, he heard a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" Matt 3:17. The Spirit of the Lord did first descends upon him as a dove, before Satan fell upon him as a lion. God walks with his people some turns in paradise, and gives them some tastes of his right-hand pleasures; before Satan, by his tempting, shall do them a displeasure, Psalm 16:11. But I must hasten to a close of this chapter; and therefore,

IX. Ninthly, and lastly, **After some sharp conflicts with Satan**, God is graciously pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon his people, and to warm and cheer their hearts with the beams of his love: Matt 4:11, "Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him." When Christ had even spent himself in fighting and dueling, in resisting and scattering Satan's temptations, then the angels come and minister cordials and comforts unto him. So after Paul had been buffeted by Satan, he heard that sweet word from heaven, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Cor 12:7-10, which filled his heart with joy and gladness. The hidden manna, the new name, and the white stone, is given to the conqueror, Rev 7:17; to him who has fought "with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph 6:12, and has come off with his garments dipped in blood.

After the Roman generals had gotten victory over their enemies, the senate did use not one way—but many ways, to express their loves to them. So after our faith has gotten victory over Satan, God usually takes the soul in his arms, and courts it, and shows much kindness to it. Now the soul shall be carried in triumph, now the royal chariot attends the soul, now white raiment is put upon the soul, Rev 3:5, and Rev 7:9; now palms are put into the conqueror's hands, now the garland is set upon the conqueror's head, and now a royal feast is provided, where God will set the conqueror at the top end of the table, and speak kindly, and carry it sweetly towards him, as one much affected and taken with his victory over the prince of darkness.

Conflicts with Satan are usually the sharpest and the hottest; they spend and use most the vital and noble spirits of the saints; and therefore the Lord, after such conflicts, does ordinarily give his people his choicest and his strongest cordials.

And thus, by divine assistance, we have showed you the special times and seasons wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to give his people some tastes of his love, some sweet assurance, that they are his favorites, that all is well, and shall be forever well between him and them; and that, **though many things may trouble them, yet nothing shall separate them from their God, their Christ, their crown.** As many have found by experience.

**Containing the several HINDRANCES and IMPEDIMENTS that keep poor souls from assurance; with the MEANS and HELPS to remove those impediments and hindrances.**

I. The first impediment. Now the first impediment and hindrance to assurance that we shall instance in, is, **Despairing thoughts of mercy.** Oh! these imprison the soul, and make it always dark with the soul; these shut the windows of the soul, that no light can come in to cheer it. Despairing thoughts make a man fight against God with his own weapons; they make a man cast all the cordials of the Spirit to the ground, as things of no value; they make a man suck poison out of the sweetest promises; they make a man eminent in nothing unless it be in having hard thoughts of God, and in arguing against his own soul and happiness, and in turning his greatest advantages into disadvantages, his greatest helps into his greatest hindrances.

Despairing thoughts of mercy make a man below the beast which perishes. Pliny speaks of the scorpion, that there is not one minute wherein it does not put forth the sting, as being unwilling to lose any opportunity of doing mischief.

Such scorpions are despairing souls, they are still a-putting out their stings, a-wrangling with God, or Christ, or the Scripture, or the saints, or ordinances, or their own souls. A despairing soul is a terror to himself; it cannot rest—but, like Noah's ark, is always tossed here and there; it is troubled on every side, it is full of fears and fightings. A despairing soul is like the spider, which draws poison out of the sweetest flowers.

A despairing soul is a burden to others—but the greatest burden to itself. It is still a-vexing, terrifying, tormenting, condemning, and perplexing itself. Despair makes every sweet bitter, and every bitter exceeding bitter; it puts gall and wormwood into the sweetest wine, and it puts a sting, a cross, into every cross.

Now while the soul is under these despairing thoughts of mercy, how is it possible that it should attain to a well grounded assurance. Therefore for the helping of the soul out of this despairing condition, give me leave a little to expostulate with despairing souls. Tell me, O despairing souls, is not despair an exceeding vile and contemptible sin? Is it not a dishonor to God, a reproach to Christ, and a murderer of souls? Is it not a misrepresenting of God, a denying of Christ, and a crowning of Satan? It does without doubt proclaim the devil a conqueror, and lifts him up above Christ himself. Despair is Satan's masterpiece; it carries men headlong to hell; it makes a man twice-told a child of hell; it is a viper which has stung many a man to death.

Despair is an evil that flows from the greatest evil in the world; it flows from unbelief, from ignorance, and misapprehensions of God and his grace, and from mistakes of Scripture, and from Satan, who, being forever cast out of paradise, labors with all his art and might to work poor souls to despair of ever entering into paradise. O despairing souls, let the greatness of this sin effectually awaken you, and provoke you to labor as for life, to come out of this condition, which is as sinful as it is doleful, and as much to be hated as to be lamented.

Again, tell me, O despairing souls, has not despairing Judas perished, whereas the murderers of Christ, believing on him, were saved? Did not Judas sin more heinously by despairing, than by betraying of Christ?

Despairing Spira is damned, when repenting **Manasseh** is saved. O despairing souls, the arms of mercy are open to receive a Manasseh, a monster, a devil incarnate; he caused that gospel prophet Isaiah to be sawed in half with a saw, as some Rabbis say; he turned aside from the Lord to commit idolatry, and caused his sons to pass through the fire, and dealt with bewitching spirits, and made the streets of Jerusalem to overflow with innocent blood, 2 Chron 33:1-15.

The soul of **Mary Magdalene** was full of devils; and yet Christ casts them out, and made her heart his house, his presence chamber, Luke 7:47. Why do you then say there is no hope for you, O despairing soul? **Paul** was full of rage against Christ and his people, and full of blasphemy and impiety, and yet behold, Paul is a chosen vessel, Paul is caught up into the heaven, and he is filled with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:1-2; Acts 9:1; Acts 26:11; 1 Tim 1:13,15-16.

Why should you then say there is for you no help, O despairing soul! Though the prodigal had run from his father, and spent and wasted all his estate in ways of vileness and wickedness, yet upon his resolution to return, his father meets him, and instead of killing him, he kisses him; instead of kicking him, he embraces him; instead of shutting the door upon him, he makes sumptuous provision for him, Luke 15:13-23. And how then do you dare to say, O despairing soul, that God will never cast an eye of love upon you, nor bestow a crumb of mercy on you! The apostle tells you of some monstrous miscreants who were unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners; and yet these monsters of mankind, through the infinite goodness and free grace of God, are washed from the filth and guilt of their sins, and justified by the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and decked and adorned with the precious graces of Christ, 1 Cor 6:9-11.

Therefore do not say, O despairing soul, that you shall die in your sins, and lie down at last in everlasting sorrow. O despairing souls, are you good at burning, that you have no mercy on yourselves—but to argue to your own undoing? Did it make for the honor and glory of his free grace to pardon them, and will it be a reproach to his free grace to pardon you? Could God be just in justifying such ungodly ones, and shall he be unjust

in justifying of you? Did not their unworthiness and unfitness for mercy turn the stream of mercy from them? No! Why then, O despairing soul, should you fear that your unworthiness and unfitness for mercy will so stop and turn the stream of mercy, as that you must perish eternally for lack of one drop of special grace and mercy?

Again, tell me, O despairing soul, is not the grace of God free grace, is not man's salvation of free grace? "By grace you are saved," Eph 2:8. Every link of this golden chain is grace. It is free grace which **chose** us, Rom 11:5. Even so then at this present time also there is "a remnant according to the election of grace." It is free grace which chooses some to be jewels from all eternity, which chooses some to everlasting life, when others are left in darkness. Augustine, "The patrons of man's free will are enemies to God's free grace."

The **Lord Jesus Christ** is a gift of free grace. Christ is the greatest, the sweetest, the choicest, the chief gift which God ever gave; and yet this gift is given by a hand of love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," etc., John 3:16; Isa 9:6; John 4:10. "God so loved the world;" so freely, so vehemently, so fully, so admirably, so inconceivably, "That he gave his only Son." His Son, not his servant, his begotten Son, not his adopted Son, yes, his only begotten Son!

I have read of parents who had four sons; and in a famine, sore oppressed with hunger, they resolved to sell one son; but then they considered with themselves which of the four they should sell. They said the eldest was the first of their strength, therefore reluctant were they to sell him. The second was the picture of their father, and therefore reluctant were they to part with him. The third was like the mother, and therefore they were not willing to part with him. The fourth, and youngest, was the child of their old age, their Benjamin, the dearly beloved of them both; and therefore they were resolved not to part with any of them, and so would rather allow themselves to perish than to part with any of their children. But God, O you despairing soul, is all love, he will not stand upon giving his most lovely Son to most unlovely souls.

Oh! but God's heart is so strongly set upon sinners, that he freely gives Jesus Christ, who is his firstborn, who is his very picture, who is his

beloved Benjamin, who is his chief joy, who is his greatest delight. As Solomon speaks: Prov 8:30, "Then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight" (in the Hebrew—his greatest delight), "rejoicing always before him," or sporting greatly before him, as little ones do before their parents. Why, then, O despairing soul! do you sit down sighing, and walk up and down mourning, and sadly concluding that there is no mercy for you? Hold up your head, O despairing soul! Jesus Christ himself is a gift of free grace! The consideration of his free, boundless, bottomless, and endless love, may afford you much matter of admiration and consolation—but none of desperation.

And as Jesus Christ is a gift of free grace, or a free-grace gift, so the precious **covenant** of grace is a gift of grace: Gen 17:2, "I will make my covenant between me and you;" but in the original it is, "I will give you my covenant." Here you see that the covenant of grace is a free gift of grace.

God gave the covenant of the priesthood unto Phinehas as a gift, Num 25:12. Just so, God gives the covenant of grace as a gift of favor and grace to all that he takes unto covenant with himself. **From first to last—all is from free grace!** God loves freely: "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely," etc., Hos 14:4.

So Moses: "The Lord," says he, "set his love upon you to take you into covenant with him: not because you were more in number than other people—but because he loved you, and chose your fathers," Deut 7:7-8.

The only ground of God's **love** is his grace. The ground of God's love is only and wholly in himself. There is neither portion nor proportion in us to draw his love. There is no love nor loveliness in us that should cause a beam of his love to shine upon us. There is that enmity, that filthiness, that treacherousness, that unfaithfulness, to be found in every man's bosom, which might justly put God upon glorifying himself in their eternal ruin, and to write their names in his black book in characters of blood and wrath. God will have all blessings and happiness to flow from free grace:

(1.) that the worst of sinners may have strong grounds for hope and

comfort;

(2.) for the praise of his own glory;

(3.) that vain man may not boast;

(4.) that our mercies and blessings may be sure to us.

And as God loves freely, so God **justifies** us freely: Rom 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And as poor sinners are justified freely, so they are **pardoned** freely: Acts 5:31, "Him has God exalted," speaking of Christ, "with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior—to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And as they are pardoned freely, so they shall be **saved** freely: Rom 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death—but the gift of God is eternal life," etc. The gracious gift of God. *Charisma* signifies a gift flowing from the free grace and favor of God, John 10:28.

Thus you see, O despairing souls! that all is of free grace; from the lowest to the highest round of Jacob's ladder—all is of grace! Christ is a free gift, the covenant of grace is a free gift, pardon of sin is a free gift, heaven and salvation is a free gift. Why, then, O despairing souls! should you sit down sighing under such black, sad, and dismal apprehensions of God, and your own state and condition?

Truly, seeing all happiness and blessedness comes in a way of free grace, and not in a way of doing, not in a way of works, you should arise, O despairing souls! and cast off all despairing thoughts, and drink of the waters of life freely, Rev 21:6; Rev 22:18. What though your heart is dead, and hard, and sad; what though your sins be many, and your fears great; yet behold here is glorious grace, rich grace, wondrous grace, matchless and incomparable riches of free grace spread before you. Oh! let this fire warm you, let these waters refresh you, let these cordials strengthen you, that it may be day and no longer night with you, that your mourning may be turned into rejoicing, and that your beautiful garments may be put on, that so the rest of your days may be days of gladness and sweetness, and free grace may be an everlasting shade, shelter, and rest unto you, Isa 52:1.

Again, tell me, O despairing souls! do you understand, and most seriously and frequently ponder upon those particular scriptures that do most clearly, sweetly, and fully discover the mercies of God, the affections of God, the grace and favor of God to poor sinners, as that Psalm 86:5, "For you, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy, unto all who call upon you"? God's mercies are above all his works, and above all ours too. His mercy is without measures and rules. All the acts and attributes of God sit at the feet of mercy. The weapons of God's artillery are turned into the rainbow; a *bow*, indeed—but without an arrow, *bent*—but without a string. The rainbow is an emblem of mercy; it is a sign of grace and favor, and an assurance that God will remember his covenant. It is fresh and green, to note to us that God's mercy and grace to poor sinners is always fresh and green.

Again, tell me, O despairing souls! have you seriously pondered upon Neh 9:16-17, "But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to your commandments, and refused to obey; neither were they mindful of the wonders which you did among them—but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage. But you are a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsook them not"? "You are a God," says he, "ready to pardon," or rather as it is in the original, "And you a God of pardons." He will multiply to pardon, or he will increase his pardon, as the sinner increases his sins. There is a very great emphasis in this Hebraism, "a God of pardons." It shows us that mercy is essential unto God, and that he is incomparable in forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Here Nehemiah sets him forth as one made up all of pardoning grace and mercy. **As a circle begins everywhere—but ends nowhere, so do the mercies of God,** Mic 7:18.

When Alexander sat down before a city, he did use to set up a light, to give those within notice that if they came forth to him while the light lasted, they might have pardon; if otherwise, no mercy was to be expected. Oh! but such is the mercy and patience of God to sinners, that he sets up light after light, and waits year after year upon them. When they have done their worst against him, yet then he comes with his heart

full of love, and his hands full of pardons, and makes a proclamation of grace, that if now at last they will accept of mercy, they shall have it, Luke 13:7; Jer 3:1-15. Why, then, O despairing soul! do you make your life a hell, by having such low and mean thoughts of God's mercy, and by measuring of the mercies and affections of God by the narrow quantity of your weak and dark understanding?

Again, tell me, O despairing souls! have you seriously pondered upon those words in Isa 55:7-9: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man" (or rather as it is in the original, "the man of iniquity") "his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," or as it is in the original, "He will multiply pardons." "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"? Turn, O despairing souls! to these scriptures: Num 14:19-20; Exod 34:6-7; Mic 7:18-19; Isa 30:18-19; Psalm 78:34-40; Psalm 103:8-13; Jer 3:1-12; Luke 15:20-24; 1 Tim 1:13-17; and tell me whether you have seriously and frequently pondered upon them!

Oh! how can you look so much grace and so much love and favor, and such tender affections of compassion, in the face, as appears in these scriptures, and yet rack and tear your precious souls with despairing thoughts!

Oh! there is so much grace and goodness, so much love and favor, so much mercy and glory, sparkling and shining through these scriptures, as may allay the strongest fears, and scatter the thickest darkness, and cheer up the saddest spirits, etc.

Again, tell me, O despairing souls, do you not do infinite wrong to the precious blood of the Lord Jesus? Three things are called **PRECIOUS** in the Scripture: the **blood** of Christ is called "precious blood," 1 Pet 1:19; and **faith** is called "precious faith," 2 Pet 1:1; and the **promises** are called "precious promises," 2 Pet 1:4. Now, what a reproach is it to this precious blood, "which speaks better things than the blood of Abel," Heb 12:24, for you to faint and sink under the power of despair; what does this speak out? Oh! does it not proclaim to all the world that there is no such

worth and virtue, no such power and efficacy in the blood of Christ, as indeed there is? Oh! how will you answer this to Christ in that day wherein his blood shall speak and plead, not only with the profane who have trodden it under their feet—but also with despairing souls who have undervalued the power, virtue, and merit of it? Heb 10:29. The blood of Christ is the key of heaven which has let in millions, Rev 7:9; Isa 66:8. **Has not the blood of Jesus Christ washed away the sins of a world of notorious sinners; and is it not of virtue to wash away the sins of one sinner?** Has it had that power in it as to bring many thousands to glory already, and is there not so much virtue left in it as to bring your soul to glory? 1 John 1:7-9. Has it actually delivered such a multitude from wrath to come as cannot be numbered, and is the virtue of it so far spent as that it cannot reach to your deliverance? Are there not yet millions of thousands that shall hereafter be actually saved and justified by this blood? Why, then, should you despair of being justified and saved from wrath to come by the virtue and power of this precious blood?

There were five people who were studying what was the best means to mortify sin. One said, to meditate on death; the second, to meditate on judgment; the third, to meditate on the joys of heaven; the fourth, to meditate on the torments of hell; the fifth, to meditate on the blood and sufferings of Jesus Christ: and certainly, the last is the choicest and strongest motive of all to the mortifying of sin.

O despairing souls, despairing souls! if ever you would cast off your despairing thoughts and get out of your present hell, then dwell much, muse much, and apply much this precious blood to your own souls. So shall "sorrow and mourning flee away, and everlasting joy shall rest upon you," and the Lord shall give you "an everlasting name," and be "everlasting light and glory to you," and "you shall be no more called Forsaken;" for "the Lord will rejoice over you," [Isa 55:11; Isa 56:5; Isa 60:19-20, and Isa 62:4-5; John 4:21,23] and be a wellspring of life unto you, and make his abode with you, and turn your sighing into singing, your trembling into rejoicing, and your prison into a paradise of pleasure. Just so, that your souls shall be able to stand up and say, Oh, blessed be God for Jesus Christ; blessed be God for that precious blood which has

justified our persons, and quieted our consciences, and scattered our fears, and answered our doubts, and given us to triumph over sin, hell, and death. "Who is he who condemns? it is Christ that died," Rom 8:33-38.

The apostle, upon the account of Christ's death, of Christ's blood, cries out, Victory, victory; he looks upon all his enemies and sings it sweetly out, "Over all these we are more than conquerors," or "above conquerors!"

O despairing souls, to all your former sins do not add this—of making light and slight of the blood of Christ. As there is no blood which saves souls like the blood of Christ, so there is no blood which sinks souls like the blood of Christ. A drop of this blood upon a man's **head** at last will make him miserable forever; but a drop of it upon a man's **heart** at last will make him happy forever. In the day of vengeance, the destroying angel will spare you if this blood be found upon the doorposts of your hearts, otherwise you are lost forever, Exod 12:7.

Lastly, I can tell you, O despairing souls, that God has brought some out of the very gulf of despair, out of the very belly of hell; and therefore you may hope that your sins, which are your present burden, shall not be your future ruin. Does not Asaph resemble the despairing soul? "My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. I am so troubled that I cannot speak." "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? and will his promise fail for evermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Psalm 77:2-9. Now, out of this gulf God delivers him: Psalm 77:10, "And I said, This is my infirmity;" or "this makes me sick," as it is in the original. Here Asaph checks himself for casting the cordials, the comforts of the Spirit to the ground, and for his having such hard, sad, and black thoughts of God.

And in Psalm 77:13, he speaks like one dropped out of heaven: "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" Formerly, the thoughts of God troubled him and overwhelmed him; but now, at last, the thoughts of the greatness of God, and of his interest in God, is matter

of admiration and consolation to him. So Heman sighs it out thus: "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near unto the grave." "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Your wrath lies hard upon me, and you have afflicted me with all your waves." "Lord, why do you cast off my soul? why do you hide your face from me? I am afflicted, and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer your terrors, I am distracted. Your fierce wrath goes over me; your terrors have cut me off," Psalm 88:3,6-7,14-16. All conclude that he was very holy, and his soul very happy, even while he was in this gulf of misery. And yet, for all this, Heman's state was good; his soul was safe and happy: he calls God in the same psalm "the God of his salvation," Psalm 88:1. So Jonah, when he was in the belly of hell, concludes, "that he was cast out of the sight of God," Jon 2:4. The sense of his sin, and of God's anger and wrath, was so eminent and transcendent upon him, that it even distracts him, and makes him speak like a despairing soul: "I am cast out from the presence of the Lord; I am expelled out of God's sight," as Moses was expelled out of Egypt. God has cast me out as one in whom he can take no pleasure nor delight, as a husband loth a wife that has been false and unfaithful to him; and yet God's heart and love is so set upon Jonah that he will save him by a miracle rather than he shall not be saved. Jonah was much in the heart of God, and God made his faith at last victorious.

To these I shall add some other famous instances. In king James' time there was one Mistress Honiwood of Kent, an ancient and pious gentlewoman, who lived many years in much horror and terror of conscience, for lack of assurance of the favor of God, and of her eternal well-being. She would very often cry out, "She was damned, she was damned." Several men of eminent piety and parts, left no means unattempted, whereby her doubts might be answered, her conscience pacified, and her soul satisfied and cheered; yet she being strongly under the power of despair, persisted in crying out, "Oh! she was damned, she was damned." When these gentlemen were about to depart, she called for a cup of wine for them, which being brought, she drank, and as soon as she had done, in an extreme passion she threw the Venice glass against the ground, saying, "As sure as this glass will break, so surely am I damned." The glass rebounded from the ground without any harm, which one of the ministers suddenly caught in his hand, and said, "Behold, a

miracle from heaven to confute your unbelief, Oh! tempt God no more, tempt God no more." Both the gentlewoman and all the company were mightily amazed at this strange incident, and all glorified God for what was done; and the gentlewoman, by the grace and mercy of God, was delivered out of her hell of despair, and was filled with much comfort and joy, and lived and died full of peace and assurance.

Take another instance. There lived lately at Tilbury, in Essex, a gentleman who was a long time under such an eminent degree of despair, that he rejected all comfort that was offered to him by any hand, and would not allow any to pray with him; nay, he sent to the ministers and Christians who lived near him, and desired them, that as they would not increase his torments in hell, they would cease praying for him. He would not allow any religious service to be performed in his family, though formerly himself was much in the use of them; yet God gave him at last such inward refreshings, and by degrees filled him with such abundance of heavenly comforts, as he told all who came to him that it was impossible for any tongue to utter, or heart to imagine, who did not feel them. At last God gave him "the new name, and the white stone, which none knows but he who has it," Rev 2:17. He lived about three quarters of a year, enjoying heaven upon earth, and then breathed out his last in the bosom of Christ.

Poor I, that am but of yesterday, have known some who have been so deeply plunged in the gulf of despair, that they would throw all the spiritual cordials which have been offered to them, to the ground. They were strong in reasoning against their own souls, and resolved against everything that might be a comfort and support unto them.

They have been much set against all ordinances and pious services; they have cast off holy duties themselves, and peremptorily refused to join with others in them; yes, they have, out of a sense of sin and wrath, which has lain hard upon them, refused the necessary comforts of this life, even to the overthrow of natural life. And yet out of this horrible pit, this hell upon earth, has God delivered their souls, and given them such manifestations of his grace and favor, that they would not exchange them for a thousand worlds.

O despairing souls, despairing souls, you see that others, whose

conditions have been as bad, if not worse than yours, have obtained mercy. God has turned their hell into a heaven; he has remembered them in their low estate; he has pacified their raging consciences, and quieted their distracted souls; he has wiped all tears from their eyes; and he has been a well-spring of life unto their hearts. Therefore be not discouraged, O despairing souls—but look up to the mercy-seat; remember who is your rest, and kick no more, by despair, against the affections of divine love.

II. The second impediment to assurance is, **men's entering into the lists of dispute with Satan about those things that are above their reach**, as about the decrees and counsel of God. Oh by this Satan keeps many precious souls off from assurance. Since God has cast him out of paradise, and bound him in chains of darkness, he will make use of all his skill, power and experience, to draw men into the same misery with himself; and if he cannot prevent their entering at last into paradise above, he will labor might and main to make their life a wilderness here below; and to this purpose he will busy their thoughts and hearts about the decrees of God, and about their particular elections; as, whether God has decreed them to eternal happiness, or chosen them to everlasting blessedness, etc., that so by this means he may keep them from that desirable assurance that may yield believers two heavens, a heaven of joy and comfort here, and a heaven of felicity and glory hereafter.

It is said of Marcellus, the Roman general, that he could not be quiet, neither conquered, nor conqueror. Such a one is Satan: if he be conquered by faith, yet he will be tempting; if he conquers, yet he will be roaring and triumphing. Satan's great design is eternally to ruin souls; and where he cannot do that, there he will endeavor to discomfit souls by busying them about the secret decrees and counsels of God. If the soul breaks through his temptations, as David's worthies did break through the armies of the Philistines, 1 Sam 23:16, and snap his snares in sunder, as Samson did his cords, Judg 15:13-14, then his next shift is to engage them in such debates and disputes that neither men nor angels can certainly and infallibly determine, that so he may spoil their comforts, when he cannot take away their crown.

Now your wisdom and your work, O doubting soul, lies not in disputing—but in believing, praying, and waiting on God. No way to heaven, no way

to assurance, like this. Adam disputes with Satan, and falls, and loses paradise; Job believes, and resists Satan, and stands, and conquers upon the ash-heap. When Satan, O trembling soul, would engage you in disputes about this or that, say to him, "Satan, revealed things belong to me," but "secret things belong to the Lord," Deut 29:29. It is dangerous to be curious in prying into hidden matters, and careless and negligent in observing known laws; say to him, Satan, you have been "a liar and a murderer from the beginning," John 8:44; you are a professed enemy to the saints' confidence and assurance, to their consolation and salvation. If you have anything to say, say it to my Christ; he is my comfort and crown, my joy and strength, my redeemer and intercessor, and he shall plead for me. Ah, Christians! if you would but leave disputing, and be much in believing and obeying, assurance would attend you; and you should "lie down in peace, and take your rest, and none should make you afraid," Job 11:13-20.

III. The third impediment that keeps poor souls from assurance, is, **The lack of a thorough search and examination of their own souls, and of what God has done and is a-doing in them.** Some there are, who can read better in other men's books than in their own, and some there are, who are more critical and curious in observing and studying other men's tempers, hearts, words, works, and ways—than their own. This is a sad evil, and causes many souls to sit down in darkness, even days without number. He who will not seriously and frequently observe the internal motions and actings of God, in and upon his noble part, his immortal soul, may talk of assurance, and complain of the lack of assurance—but it will be long before he shall obtain assurance. O you staggering, wavering souls, you tossed and disquieted souls, know for a certain, that you will never come to experience the sweetness of assurance, until your eyes are turned inward, until you live more at home than abroad, until you dig and search for the mines that are in your own hearts, until you come to discern between a work of nature and a work of grace, until you come to put a difference between the precious and the vile, between God's work and Satan's work. When this is done, you will find the clouds to scatter, and the Sun of righteousness to shine upon you, and the daystar of assurance to rise in you.

Doubting, trembling souls, do not deceive yourselves; it is not a careless, slight, slender searching into your own hearts, which will enable you to see the deep, the secret, the curious, the mysterious work of God upon you. If you do not "seek as for silver," and search for Christ and grace "as for hidden treasures," you will not find them, Prov 2:3-5. Your richest metals lie lowest, your choicest gems are in the affections of the earth, and those who will have them, must search diligently, and dig deep, or else they must go without them. Doubting souls, you must search, and dig again and again, and you must work and sweat, and sweat and work, if ever you will find those spiritual treasures, those pearls of great price, which are hidden under the ashes of corruption, which lie low in the very recesses of your souls.

Tell me, O doubting souls, has that sweet word of the apostle been ever made to stick in power upon you: 2 Cor 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith;" or, whether faith be in you, "prove yourselves," etc. The precept is here doubled, to show the necessity, excellency, and difficulty of the work; to show that it is not a superficial—but a thorough, serious, substantial examination that must enable a man to know whether he has precious faith or not; whether he is Christ's spouse or the devil's strumpet. All is not gold which glitters; all is not faith that men call faith; therefore, he who would not prove a cheat to his own soul, must take some pains to search and examine how all is within. We are to prove and try, as goldsmiths try their metal by the fire and the touchstone. God brings not a pair of scales to weigh our grace—but a touchstone to try our graces. If our gold be true, though it be never so little, it will pass current with him. He will not quench the smoking flax," etc. [Matt 12:20.]

Ah! how few are there in these days who keep a diary of God's mercies and their own infirmities, of spiritual experiences and the inward operations of heavenly graces! Seneca reports of a heathen man who every night asked himself these three questions: first, What evil have you healed this day? secondly, What vice have you stood against this day? thirdly, In what part are you bettered this day? And shall not Christians take pains with their own hearts, and search day and night to find out what God has done, and is a-doing there? God has his doing hand, his

working hand in every man's heart; either he is a-working there in ways of mercy or of wrath; either he is building up or a-plucking down; either he is a-making all glorious within, or else he is a-turning all into a hell.

Well! doubting souls, remember this, that the soundest joy, the strongest consolation, flow from a thorough examination of things within. This is the way to know how it is with you for the present, and how it is likely to go with you for the future. This is the way to put an end to all the wranglings of your hearts, and to put you into a possession of heaven on this side heaven.

IV. The fourth impediment that keeps many precious souls from assurance is, **Their mistakes about the work of grace.** Look! as many hypocrites do take a good nature for grace, and those common gifts and graces which may be in a Saul, a Jehu, a Judas, for a special distinguishing grace, etc., so the dear saints of God are very apt to take grace for a *good nature*, to take pearls of great price for stones of no value, to take special grace for common grace. Many trembling souls are apt to call their faith unbelief, with the man in the Gospel, Mark 9:24, and their confidence presumption, and their zeal passion, etc.; and by this means many are kept off from assurance. Now, the way to remove this impediment is, wisely and seriously to distinguish between renewing grace and restraining grace, between common grace and special grace, between temporary grace and sanctifying grace. Now, the difference between the one and the other I have showed in ten particulars in my treatise called "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices,"; and to that I refer you for full and complete satisfaction.

If you will cast your eye upon the particulars, I doubt not but you will find that profit and content which will recompense you for your pains. And this I thought more convenient to hint to you, than to write over the same things that there you will find to your delight and settlement.

V. The fifth impediment to assurance is, **Their grieving and vexing the Spirit of grace** by not hearkening to his voice, by refusing his counsel, by stopping the ear, by throwing water upon that fire he kindles in their souls, and by attributing that to the Spirit, what is to be attributed to men's own passions and distempers, and to the prince of darkness and

his demons. Nothing can come from the Holy Spirit but that which is holy. By these and such like ways, they sadden that precious Spirit who alone can gladden them, they set him a-mourning who alone can set them a-rejoicing, they set him a-grieving who alone can set them a-singing; and therefore it is that they sigh it out with Jeremiah, Lam 1:16, "Behold, he who should comfort our souls, stands afar off." Smoke drives away bees, and a foul smell drives away doves. Sin is such a smoke, such an ill-savor, as drives away this dove-like Spirit.

Ah, doubting souls! if ever you would have assurance, you must observe the motions of the Spirit, and give up yourselves to his guidance; you must live by his laws, and tread in his steps; you must live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit; you must let him be chief in your souls. This is the way to have him to be a sealing Spirit, a witnessing Spirit to your hearts. Believe it, souls, if this be not done, you will be far off from quietness and settlement. The word that in 1 John 3:19 is rendered "assure," signifies to persuade: to note to us that our hearts are forward and peevish, and apt to wrangle and raise objections against God, against Christ, against the Scripture, against our own and others' experiences, and against the sweet hints and joyings of the Spirit; and this they will do, especially when we omit what the Spirit persuades us to. The soul will not quite stop wrangling, until it is quieted in the bosom of Christ. Omissions raise fears and doubts, and makes work for hell, or for the Spirit and physician of souls. Or else, when we do that which the Spirit dissuades us from. If you are kind and obedient to the Spirit, it will not long be night with your souls; but if you rebel and vex him, he will make your life a hell, by withholding his ordinary influences, by denying to seal you to the day of redemption, and by giving you up to conflict with horrors and terrors, etc., Isa 63:10. Therefore, be at the Spirit's beck and check, and assurance and joy will before long attend you.

VI. The sixth impediment to assurance is, **Doubting souls making their sense, reason, and feeling the judges of their spiritual conditions.** Now so long as they take this course, they will never reach to assurance. **Reason's arm is too short to reach this jewel, assurance.** This pearl of price is put in no hand but that hand of faith which reaches from earth to heaven. What tongue can express or heart

conceive the fears, the doubts, the clouds, the darkness, the perplexities which will arise from the soul's reasoning thus—"I find that the countenance of God is not towards me as before, Gen 31:5; therefore, surely my condition is bad; I feel not those quickenings, those cheerings, those meltings as before; I am not sensible of those secret stirrings and actings of the Spirit and grace in my soul as before; I do not hear such good news from heaven as before; therefore certainly God is not my God, I am not beloved, I am not in the state of grace, I have but deceived myself and others; and therefore the issue will be that I shall die in my sins."

To make sense and feeling the judges of our spiritual conditions, what is it but to make ourselves happy and miserable, righteous and unrighteous, saved and damned in one day, ay, in one hour, when sense and reason sit as judges upon the bench? Has God made sense and feeling the judges of your conditions? No! Why, then, will you? Is your reason Scripture? Is your sense Scripture? Is your feeling Scripture? No! Why, then, will you make them judges of your spiritual estate? Is not the word the judge, by which all men and their actions shall be judged at last? "The word that I have spoken," says Christ, "shall judge you in the last day," John 12:48. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light, or no morning in them," Isa 8:20.

Why, then, O doubting souls, will you make your sense and feeling the judge, not only of your condition—but of the truth itself? What is this but to dethrone God, and to make a God of your sense and feeling? What is this—but to limit and bind up the Holy One of Israel? What is this but to toss the soul to and fro, and to expose it to a labyrinth of fears and scruples? What is this but to cast a reproach upon Christ, to gratify Satan, and to keep yourselves upon the rack? Well! doubting souls, the counsel that I shall give you is this, be much in believing, and make only the Scripture the judge of your condition; maintain the judgment of the word against the judgment of sense and feeling; and if upon a serious, sincere, and impartial comparing of your heart and the word together, of your ways and the word together, the word speaks you out to be sincere, to be a Nathanael, to be a new creature, to be born again, to have an immortal seed in you, etc., cleave to the testimony of the word, rejoice in it, rest

upon it, and give no more way to fears and doubts. Let your countenance be no more sad; for nothing can speak or make that soul miserable, that the word speaks out to be happy, Psalm 119:24. God has bowed down the Scriptures to the capacity even of babes and sucklings.

Constantine would have all differences and disputes in the Nicene Council ended by the Bible. O doubting souls, look cheerfully to this, that all differences and controversies that arise in your hearts be ended by the word. There is danger in looking *outside* the Scripture, or *beyond* the Scripture, or *short* of the Scripture, or upon sense and feeling, so much as upon the Scripture; therefore let the word be always the man of your counsel. No way to assurance and joy, to settlement and establishment, like this. If you are resolved to make sense and feeling the judge of your conditions, you must resolve to live in fears, and lie down in tears.

VII. The seventh impediment to assurance is, **Men's remissness, carelessness, and laziness in religious services, and in the exercise of their graces.** Ah, how active and lively are men in pursuing after the world! but how lifeless and unactive in the ways of grace and holiness! Ah, doubting Christians! remember this, that the promise of assurance and comfort is made over, not to lazy but laborious Christians; not to idle but to active Christians; not to negligent but to diligent Christians: John 14:21-23, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Now "Judas said unto him (not Iscariot), Lord! how is it that you will manifest yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If any man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." So 2 Pet 1:10-11, "Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

A lazy Christian shall always lack four things, namely, comfort, contentment, confidence, and assurance. God has made a separation between joy and idleness, between assurance and laziness; and therefore it is impossible for you to bring these together, which God has put so far

asunder. Assurance and joy are choice gifts which Christ gives only to laborious Christians. The lazy Christian has his mouth full of complaints, when the active Christian has his heart full of comforts. God would have the hearts of his children to be hot in pious services. "Be fervent" (or seething hot, as it is in the original) "in spirit, serving the Lord," Rom 12:11.

That service which has not heavenly heat, which has not divine fire in it, is no service, it is lost service. A lazy spirit is always a losing spirit. Oh! remember, lazy Christians, that God is a pure action, therefore he loves activeness in pious services. Remember the angels, those princes of glory, are full of life and activity, and they always behold the Father's face in glory, Matt 18:10. Remember, he who will find rich minerals must dig deep, he who will be rich must sweat for it, he that will taste the kernel must crack the shell, he who will have the marrow must break the bone, he who will wear the garland must run the race, he who will ride in triumph must get the victory. Just so, he who will get assurance must be active and lively in duty, Prov 2:4-6. It is only fervent prayer which is effectual prayer, it is only the working prayer which works wonders in heaven, and which brings down wonderful assurance into the heart.

Cold prayers shall never have any warm answers; God will suit his returns to our requests; lifeless services shall have lifeless answers; when men are dull, God will be dumb. Elijah prayed earnestly, or as it is in the Greek, "He prayed in prayer," and God answered him. (Most men have more heat in their brains, than in their hearts and services; and therefore it is that they walk in darkness, that they lack assurance.) Many there are who pray—but they do not pray in prayer, they are not lively and earnest with God in prayer; and therefore justice shuts out their prayers. When one desired to know what kind of man Basil was, there was, says the history, presented to him in a dream, a pillar of fire with this motto, 'Basil is such a one, all on a-light fire for God.' Ah! lazy, doubting Christians, were you all on fire—in hearing, in praying, etc.; it would not be long before the windows of heaven would be open, before God would rain down manna, before he would drop down assurance into your bosoms.

My advice to you, lazy Christians, is this, cease complaining of the lack of assurance, and be no more formal, slight, and superficial in pious services

—but stir up yourselves, and put out all your might and strength in holy actions, and you shall experimentally find that it will not be long before you shall have such good news from heaven, as will fill you with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

VIII. The eighth impediment to assurance is, **Men's living in the neglect of some ordinance, or in the omission of some pious duties.** Omission of diet breeds diseases, and makes the life uncomfortable, yes, sometimes a burden to a man. So the omission of holy duties and services breeds many fears, doubts, and questions in the soul, about its own sincerity, about its interest in Christ, about its finding audience and acceptance with God; and so makes the life of a Christian very uncomfortable, yes, a burden to him.

They seek Christ in some of his ways—but not in all; they wait upon him in this and that ordinance—but not in every ordinance. Are there not many doubting souls who wait upon God, in hearing the word of life; and yet neglect, and make light of waiting upon Christ, in breaking the bread of life? Are there not many who are very careful daily to perform family duties, and yet are very rarely found in closet services? Some there are, who are all **ear**, all for hearing; and others there are, who are all **tongue**, all for speaking and praying; and others there are, who are all **eye**, all for believing, all for searching, all for inquiring into this and that; and others there are, who are all **hand**, all for receiving the Lord's supper, etc. And seriously, when I consider these things, I cease wondering that so many lack assurance, and do rather wonder that any obtain assurance, considering how few there are, who are conscientious and ingenuous in waiting upon God in every way and service wherein he is pleased to manifest his grace and favor to poor souls.

Well! doubting souls, remember this, God will have you may seek his face in all. God loves as well that you should *wait* on him, as that you should *wrestle* with him. He who will not give God the honor of attending him in every duty, in every ordinance, may long enough complain of the lack of assurance, before God will give him the white stone and the new name, which none knows but he who has it, Rev 2:17. Many of the precious sons of Zion have found God giving assurance in one ordinance, others have found him giving assurance in another ordinance. God speaks peace to

some in such and such services, and comfort to others in such and such duties. Therefore, as you would have assurance, O doubting souls, seek the Lord in every way and service, wherein he is pleased to make known his glory and goodness. In hearing, Christ opens his box of ointments to some, and in praying and breaking of bread, he lets his sweet myrrh fall upon the hearts of others. Some have seen the glory of the Lord in the sanctuary, who have been clouded in their closets; others have heard a sweet still voice in their closets, who have sat long trembling in the sanctuary. Remember, doubting souls, Moab and Ammon were banished to the sanctuary to the tenth generation, for a mere omission, because they met not God's Israel in the wilderness with bread and water, Deut 23:3-4. And I truly believe, that God does banish, as I may say, many from his favorable presence, as Absalom did David, for their sinful omissions, for their non-attendance upon him in all his ways. Here the proverb is most false which says, 'a little hurts not.' Ah! this or that little omission, as you call it, may expose men to a great deal of wrath, Matt 25:41-46. They did not rob the saints—but omitted the relieving of them, which was their ruin.

Therefore, if ever you would have assurance, seek the Lord, not only while he may be found—but also in every gracious dispensation where he may be found. "Then shall the joy of the Lord be your strength," and his "glory shall rest upon you." "The days of your mourning shall be ended," and "you shall lie down in peace, and none shall make you afraid." [Neh 8:9; Isa 60:20; Lev 26:6]

I would earnestly desire you, O doubting souls, seriously to consider, that all the ways of Christ are ways of pleasantness; as Solomon speaks, Prov 3:17, not only this way or that way—but every way of Christ is a way of pleasantness; every way is strewed with roses, every way is paved with gold, every way is attended with comfort and refreshing. So the psalmist, "Your paths drop fatness," Psalm 65:11-12; not only this or that path—but all the paths of God drops fatness. Oh then, walk in every way, tread in every path of God, as you would have your souls filled with marrow and fatness, Psalm 63:5; and never forget that choice saying of the prophet Isaiah, "You meet him who rejoices, and works righteousness, who remembers you in your ways," Isa 64:5. God ran and meet the soul, as the

father of the prodigal ran and met him afar off with affections of love and pity. Those who would have God to meet with them in a way of peace and reconciliation, in a way of grace and favor, must remember God in all his ways; not only in this or that particular way—but in every way wherein he is pleased to cause his glory to shine. Therefore, doubting souls, cease complaining, and be more conscientious and ingenuous in waiting upon God in all his appointments, and it will not long be night with you.

IX The ninth impediment that keeps Christians from assurance is **an immoderate love of the world**. Many are miserable by *loving* hurtful things—but are more miserable by *having* them. Their thoughts and hearts are so busied about getting the world and keeping the world, that they neither seek assurance as they should, nor prize assurance as they should, nor lament the lack of assurance as they should, nor study the worth and excellency of assurance as they should; and therefore it is no wonder, that such are without assurance. As it is very hard for a rich man to enter into heaven, Matt 19:23-24, so it is very hard for a worldly Christian to get assurance of heaven. The "thick clay," Hab 2:6, of this world does so affect him, and capture him, so satisfy him, and sink him—that he is not able to pursue after assurance, with that life and love, with that fervency and frequency, as those must do, who will obtain it. It is said, Gen 13:2, "That Abraham was very *rich* in cattle, in silver, and in gold;" according to the Hebrew, Abraham was very *heavy* in cattle, in silver, and in gold; to show, says one, that *riches are a heavy burden*—and a hindrance many times to a Christian's comfort and confidence, to his happiness and assurance.

*Rich men's wealth proves a hindrance to their happiness.* Solomon got more hurt by his wealth, than he got good by his wisdom. Such a fire rose out of his worldly enjoyments, as did even consume and burn up his choicest graces and his noblest virtues; under all his *royal robes*, he had but a *threadbare soul*. Sicily, says one, is so full of sweet flowers, that dogs cannot hunt there, the scent of the sweet flowers diverts their smell. And ah! what do all the sweet delights and pleasures of this world do—but make men lose the scent of heaven—but divert men from hunting after assurance, and from running after Christ, in the sweetness of his ointments.

*The creature* is all *shadow*—and vanity of vanities. Vanity is the very quintessence of the creature, and all that can possibly be extracted out of it. It is like Jonah's gourd. A man may sit under its shadow for a while—but it soon decays and dies. "Why should you set your heart upon that which is not?" Prov 23:5. Were ever riches true to those who trusted them? As the bird hops from twig to twig, so do riches hop from man to man, etc. Worldly Christians, cease complaining of the lack of assurance, and sincerely humble and abase your souls before the Lord; for that you have so eagerly pursued after lying vanities; for that you have in so great a measure forsaken the fountain of living waters; for with Martha you have been busied about many things; when Christ and assurance, the two things necessary, have been so much neglected and disregarded by you.

Get this world, this moon, under your feet; take no rest until you have broken through this *silken net*, until you have got off these *golden fetters*. A heart which is full of the world, is a heart full of lacks. Ah! the joy, the peace, the comfort, the confidence, the assurance—which such hearts lack. The stars which have least circuit, are nearest the pole; and men whose hearts are least entangled with the world, are always nearest to God, and to the assurance of his favor. Worldly Christians, remember this—you and the world must part, or else assurance and your souls will never meet. When a worldly Christian is saved, he is *saved as by fire*; and before ever he shall be assured of his salvation, he must cry out, "all human consolations are but desolations!" God will not give the *sweets of heaven*, to those who are gorged and surfeited with the *delicacies of the earth*. The hen upon the ash-heap prefers a barley-corn above the choicest pearl; such *ash-heap Christians* prefer a little barley-corn above this pearl of price, assurance.

Those who, with Esau, prefer a *morsel of meat* before this blessing of blessings; who prefer *Paris* above *Paradise*; who prefer God's coin above his countenance—may at last with Esau seek, and seek with tears, this heavenly jewel, assurance; and yet, as he, be rejected and repulsed, Heb 12:16-17. "The world is a carcass, and those who hunt after it are dogs." This proverb makes a great many of our glistening professors to be but dogs.

X. The tenth impediment that keeps Christians from assurance, is, **The**

**secret cherishing and running out of their hearts, to some bosom, darling sin.** It is dark night with the soul, when the soul will cast a desiring eye upon this or that bosom sin, and secretly say, "Is it not a *little* one?" Gen 19:20, though God and conscience have formerly checked and whipped the soul for so doing. **Ah! how many are there who dally and play with sin—even after they have put up many prayers and complaints against sin—and after they have lamented and bitterly mourned over their sins.** Many there are who complain of their deadness, barrenness, frowardness, conceitedness, censoriousness, and other sins; and yet are ready at every turn to gratify, if not to justify, those very sins that they complain against! No wonder that such lack assurance!

After the Israelites ate manna in the wilderness, and drank "water out of the rock," after God had been to them a "cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night," after he had led them by the hand, and kept them as the apple of his eye, after he had made them spectators of his wonders—they hankered after *the fleshpots of Egypt!* So when, after God has given a man a new name and a white stone, after he has made a report of his love to the soul, after he has taken a man up into paradise, after he has set a man upon his knee, and carried him in his bosom, after he has spoken peace and pardon to the soul, Psalm 85:8—for the soul to return to folly, oh! this cannot but prove a woeful hindrance to assurance, this will provoke God to change his countenance, and to behave not as a friend—but as an enemy!

When God's *love* is abused, his *justice* takes up the iron rod. God will strike hard and heavy, when men kick against his love and mercy. God has made an everlasting separation between sin and peace, between sin and joy, and between sin and assurance. God will be out with that man—who is in with his sin. If sin and the soul are one, God and the soul must needs be two. He who is resolved to dally with any sin—he must resolve to live in many fears. Never forget this—he who savors any one sin, though he foregoes many others, does but as Benadab, recover from one disease, and die of another. Yes, he takes pains to plunge himself into two hells—a hell here, and a hell hereafter. Therefore, as ever you would have assurance, offer up your *Isaac*, part with your *Benjamin*, pull out your

right eye, cut off your right hand; otherwise assurance and joy will not be your portion.

Now that I may remove this impediment, which is of such dangerous consequence to Christians' souls, and keep Christians forever from smiling upon any bosom sin, I shall first lay down a few **considerations** to provoke them to dally and play no more with sin—but to put off that sin which does so easily beset them, which sticks so close unto them, Heb 12:1; and then in the second place, I shall propound some **means** which may contribute to the bringing of bosom sins under control, that so it may be no longer *night* with the soul.

1. The first motive to provoke you to put out all your strength and might against bosom sins—which you are so apt to play with, is seriously to consider, that **this will be a strong and choice demonstration and evidence of the sincerity and uprightness of your hearts**: Psalm 18:23, "I was also upright with him, and I kept myself from my iniquity." I kept a strict and diligent watch upon that particular sin which I found myself most inclined unto. And this, says David, is a clear evidence to me of the uprightness of my heart with God. The truth is, **there is no hypocrite in the world, but does dandle and dally with some bosom sin or other**; and though at times, and for carnal reasons, they seem to be very zealous against *this* and *that* sin; yet at the very same time their hearts stand strongly and affectionately engaged to some bosom sin, as might be showed in Saul, Judas, and Herod. "Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue, though he cannot bear to let it go and keeps it in his mouth, yet his food will turn sour in his stomach; it will become the venom of serpents within him. He will spit out the riches he swallowed; God will make his stomach vomit them up. He will suck the poison of serpents; the fangs of an adder will kill him." Job 20:12-16.

Therefore, as ever you would have a sure argument of your uprightness, **trample upon your Delilahs!** This very *evidence of your uprightness and sincerity* may yield you more comfort and refreshing in a day of trouble and darkness, than for the present you do apprehend, or have faith to believe. Some there are, who can tell you, that neither the joy of the bridegroom, nor the joy of the harvest, is to be compared to that joy

which arises in the soul from the sense and evidence of a man's own uprightness, 2 Cor 1:12. *Sincerity* is the very queen of virtues; she holds the throne, and will be sure to keep it. Yes, the very sight of it in the soul makes a man sit cheerful and thankful, *Noah-like*, in the midst of all tempests and storms. **Look! as the playing with a bosom sin speaks out hypocrisy, so the mortifying of a bosom sin speaks out sincerity of soul!**

2. The second motive to provoke doubting souls to trample upon their bosom sins, is solemnly to consider, that **the conquest of their darling sins will render the conquests of other sins easy.**

When *Goliath* was slain, the rest of the Philistines fled, 1 Sam 17:51-52. When a *general* in an army is cut off, the common soldiers are easily routed and destroyed. Ah! complaining, doubting souls—did you but take the courage and resolution to fall with all your might and spiritual strength upon those particular sins which stick so close unto you, and which so easily captivate you; you would find, that the great *mountains* which are before you would soon be made a *plain*, Zech 4:7. Other sins will not be long-lived, when justice is done upon your bosom sins. Thrust but a dart through the heart of *Absalom*, and a complete conquest will follow, 2 Sam 18:14.

3. The third motive to provoke you to crucify your bosom sins, be they what they will, is, seriously to **consider the very great damage that your souls have *already* sustained by your bosom sins.**

*Saul*, by casting an amorous eye upon Agag, lost his crown and kingdom. *Samson*, by dallying with his Delilah, lost his strength, sight, light, liberty, and life. But what are these losses to your loss of spiritual strength, to your loss of communion with God, to your loss of the Spirit of light, life, liberty, and glory; to your loss of joy unspeakable, and peace which passes all understanding; and to your loss of those fresh and sparkling hopes of glory, which were once sparkling in your bosom? Some there are, who had rather lose their *souls* than their *sins*: these shall be chronicled in hell for fools and madmen!

Mark Antony was so far bewitched with his Cleopatra, that in the heat of

the battle of Actium, when the empire of the world, his life, and all lay at stake, that he fled to pursue her, to the ruin and loss of all. **There are many, who are so bewitched to some Cleopatra, to some darling sin or other—that they pursue the enjoyment of them to the loss of God, Christ, heaven, and their souls forever!**

Ah! Christians, that the sense of what you have formerly lost, and of what you daily lose by your playing with sin, might provoke you to set upon some effectual course for the mortifying of them!

It was a blasphemous speech of Henry the Second, who said, when Mentz, his city, was taken, "That he would never love God any more, who allowed a city so dear to him to be taken from him." But it will be a blessed and happy thing for you, in uprightness to say, "Oh, we will never more love, we will never more favor, we will never more dally with our bosom sins; for they have damnified us in our spiritual enjoyments, and in our spiritual returns from heaven. Shall the sense of outward losses by this and that instrument, work us out of love with them? And shall not the sense of our spiritual losses by bosom sins—work us much more out with them. Ah, Lord! of what iron mettle is that heart, which can look upon those sad losses which have attended playing with bosom sins—and yet *still dally with those Delilahs?*

4. The fourth motive to provoke you to the mortifying of your darling sins, is, solemnly to consider, that **the conquest and effectual mortifying of one bosom sin, will yield a Christian more glorious joy, comfort, and peace—than ever he has found in the gratifying and committing of all other sins.** The pleasure and sweetness which follows victory over sin, is a thousand times beyond that seeming sweetness which is in the gratifying of sin. The joy which attends the subduing of sin—is a noble joy, a pure joy, a special joy, an increasing joy, and a lasting joy. But that joy which attends the committing of sin—is an ignoble joy, a corrupt joy, a decreasing joy, a dying joy. **The truth is--if there were the least real joy in sin, there could be no hell-torments, where men shall most totally sin, and be most totally tormented with their sin.**

The heathens, as many Christian professors now, had not the right art of

mortifying sin. All their attempts are to *hide* a lust, not to *quench* it; therefore their joy was like the crackling of thorns under a pot.

**Ah! doubting Christians, as ever you would have good days, as ever you would walk in the light, as ever you would, like the angels, have always harps in your hands, and hallelujahs in your mouths—be restless, until in the spirit and power of Jesus, you have brought under control, that sin which sticks so close unto you. Remember this, nothing below the conquest of bosom sins can make a jubilee in the heart. **It is not a man's whining and complaining over sin—but his mortifying of sin, which will make his life a paradise of pleasure.****

If, notwithstanding all that has been said, you are still resolved to dally with sin, then you must resolve to live as a stranger to God, and as a stranger to assurance and peace; you must expect sad trials without, and sore troubles within; you must expect to find Satan playing his part both as a lion and as a serpent, both as a devil and as an angel of light. You must expect either no news from heaven, or but bad news from heaven; and you must expect that conscience will play the part both of a scolding wife and of a lion that wants his prey; and this shall be your just wages for playing with sin. If you like the wages, then take your course, and dally with sin still; if otherwise, then **sacrifice your Isaac!**

The leper under the law was still to keep his hair shaved, Lev 14:5. So should we be still a-cutting and shaving, that though the roots of sin remain, yet they may not grow and sprout.

5. The fifth motive to work you to trample upon your bosom sins is, wisely to consider, that **it is your duty and glory to do that every day—which you would willingly do upon a dying day.** Ah! how would you live and love upon a dying day? How would you admire God, rest upon God, delight in God, long for God, and walk with God upon a dying day? How would you hate, loathe, and abhor your bosom sins upon a dying day? How would you complain of your bosom sins, and pray against your bosom sins, and mourn over your bosom sins, and watch against your bosom sins, and fly from all occasions which would tend to draw you to close with your bosom sins upon a dying day?

Ah! doubting souls, you would not for all the world gratify your bosom sins upon a dying day; and will you gratify them on other days, which, for anything you know to the contrary, may prove your dying day? Thrice happy is that soul who labors with all his might to do that at first, which he would gladly do at last; who does that on every day; which he would give a thousand worlds to do on a dying day. No way to assurance like this; no way to joy and comfort like this; no way to rest and peace like this; no way to the kingdom, to the crown, like this!

I earnestly beseech you, trembling souls, when you find your hearts running out to bosom sins, that you would lay your hands upon them, and thus expostulate the case: "O my soul—would you thus dally and play with sin upon a dying day? Would you thus stroke and hug sin upon a dying day? would you not rather, show all the dislike and hatred that is imaginable against it? Would you not tremble at sin more than at hell? and abhor the very *occasions* of sin more than the most venomous serpent in all the world? Would you not rather suffer the worst and greatest punishments, than to smile upon a darling sin upon a dying day? Yes! oh would you gladly do this upon a dying day? Why not then every day? Why not then every day, O my soul?"

6. The sixth motive to provoke you to fall with all your might upon bosom sins is, seriously to consider, that **until this is done, fears and doubts will still haunt the soul**; the soul will still be fearing that surely all is naught, and that that work which is wrought upon it is not a real but a counterfeit work; that it is not a spiritual and special work—but a common work, which a man may have and perish. Until this is done, the soul can never be able to see grace in his own native beauty and glory. One flaw in the diamond does not only take away the beauty, glory and price of it—but it puts men into questioning whether it is a real diamond.

The hugging of sin in a corner, will raise such a *dust* in the soul, that it will not be able to see these pearls of glory sparkling and shining. Until this is done, doubting souls, you will be but spiritual babes and dwarfs. The *hankering of the soul after sin*, is the casting of water upon the Spirit; it is the laming of grace, it is the clipping the wings of faith and prayer. Just so, that the soul can neither be confident, nor fervent, frequent nor constant in pious services. Just so, it will unavoidably follow

—that such souls will be like Pharaoh's lean cows, poor and starveling. Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard son; and yet that one bastard son destroyed all the rest! You may easily apply it. [Judg 8]

Look! as many men are kept low in their outward estates, by having a back door to some *Herodias*; so many doubting souls are kept low in spirituals, by their hankering after some particular sins.

Remember, Christians, **sin** is the soul's sickness, the soul's weakness. If the body is weak and diseased, it grows not. Sin is poison which turns all nourishment into corruption, and so hinders the growth of the soul in grace and holiness. Ah! Christians, as ever you would be rid of your fears and doubts, as ever you would see the beauty and glory of grace, as ever you would be eminent and excellent in grace and holiness—see that effectual justice be done upon that *Achan*, that *Jonah*, that *darling sin*, which has occasioned storms within and tempests without!

It was a grievous vexation to King Lysimachus, that his staying to drink one draught of water lost him his kingdom. Ah! Christians, it will grievously vex you, when you come to yourselves, and when you come to taste of the admirable pleasure which attends the conquest of sin—to consider that your hankering after this or that particular sin, has been the loss of that joy and comfort, that peace and assurance, which is infinitely more worth than all the kingdoms of the world! If there is but *one crack in the honey-jar*, there the wasp will be buzzing; and where there is but some one sin favored, there Satan will be tempting and upbraiding.

QUESTION. But you may say to me, Oh we would gladly have our bosom-sins subdued, we desire above all, that they may be effectually mortified. These *sons of Zeruiah* we would choose to have slain! But **what course must we take to bring under our *darling sins*, to get off our *golden fetters*, to get out of these *silken snares*?** To this question I shall give these answers:

1. The first means. If ever you would have mastery over this or that bosom sin—then **engage all your power and might against your bosom sin**, draw up your spiritual forces, and engage them wholly against that sin which does so easily beset you. As the king of Syria said to his

captains, "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the *king* of Israel," 2 Chron 18:30. Just so, say I, your wisdom and your work, O doubting souls, lies not in skirmishing with this or that lesser sin—but in coming up to a close sharp fight with the *king* sin—with that darling sin, which has a kingly interest in you, and a kingly power over you.

When there is no hope of *curing*, men must fall *a-cutting*. Believe it, souls, you must fall a-cutting your bosom sins in pieces by the sword of the Spirit, as Samuel cut Agag in pieces in Gilgal before the Lord, or else you will never obtain a perfect cure, 1 Sam 15:33. Slight skirmishes will not do it; **you must pursue your bosom sins to the death—or they will be the death of your souls!**

2. The second means to bring under a bosom sin, is, to **labor to be most eminent and excellent in that particular grace, which is most opposite to a man's bosom sin.** (As when one bucket of a well goes up—the other goes down. Just so, when grace gets up—sin goes down; when grace flourishes—sin withers.) As it is a Christian's glory to be eminent in every grace, so it is a Christian's special duty to excel in that particular grace which is most contrary to his darling sins. Is it pride, is it the world, is it hypocrisy, etc., which is your bosom sin, which is the chief favorite in your soul? Oh then, labor above all to be clothed with humility, to abound in heavenly-mindedness, to transcend in sincerity, etc., I know no surer, no choicer, no sweeter way, effectually to crucify a bosom sin, than this. He who comes up to this counsel, will not be long held in sin's *golden fetters*; it will not be long before such a soul cries out, Victory, victory!

3. The third means to help us to trample upon bosom sins, is, to **look upon bosom sins now, as they will appear to us at last**; to look upon them in the time of health—as they will appear to us in times of sickness; to look upon them in the youth time of our life—as they will appear to us in the day of our death. Ah! souls, of all unpardoned sins, your bosom sins will be presented by **God, conscience, and Satan** at last—as the most filthy and ugly, as the most terrible and dreadful. Your bosom sins at last will appear to be those monsters, those fiends of hell—which have most provoked God against you, which have shut up Christ's affections of love and compassion from you, which have armed

conscience against you, which have barred the gates of glory against you, which have prepared the hottest place in hell for you, and which have given Satan the greatest advantage eternally to triumph over you! Many there are, who have found these things by woeful experience. Woe, woe, to that soul which shall put it to the trial.

Ah! souls, at last your bosom sins will more press and oppress you, more sadden and sink you, more terrify and amaze you—than all your other transgressions! Those sins which seem most sweet in life—will prove most bitter in death, Job 20:11-29. Those *pleasant morsels* will prove your greatest hell, when there is but a short step between your soul and eternity. Ah! Christians, never look upon bosom sins—but with that eye which within a few hours you must behold them; and this, you will find by experience, will be a singular means to bring under control your bosom sins.

4. The fourth means to subdue bosom sins is, to **apply yourselves to extraordinary means, as fasting and prayer**, etc. Ordinary medicines will not remove extraordinary distempers; nor will ordinary duties remove bosom sins, which, by long and familiar acquaintance with the soul, are exceedingly strengthened and advantaged. You read of some devils in the Gospel which could not be cast out but by prayer and fasting, Matt 17:14-22. So bosom sins are those *white devils* which will not, which cannot be cast out but by fervent and constant prayer, joined with fasting and humiliation. Souls who are serious and conscientious in observing of this rule will find such a divine power to attend their endeavors as will enable them to triumph over those white devils within, as Christ triumphed over principalities and powers upon the cross, Col 2:14-15.

5. The fifth means. As you would have victory over bosom sins, **keep away from all those occasions which tend to lead you to the gratifying of them**. He who shuns not the occasions of sin, tempts two at once—Satan and his own heart! He tempts *Satan* to tempt him to taste of forbidden fruit, and he tempts *his own heart* to feed upon forbidden fruit. "Abstain from all appearance of evil," 1 Thess 5:22; "hate the garment spotted by the flesh," Jude 23. Whatever carries with it a shadow of suspicion—that abstain from, that you may neither wound God nor the gospel, nor your own consciences. If there is any fuel to feed your bosom

sin in your **house**, remove it; or before your **eye**, remove it; or in your **hand**, remove it, put it far away! Your soul cannot be safe, it cannot be secure, so long as the *occasions of sin* are your companions.

Would you have a clear evidence of the truth of your grace—then shun the occasions of sin. Would you imitate the choicest saints—then shun the occasions of sin. Would you stand in shaking times—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you keep always peace with God, and peace with conscience—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you frustrate Satan's greatest designs, and countermine him in his deepest plots—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you keep your bones from breaking, and your heart from bleeding—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you keep down fears and doubts, and keep up faith and hope—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you have assurance in life, and joy and peace in death—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Do this, and you do all. If you do not do this, you do nothing at all. [Gen 39:10; Job 31:1; Psalm 26:4-6]

And thus I am done with **the impediments which hinder souls from assurance; as also with the means to remove those impediments.**

**Containing several motives to provoke Christians to be restless until they have obtained a well-grounded assurance of their eternal happiness and blessedness.**

(1.) The first motive. Now, the first motive that I shall lay down to provoke you to get a well-grounded assurance, is, solemnly to consider, **That many are now dropped into hell who have formerly presumed of their going to heaven:** as those who came bouncing at heaven-gate, crying out, "Lord, Lord, open to us, for we have prophesied in your name, and in your name have cast out devils, and in your name have done many wonderful works;" and yet that direful and dreadful sentence is passed upon them, "Depart from me, you workers of

iniquities," Matt 7:22,26-27.[1]

The foolish virgins were in a golden dream that they were as happy as the best, and yet, when they were awakened, they found the bridegroom entered into his glory, and the door of mercy shut against them, Matt 25:10-12. So were the Jews that cried out, "The temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord!" **Men are naturally prone to flatter themselves that their sins are not sins, when indeed they are; and that they are but small sins, when they are great and grievous,** Isa 40:27; Deut 29:19; and they are apt to flatter themselves that they have grace when they have none; and that their grace is true, when it is but counterfeit; and that their condition is not so bad as others, when it is worse; and, with Agag, that the bitterness of death is past, when God has his sword in his hand ready to execute the vengeance written. [Prov 30:12; Rev 3:17-18; Mic 3:11] I judge as in this world, so in hell—the most self-flattering souls will be the most miserable souls.

I have read of a madman at Athens, who laid claim to every rich ship which came into the harbor, whereas he was poor, and had no part in any. Ah! this age is full of such mad souls, who lay claim to God and Christ, and the promises and gospel privileges, and all the glory of another world—when they are poor, and blind, and miserable, and wretched, and naked, when they are Christless and graceless, etc. Ah, souls! does it not therefore behoove you to labor much for a well-grounded assurance, that so you may not miscarry to all eternity—but may at last be found worthy to receive a crown of glory and to enter into your Master's joy, which is a joy too great and too glorious to enter into you, and therefore you must enter into it, Matt 25:21,23.

(2.) The second motive to provoke Christians to get a well-grounded assurance is this, consider, **That there are a great many soul flatterers, soul-deceivers, and soul-cheaters in the world.** The devil has put his *angelic robes* upon many of his chief agents, that they may the more easily and the more effectually deceive and delude the souls of men. This age affords many sad testimonies of this. A hidden enemy is far worse than an open enemy.

Ah! what multitudes are there, that to some bleary eyes appear as angels

of light, and yet in their principles and practices are but servants to the prince of darkness, laboring with all their might to make proselytes for hell, Matt 23:15, and to draw men to those wild notions, opinions, and conceits which will leave them short of heaven, yes, bring them down to the hottest, darkest, and lowest place in hell, if God does not prevent it by a miracle of grace. Therefore you had need look about you, and see that you get a well-grounded assurance, and not allow Satan to put a cheat upon your immortal souls. Christ has foretold us, "That in the last days there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, that shall say, Lo, here is Christ, and lo, there is Christ," Matt 24:23-24. And truly this scripture is this day fulfilled in your ears. Ah, how many blasphemous wretches have there been in these days, who have asserted themselves to be the very Christ! And it is to me no little miracle, that the very earth has not opened her mouth and swallowed up such monsters, such firebrands of hell.

The apostle tells you of some that "lie in wait to deceive, by such sleights" as cheaters and false gamesters use at dice; he tells you of cunning crafty men that do diligently watch all advantages to work, draw, and win weak and unstable souls to those opinions, principles, and practices, which tend to drown them in everlasting perdition. Satan's disciples and agents have a method of deceiving, they are doctors in all the arts of cozenage, and they will leave no means unattempted whereby they may draw men to build upon hay and stubble, upon this opinion and that notion, etc., that so men and their works may burn forever together, 1 Cor 3:15.

It is reported of king Canutus, that he promised to make him the highest man in England, who should kill king Edmund Ironside, his co-rival; which, when one had performed, and expected his reward, he commanded him to be hung on the highest tower in London. So Satan and his emissaries, they promise poor souls that such and such opinions, and notions, etc., will thus and thus advantage them, and advance them; but in the end, poor souls shall find the promised crown turned into a noose, the promised comfort turned into a torment, the promised glory turned into ignominy, the promised exaltation turned into desolation, the promised heaven turned into a hell. This age is full of soul-flatterers, of soul-undoers, who, like evil physicians, skin over the wound—but kill the

patient. Flattery undid Ahab, and Herod, and Nero, and Alexander. Not bitter words—but flattering words, do all the mischief. This many have found true by woeful experience.

Those flatterers who told Dionysius, that his spittle was as sweet as honey, undid him; and those flatterers that told Caesar, that his freckles in his face were like the stars in the firmament, ruined him. And ah! how many young and old in these days have been lost and undone by those soul-flatterers, who lie in wait to ensnare and deceive the souls of men. **Smooth talk often proves sweet poison.** Many in these days have found it so. Oh that this very consideration might be set home by the hand of the Spirit, with that life and power upon your souls, as effectually to stir and provoke you to get a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness, that so you may stand fast, like the house built upon the rock, in the midst of all tempests and storms, that nothing may unsettle you, nor disquiet you, and that none may take away your crown, Matt 7:24-25; Rev 3:11.

(3.) The third motive to stir you up to get a well-grounded assurance is this, consider, That **a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness will ease you, and free you of a threefold burden.** It will free you,

1. From a burden of cares.
2. From a burden of fears.
3. From a burden of doubts.

1. Now the burden of **cares**, ah Christians! causes you to sit down sighing and groaning; ah! how do the cares of getting this and that, and the cares of keeping this and that worldly contentment, disturb and distract, vex and rack the souls of men who live under the power of carking cares, Matt 13:22. Oh—but now assurance of better things makes the soul sing care away, as that martyr said, "My soul is turned to her rest; I have taken a sweet nap in Christ's lap, and therefore I will now sing away care, and will be carefree." Assurance of an eternal kingdom and crown, is a fire which burns up all those cares which ordinarily fill the head and distract the

heart. There is no way to get off the burden of cares but by getting assurance.

2. Again, assurance will free you from the burden of **fears**, as well as from the burden of cares. Men are apt to make elephants of flies, and giants of pigmies. Until men reach assurance, they will still *create* fears, rather than *extinguish* them. Now, your hearts are filled with fears of possessing the creature, with fears of lacking the creature, with fears of losing the creature, etc. And these fears make men turn, like the chameleon, into all colors, forms, and fashions, yes, they make their lives a hell. Oh—but now assurance will scatter all these fears, as the sun does the clouds; it will extinguish these fears, as the sun does the fire. Assurance made David divinely fearless, and divinely careless: Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me," Psalm 23:3. Ah! how full of fears and perplexities was Hagar, until the Lord opened her eyes to see the well of water that was near her, Gen 21:16. So the soul will be full of fears and perplexities until it comes to see assurance, to enjoy assurance. Christians, when all is said that can be, this will be found at last a most certain truth, that there is no way to be effectually rid of your fears—but by obtaining a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness.

3. Again, assurance will rid you of your burden of **doubts**. Remember, Christians:

(1.) that doubts are bred and fed by ignorance and unbelief, and therefore are sinful;

(2.) that they rob the soul of all joy, comfort, and contentment;

(3.) they render men babes in Christianity;

(4.) they throw reproach upon God, Christ, and the promises;

(5.) they give Satan the greatest advantage against us.

Now you are still a-doubting. Sometimes you doubt whether that you are

a thorough Christian, and not an Agrippa, an almost Christian, a half Christian, as most professors are. Sometimes you doubt of your *sonship*, and that leads you to doubt of your *heirship*. Sometimes you doubt of your acquaintance with God, and that leads you to doubt of your access to God, and acceptance with God. Sometimes you doubt of your union with God, and those doubts lead you to doubt of the truth of your communion with God, etc. The truth is, your whole life is a life of doubting, and so it will be—until you reach to a well-grounded assurance.

Though the two disciples had Christ for their companion, yet their hearts were full of fears and doubts, while their eyes were blinded so that they should not know him, Luke 24:14-15, etc. Until a Christian's eyes be open to see his assurance, his heart will be full of doubts and perplexities. Though Mary Magdalene was very near to Christ, yet she stands sighing, mourning, and complaining that they had stolen away her Lord, because she did not see him, John 20:13-16. Christians! though you may be very near and dear to Christ, yet until you come to see your assurance, you will spend your days in doubting, mourning, and complaining.

The sum of all is this, as you would be rid of your burden of cares, your burden of fears, and your burden of doubts, get a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness; but if you are in love with your burdens, then neglect but the making of your calling and election sure, and you shall certainly make sure your burdens; they shall rise with you, and walk with you, and lie down with you, until they make your lives a hell.

(4.) The fourth motive to provoke you to labor after a well-grounded assurance is, To **consider that Satan will labor with all his arts and deceits, with all his power and might, to keep you from attaining a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness.** Such is Satan's envy and enmity against a Christian's joy and comfort, that he cannot but act to the utmost of his ability to keep poor souls in doubts and darkness. Satan's envy is such against the joy and comfort of the saints, that he cannot rest, nor cease from making use of all his wiles, whereby poor souls may be kept off from assurance, and their lives made a burden to them.

Satan knows that assurance is that pearl of great price, which will make the soul happy forever; he knows that assurance makes a Christian's wilderness to be a paradise; he knows that assurance begets in Christians the most noble and generous spirits; he knows that assurance is that which will make men strong to do exploits, to shake his tottering kingdom about his ears; and therefore he is very studious and industrious to keep souls off from assurance, as he was to cast Adam out of paradise.

It is no wonder that Satan, who envied the first seeds of grace which divine love sowed in your soul, that he should envy the increase of your grace, yes, your assurance, which is the top and royalty of grace. When you were a babe, Satan cast water upon your smoking flax, that it might not flame forth into assurance; and now you are grown up to some more maturity, he is raised in his enmity, so that he cannot but put out his power and policy to keep you from assurance of felicity and glory. Satan envies your candlelight, your torchlight, your starlight, how much more that the sun should shine upon you! Satan envies your eating of the crumbs of mercy under the table, how much more that, as a child, you should sit at Wisdom's table, and eat and drink abundantly of Wisdom's delicacies! Satan envies your feeding on husks among the swine, how much more that you should eat of the fattened calf! Satan envies your sitting with Mordecai at the king's gate, how much more that you should wear the king's robes! Satan envies your tasting of the least drop of comfort, how much more your swimming in those pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore! He envies your sitting upon God's knee, how much more, then, your lying in his bosom! He envies your being admitted into his service, how much more that you should be of his court and council!

Some say of the crystal, that it has such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a luster and beauty upon them. Assurance is that heavenly crystal which quickens souls, and which casts a beauty and a glory upon souls; and this makes the devil mad.

Satan knows that assurance is manna in a wilderness, it is water out of a rock, it is a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He knows that assurance is a salve for all sores, and medicine for all diseases, and a remedy against every malady. He knows that assurance is a Christian's

anchor at sea, and his shield upon land; and that it is a staff to support him, and a sword to defend him, and a pavilion to hide him, and a cordial to cheer him; and therefore it is that he labors, both as a lion and as a serpent, to keep poor souls from a well-grounded assurance. This *son of the morning* has fallen from the top of glory to the bottom of misery, and therefore he strives to make all as miserable and unhappy as himself.

Ah! Christians, have not you need to seek assurance with all your might, who have to do with so mighty an adversary, who cares not what torments he heaps upon himself, so that he may prove your tormentor, by keeping your souls and assurance asunder? Oh that this very consideration might make you restless, until you have got this "white stone" in your bosoms!

(5.) The fifth motive to provoke you to get a well grounded assurance is this, consider that **a well grounded assurance is a jewel of that incomparable value**, it is such a pearl of great price as will abundantly recompense the soul for all the cost and effort it shall be at to enjoy it. Yes, the enjoyment of assurance in that hour of death, when the soul shall sit upon your trembling lips, ready to take her leave of you, and all the world, will richly recompense you for all those prayers, tears, sighs and groans which you have breathed out in one place or another, in one service or another.

Surely the gold in the mine will recompense the digger; the crown, in the end, will recompense the runner; the fruit in the vineyard will recompense the vine-dresser; the corn in the barn will recompense the reaper; and the increase of the livestock will recompense the shepherd. Just so, assurance at last will abundantly recompense the soul for all its knocking, weeping, and waiting at mercy's door. God will never allow "the seed of Jacob to seek his face in vain," Isa 45:19. There is a reward not only in keeping—but also for keeping of his commands, Psalm 19:11. Joseph, for his thirteen years' imprisonment, had the honor to reign eighty years like a king; David, for his seven years' banishment, had a glorious reign of forty years' continuance; Daniel, for his lying a few hours among the lions, is made chief president over a hundred and twenty princes; the three children, for taking a few turns in the fiery furnace, are advanced to great dignity and glory.

Ah! doubting souls, pray hard, pull hard, work hard for assurance; the pay will answer the pains. Christ will, sooner or later, say to you, as the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, "I am yours, and all that I have," 1 Kings 20:4. 'I am yours, O doubting souls,' says Christ, 'and assurance is yours, and joy is yours; my merit is yours, my Spirit is yours, and my glory is yours; all I am is yours, and all I have is yours. Oh, this is *a hive full of divine comfort*; oh this will recompense you for all your wrestling and sweating to obtain assurance, Matt 25:34-41; Rev 3:11-12.

Augustine, in his Confessions, has this notable expression, "How sweet was it to me, to be suddenly without those sweet earthly vanities. And those things which I was afraid to lose—with joy I let go; for you who are the true and only sweetness, did cast out those from me, and instead of them did enter in yourself—who is more delightful than all pleasure, and more clear than all light."

Ah! Christians, do but hold up and hold on, and assurance and joy will come, and you shall, after your working and waiting, sit down and sing it out with old Simeon, "My eyes have seen your salvation;" my heart has found the sweetness of assurance, and "now, Lord, let your servant depart in peace," Luke 2:30.

(6.) The sixth motive to provoke you to get assurance, is this, **Consider what labor and pains worldlings take to obtain the vain things of this life.** Ah! what riding, running, plotting, lying, swearing, stabbing, and poisoning, is used by men of this world—to obtain the poor things of this world, which are but shadows and dreams, and mere nothings! How do many with Samson lay heap upon heap, to make their crowns and kingdoms sure, to make the tottering glory of this world sure to themselves! what bloody butchers do they prove! they will have the crown, though they swim to it through the blood of innocent men. Men will venture life and limb to obtain those things which hop from man to man, as the bird hops from twig to twig.

Oh! how should this stir and provoke us to be up and doing, to labor as for life—to make sure of spiritual and eternal things! Is earth better than heaven? Is the glory of this world greater than the glory of the world to

come? Are these riches more durable than those which corrupt not, which "are laid up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal?" Matt 6:19-20. No! Oh then be ashamed, Christians, that worldlings are more studious and industrious to obtain pebbles, than you are to obtain pearls! They labor to obtain those things which at last will be their burden, their bane, their plague, their hell. You are to labor to obtain those things which will be your joy and crown in life, in death, and in the day of judgement.

The laborious, the active Christian, is tempted but by one devil; but the idle, slothful Christian, is tempted by all devils. It is very sad, when worldlings are a-reaping; that saints as to spirituals, should be slumbering and sleeping.

Pambus wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost, partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell, and partly because he had not been so careful to please God, as she had been to please her sluttish lovers. Ah, Christians! what great reason have you to sit down and weep bitterly—that worldlings take so much pains to make themselves miserable, and that you have taken no more pains to get assurance, to get a pardon in your bosoms, to get more of Christ into your hearts!

(7.) The seventh motive to provoke you to get assurance, is to consider, **That assurance will enable you to bear a burden, without a burden**, as in Hebrews 10:34, "You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." Here you see that assurance of heavenly things makes these worthies patiently and joyfully bear a burden, without a burden. So the apostles, knowing that they had "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, went through honor and dishonor, evil report and good report," 2 Cor 5:8, and 2 Cor 6:8-11. They went through many weaknesses, sicknesses, wants, and deaths; they had nothing, and yet possessed all things; they had burden upon burden cast upon them by the churches, by false apostles, and by an uncharitable world, and yet they cheerfully bore all burdens without a burden, through the power of a well-grounded assurance.

**Assurance makes heavy afflictions light, long afflictions short, bitter afflictions sweet**, 2 Cor 4:16-18. Where a man lacks assurance, there the *shadow* of a burden frights him, and the weight of the least burden sinks him. Such a man is still a-crying out, "No man's burden to my burden; my burden is greater than others, my burden is heavier than others." The lack of assurance oftentimes makes men's very *mercies* a burden, their *comforts* a burden, their *relations* a burden, yes, their very *lives* a burden unto them. Ah! Christians, you will never bear burdens without a burden—until you come to attain an assurance of better things. This will enable you to leap under the weight of any cross, to rejoice under the weight of any mountain, Job 7:20.

*Assurance fits a man's heart to his condition*, and when a man's heart is fitted to his condition, nothing proves a burden to him. Assurance of better things to come takes away the *sting*, the *poison* which attends these lower things; and the sting and the poison being taken away, the very worst of these things are so far from being a burden to a man, that they become rather a pleasure and a delight unto him. When the sting is taken out of this or that venomous creature, a man may play with it and put it in his bosom. Ah! assurance pulls out the sting which is in every cross, loss, etc., and this makes the assured soul to sit down singing, when others who are under far less crosses and losses, sit down sighing, mourning, and complaining, "Our burdens are greater than we are able to bear!"

If there were but more assurance of better things among Christians, there would be less complaints among them of this burden, and that *molehills* then would be no longer *mountains*. Christians, it is not new notions, new opinions, new nothings, as I may say, in your heads—but the gaining of a well-grounded assurance in your hearts, which will enable you to bear all kinds of burdens without a burden.

(8.) The eighth motive to provoke you to get assurance, is drawn from those **particular commands of God, whereby he engages Christians to get assurance**, as that in 2 Pet 1:10, "Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things you shall never fall." So 2 Cor 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not

realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?" So Heb 6:11, "And we desire that everyone of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (The saints in heaven have a happy necessity of obeying God always; but we have an unhappy necessity of disobeying continually.)

Ah! you dull, doubting, drowsy Christians, you should take all these commands of God, and press them with all the power and authority you can upon your hearts, to awaken them and provoke them to get assurance of your eternal well-being. 'The precepts of God,' says Lactantius, 'do so change the whole man, and make him so new, that you can hardly know him to be the same person—a thing which philosophy has much labored in—but could never achieve. Christians! the pressing of those very commands last cited upon your hearts, may produce that comfort and peace, and make such a blessed change in your inward condition, as may bespeak much admiration.

Take one command, and charge that upon the heart; if the heart is stout and will not yield, then take another command, and press it upon your heart; if that will not do, then take another, and lay that home upon the heart; and never leave this work until your souls are effectually stirred up to labor for assurance with all your might. Christians! you should tell your souls that the commands of God bind **directly** and **immediately**, that they bind **absolutely** and **universally**. You must obey God upon the bare sight of his will, and in one thing as well as another. Christians! if I am not much mistaken, you should make as much conscience of those commands of God which require you to get assurance of your future happiness, as you do of those commands which requires you to pray, to hear, etc.

It is very sad to consider that many who complain much of the lack of assurance, should make so little care and conscience of those commands of God which require them to get assurance. Truly, Christians! while you make light of any of God's commands, God will make as light of your comforts. Did you make more conscience to act answerable to the forementioned commands, I am very apt to believe that the Sun of righteousness would certainly and speedily cause his love and glory to beam out upon you. Mind God's commands more than your own wants

and complaints, and light will break in upon you. By obeying Christ's commands, you will gain more than you can give; by kissing the Son, you will even command him, and make him and assurance yours.

(9.) The ninth motive to provoke you to get assurance is this, **You cannot gratify Satan more, nor injure yourselves more, than by living without assurance.** By living without assurance, you lay yourselves open to all Satan's snares and temptations; yes, you instigate and provoke Satan to tempt you to the worst of sins, to tempt you to the greatest neglects, to tempt you to the strangest shifts, and to reduce you to the saddest straits. Ah, Christians! in what, in what has Satan so gratified you—that you should thus gratify him? Has he not robbed you of your glory in innocency? Has he not kept your souls and your Savior long asunder? When with Joshua you have been standing before the Lord, Zech 3:1-2, has not he stood at your right hand as an adversary to resist you? Has he not often set the glory of the world before you, that he might bewitch you and ensnare you? Matt 4:8. Has he not often cast water upon those divine motions which have been kindled in you? **Have you not often found him a lion and a serpent, a tempter and a deceiver, a liar and a murderer?** 1 Thess 2:18. Yes! Oh, then, never gratify him any longer by living without assurance.

He who lives without assurance, lives without a comfortable fruition of God, and so gratifies Satan. He who lives without assurance, lives upon some creature enjoyment more than upon God, and so gratifies Satan. He who lives without assurance, lives not like the beloved of God, and so gratifies Satan. He who lives without assurance is very apt to gratify Satan, sometimes by complying with him, sometimes by following after him, and sometimes by acting his part for him, etc. Truly, Christians! there is no way effectually to prevent this sore evil—but by getting a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness. Assurance will make a man stand upon terms of defiance with Satan, it will make the soul constant in resisting, and happy in overcoming, the evil one. An assured soul will fight it out to the death with Satan; an assured soul will not fly like a coward—but will stand and triumph like a David.

And as you gratify Satan by living without assurance, so you wrong your

own souls by living without assurance.

(1.) In the point of comfort and joy, you wrong your own souls.

(2.) In the point of peace and content, you wrong your own souls.

(3.) In the point of boldness and confidence, you wrong your own souls.

A man who lives without assurance, lays his precious soul open to many blows and knocks, to many frowns and wounds, from God, from the world, from carnal friends, from hypocrites, and from Satan; therefore as you would not, Christians, gratify Satan, and wrong your own souls, and exercise over yourselves spiritual cruelty and tyranny, which is the very worst of all cruelty and tyranny—give God no rest until he has made known to you the sweetness of his love, and the secrets of his bosom, until he has gathered you up into himself, until he has set you as "a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm," Song 8:6.

(10.) The tenth motive, to provoke you to get a well-grounded assurance is this, **Consider the sweet profit and glorious advantage which will redound to you by gaining assurance**; and if the gain which will certainly redound to you by assurance will not provoke you to get assurance, I know not what will.

[1.] The first advantage. **It will bring down heaven into your bosoms; it will give you a possession of heaven, on this side heaven**, Heb 11:1. An assured soul lives in paradise, and walks in paradise, and works in paradise, and rests in paradise; he has heaven within him, and heaven about him, and heaven over him; all his language is Heaven, heaven! Glory, glory!

[2.] The second advantage. **Assurance will exceedingly sweeten all the changes of this life**. This life is full of changes. Assurance will sweeten both sickness and health, both weakness and strength, both wants and abundance, both disgrace and honor, 2 Cor 4:16-18, etc. While a man lives in the sense of God's unchangeable love, no outward changes can make any considerable change in his spirit. Let times change, let men change, let powers change, let nations change, yet a man under the power

of assurance will not change his countenance, nor change his master, nor change his work, nor change his hopes. Though others under changes turn, like the chameleon, into all colors to save their *little all*, yet the assured soul under all changes is *semper idem*—always the same.

Souls which lack assurance are like him in Aesop, who blew hot and cold with the same breath. The wind is not more subject to change and shift from one quarter to another, from one corner to another, than they are subject to change and shift in changing times.

Antistines, a philosopher, to make his life happy, desired only that he might have the spirit of Socrates, who was always in a quiet temper of spirit, whatever wrongs, injuries, crosses, losses, etc., befell him. Let the trials be what they would, yet he continued one and the same. Ah, Christians! the lack of assurance has made many changelings in these days; but if ever you would be like Socrates, if ever you would be like the philosopher's good man, that is, *Tetragonos*—four square, that cast him where you will, like a dice, he falls always sure and square, then get assurance of everlasting happiness.

Assurance will make your souls like the laws of the Medes and Persians, which alters not. Assurance will sweeten the darkest day, and the longest night; under variety of changes, it will make a man sit down with Habakkuk, and rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation, Hab 3:17-19.

[3.] The third advantage. **Assurance will keep the heart from an inordinate running out after the world, and the glory thereof.** **Moses** having an assurance of the recompense of reward, and of God's love and favor, could not be drawn by all the honors, pleasures, and treasures of Egypt. He slights all, and tramples upon all the glory of the world, as men trample upon things of no worth, Heb 11:24-27. So after **Paul** had been in the third heaven, and had assurance that nothing should separate him from the love of God in Christ, he looks upon the world as a crucified thing: "The world is crucified to me," says he, 2 Cor 12:1-3, and Rom 8:38; "and I am crucified unto the world," Gal 6:14. The world is dead to me, and I am dead to it: the world and I am well agreed; the world cares not a pin for me, and I care not a pin for the world.

The loadstone cannot draw the iron when the diamond is in presence; no more cannot the vanities of this world draw the soul after them, when assurance, that choice pearl of price, is in presence.

I have read of Lazarus, than after he was raised from the grave, he was never seen to smile. The assurance that he had of more glorious things, did deaden his heart to the things of this world; he saw nothing in them worthy of a smile. Ah! were there more assurance among Christians, there would not be such tugging for the world, and such greedy hunting and pursuing after it, as is in these days, to the dishonor of God, the reproach of Christ, and the shame of the gospel.

Get but more assurance, and less money would satisfy you; get but more assurance, and less places of honor and profit would satisfy you; get but assurance, and then you will neither transgress for a morsel of bread, nor yet violently pursue after the golden wedge, etc.

So when God gave Galeacius, that Italian marquis, an assurance of everlasting happiness, he withstood many golden temptations, and cried out, 'Cursed be he who prefers all the glory of the world to one day's communion with Christ!' Justice would not be sold and bought, as it is in these days, were there more assurance in the world.

[4.] The fourth advantage. **Assurance will exceedingly heighten you in your communion with God, and it will exceedingly sweeten your communion with God.** Assurance of a man's property in God raises him high in his fellowship with God, 1 John 3:2. There are none who have such choice and sweet communion with God as those who have the clearest assurance of their interest in God, as may be seen throughout the whole book of Solomon's Song. "My beloved is mine, and I am his," says the spouse, Song 2:16. I am assured of my property in him, says she, and therefore he shall lie all night between my breasts; and upon this account it is that she holds king Jesus in the galleries, that she is sick with love, that she is raised and ravished with his kisses and embraces: "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand does embrace me," Song 1:13; Song 7:5; Song 2:6. None had more assurance of her interest in Christ than she, and none higher and closer in communion with Christ than she.

The wife's assurance of her interest in her husband, sweetens and heightens her communion with her husband. The child's assurance of his interest in his father, sweetens his commerce and fellowship with his father. So the believer's assurance of his interest in God, will exceedingly heighten and sweeten his communion and fellowship with God. Assurance of a man's interest in God sweetens every thought of God, and every sight of God, and every taste of God, and every good word of God. God is as sweet to the assured soul when he has a sword in his hand—as when he has a scepter; when he has the rod of indignation—as when he has the cup of consolation; when his garments are rolled and dyed in blood—as when he appears in his wedding robes; when he acts the part of a judge—as when he acts the part of a father, etc. He has all—who has the owner of all.

[5.] The fifth advantage. **Assurance will be a choice preservative to keep you from backsliding from God and his ways.** Ah! assurance will glue the soul to God and his ways, as Ruth was glued to her mother Naomi. It will make a man "stand fast in the faith, and be courageous like a good soldier of Christ," Gal 5:1; 2 Tim 2:3. 2 Pet 1:10-11, "Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall." *Stumble* you may, and he who does but stumble gets ground by his stumbling. Assurance will keep a man from *falling* foully and from falling utterly. Verily, the reason why there is so many apostates in these days is, because there are so few who have a well-grounded assurance in these days. Luther, writing to his fearful friend Melancthon, says, 'if we fall, Christ falls.'

Pliny speaks of some fish which swim backward. Ah! many professors in these days swim backward; they swim from God, and Christ, and conscience; yes, they swim from the very principles of morality and common honesty. Believe it, friends! **it is not high notions in the brain—but sound assurance in the heart, which will keep a man close to Christ when others backslide from Christ.** An assured Christian will not exchange his gold for copper; he knows that one old piece of gold is worth a thousand pennies; one old truth of Christ is worth a thousand new errors, though clothed with glistening robes; and therefore he will prize the truth, and own the truth, and keep close to the

truth, when others who lack a sound assurance make merchandise of Christ, precious truths, and of their own and others' immortal souls. Get assurance, and you will stand when seeming cedars fall; lack assurance, and you can not but fall, to the breaking of your bones, if not to the utter loss of your precious soul, 2 Pet 2:3.

[6.] The sixth advantage. **Assurance will very much embolden the soul with God.** It will make a man divinely familiar with God; it will make a man knock boldly at the door of free grace; it will make a man come boldly before the mercy-seat; it will make a man enter boldly within the holy of holies. Heb 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Such full assurance as fills all the sails of the soul. Assurance makes the soul converse with God as a favorite with his prince, as a bride with her bridegroom, as a Joseph with a Jacob.

Luther, under the power of assurance, lets fall this transcendent rapture of a daring faith, 'let my will be done; my will, Lord, because it is your will. It is the lack of assurance which makes the countenance sad, the hands hang down, the knees feeble, and the heart full of fears and tremblings, Heb 12:12. Oh therefore get assurance, and that will scatter your fears, and raise your hopes, and cheer your spirits, and give wings to faith, and make you humbly bold with God. You will not then stand at the door of mercy with a 'may I knock?' with a 'may I go in?' with a 'may I find audience and acceptance?' But you will, with Esther, boldly adventure yourselves upon the mercy and goodness of God.

"Now truly, I think," says one, speaking of Christ, "he cannot despise me, who is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; for if he neglects me as a brother, yet he will love me as a husband: that is my comfort." Assurance will remove all strangeness from between Christ and the soul; of two, it will make Christ and the soul one.

[7.] The seventh advantage. **Assurance will sweeten the thoughts of death—and all the aches, pains, weaknesses, sicknesses, and diseases**—which are the forerunners of death; yes, it will make a man look and long for death. Nazianzen said of the *king of terrors*, "Devour

me, devour me! Death cures all diseases, the aching head, and the unbelieving heart!"

It will make a man sick of his absence from Christ. It makes a man smile upon the king of terrors; it makes a man laugh at the shaking of the spear, at the noise of the battle, at the garments of the warriors rolled in blood. It made the martyrs to desire the lions, to dare and tire their persecutors, to kiss the stake, to sing and clap their hands in the flames, to tread upon hot burning coals, as upon beds of roses.

The assured soul knows that death shall be the funeral of all his sins and sorrows, of all afflictions and temptations, of all desertions and oppositions. He knows that death shall be the resurrection of his joys; he knows that death is both an outlet and an inlet; an outlet to sin, and an inlet to the soul's clear, full, and constant enjoyment of God; and this makes the assured soul to sing it sweetly out, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" "Make haste, my beloved." "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" [1 Cor 15:55-57; Phil 1:23; Song 8:14; Rev 22:20] Now death is more desirable than life. Now says the soul, 'let him fear death, who is averse to go to Christ.' So I may be with Christ, though I go in a cloud, I care not, says the assured soul. Just so, I may be with Christ, I care not though I go in a fiery chariot, says the assured soul.

The Persians had a certain day in the year, in which they used to kill all serpents and venomous creatures. The assured Christian knows, that the day of death will be such a day to him, and that makes death lovely and desirable. He knows that sin was the midwife which brought death into the world, and that death shall be the grave to bury sin; and therefore death is not a terror—but a delight unto him. He fears it not as an enemy—but welcomes it as a friend; as crookback Richard the Third in his distress cried, "A kingdom for a horse, a kingdom for a horse!"

So souls who lack assurance, when they come to die, will cry out, 'A kingdom for assurance, a kingdom for assurance!' and as Severus said, "If I had a thousand worlds, I would now give them all for Christ." So a soul who lacks assurance, when he comes to enter upon a state of eternity, will cry out, 'Oh, had I now a thousand worlds, I would give them all for

assurance!' Whereas the assured soul would not for a thousand worlds but die. When his glass is out, and his sun is set, he cries not out, as Queen Elizabeth did, "A world, a world for an inch of time!" but rather, "Why is it, why is it, Lord, that your chariots are so long a-coming?"

[8.] The eighth advantage. **Assurance will very much sweeten that little oil which is in the cruse, and that handful of meal which is in the barrel,**" 1 Kings 17:12, etc. Assurance will be sauce to all meats, it will make all your mercies to taste like mercies. It will make Daniel's vegetables to be as sweet as princes' delicates, Dan 1:8,12. It will make Lazarus's rags as pleasurable as Dives's robes, Luke 16:20. It will make Jacob's bed upon the stones, to be as soft as those beds of down and ivory, which sinful great ones stretch themselves upon, Gen 28:18; Amos 6:4.

Look! as the lack of assurance embitters all a sinner's mercies, that he cannot taste the sweetness and goodness of them. Just so, the enjoyment of assurance casts a general beauty and glory upon the believer's lowest mercy. And hence it is, that assured souls live so sweetly, and walk so cheerfully, when their *little all* is upon their backs and in their hands; whereas the great men of the world, who have the world at will—but lack this assurance, which is more worth than the world—live as slaves and servants to these mercies, Job 20:22. In the midst of all their abundance, they are in straits and perplexities, full of fears and cares; nothing pleases them, nor is sweet unto them, because they lack that assurance which sweetens to a believer the ground they stand on, the air he breathes, the seat he sits on, the bread he eats, the clothes he wears, etc.

Ah! were there more assurance among Christians, they would not count great mercies small mercies, and small mercies no mercies; no, no; then every mercy on this side hell would be a great mercy, then every mercy would be a sugared mercy, a perfumed mercy. Look! as the tree which Moses cast into the waters of Marah made those bitter waters sweet, Exod 15:23-25, so assurance is that tree of life which makes every bitter sweet; and every sweet more sweet.

A believer knows,

(1.) that his little mercies are from great love;

(2.) that they are pledges of greater mercies;

(3.) that his blessings are blessed unto him;

(4.) that they shall not at last be witnesses against him.

(9.) The ninth advantage. **Assurance will make a man very angelical.** It will make him full of motion, full of action; it will make him imitate the angels, those princes of glory, that are always busy and active to advance the glory of Christ. They are still a-singing the song of the Lamb; they are still pitching their tents about those who fear the Lord, Psalm 34:7; they are ministering spirits sent forth for the good of those who are heirs of salvation, Heb 1:14. Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord, as you may see in Paul. The assured Christian is more motion than notion, more work than word, more life than lip, more hand than tongue. When he has done one work, he is a-calling out for another; 'What is the next, Lord,' says the assured soul, 'what is the next?' His head and his heart are set upon his work, and what he does, he does it with all his might, because there is no working in the grave. Assurance makes a saint all fire—it makes him like the burning seraphim.

An assured Christian will put his hand to any work; he will put his shoulder to any burden; he will put his neck in any yoke for Christ; he never thinks that he has done enough, he always thinks that he has done too little; and when he has done all he can, he sits down sighing it out, "I am but an unprofitable servant." Bellarmine is of opinion that one glimpse of hell would be enough to make a man not only turn Christian—but a monk, to live after the strictest rules, to be abounding in well-doing. Surely assurance of heaven will make a man do more.

In a word, **assurance will have a powerful influence upon your heart.** In all the duties and services of religion, nothing will make a man love like this, and live like this; nothing will make a man humble and thankful, contented and cheerful, like assurance. Nothing will make a man more serious in prayer, nor sincere in praises, than assurance. Nothing will make a man more cheerful and joyful than assurance.

Nothing will make a man fit to live and more willing to die, than assurance.

Ah, Christians! if ever you would act as angels in this world, get an assurance of another world; then you shall be dumb no more, nor dull no more—but be active and lively, like those whose hopes and whose hearts are in heaven.

(10.) The tenth advantage. **Assurance will sweeten Christ, and the precious things of Christ, to your soul.** Ah! how sweet is the person of Christ, the nature of Christ, the aims of Christ, the offices of Christ, the benefits of Christ, the blood of Christ, the word of Christ, the threatenings of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the ordinances of Christ, the smiles of Christ, the kisses of Christ—to an assured soul. Now your meditations on Christ will be no more a terror, nor a horror to you; nay, now your heart will be always best, when you are most in pondering upon the sweetness and goodness, the kindness and loveliness, of the Lord Jesus. Now all the institutions and administrations of Christ will be precious to you. Upon everything where Christ has set his name, there you will set your heart. Now you will call things as Christ calls them, and count things as Christ counts them; that shall not be little in your eye, which is great in the eye of Christ; nor that shall not be great in your eye that is—but little in the eye of Christ.

Assurance will also exceedingly sweeten your behavior to all who bear the image of Christ. Nothing will make men bear with those weak saints, whose **light** is not so clear as yours, whose **parts** are not so strong as yours, whose **enjoyments** are not so high as yours, whose **judgments** are not so well informed as yours, whose **consciences** are not so well satisfied as yours, and whose **lives** are not so amiable as yours.

Assurance makes men of a God-like disposition—easy to pardon, ready to forgive, abundant in goodness, admirable in patience. It makes men to study the good of others, and rejoice in all opportunities wherein they may strengthen the feeble, and comfort the dejected, and enrich the impoverished, and recover the fallen, and enlarge the straitened, and build up the weak. Truly, the reason why men are so bitter and sour, and censorious, is because God has not given into their bosoms this sweet

flower of delight, assurance.

Ah! were their souls fully assured that God had loved them freely, and received them graciously, and justified them perfectly, and pardoned them absolutely, and would glorify them everlastingly—they could not but love where God loves, and own where God owns, and embrace where God embraces, and be one with everyone who is one with Jesus. Were there more assurance among Christians, there would be more of David's and Jonathan's spirit among Christians, than there is this day.

Were there more assurance among Christians, there would be more life and more love, more sweetness and more tenderness. Were there more assurance, there would be less noise, less contention, less division, less distraction, less biting, and less devouring among the saints. Love is the attractive loadstone of love.

Assurance will make the lion and the calf, the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the bear and the cow, lie down together, and feed together, Isa 11:6-8. Men who lack assurance love their brethren as flies love the pot. So long as there is any meat in the pot, the flies love it. Just so, those men will love as long as there is an external motive to draw love—but when that ceases, their love ceases.

Dionysius loved his bottles when they were full—but hurled them away when they were empty. So many who lack assurance love the saints while their bags are full, and their houses full of the good things of this life; but when they are empty, then they throw them away, then they cast them off, as Job's friends did him.

Ah! but assurance will make a man love as God loves, and love as long as God loves. The assured Christian will not cease to love so long as the least buds and blossoms of grace appear. Lazarus in his rags is as lovely to an assured Christian, as Solomon in his robes. Job is as delightful to him upon the ash-heap, as David is upon his throne. It is not the outward pomp and bravery—but the inward beauty and glory of saints, which wins the assured Christian.

(11.) The eleventh motive to provoke you to get a well-grounded

assurance of your everlasting happiness is this, **consider that as there is a great deal of counterfeit knowledge, counterfeit faith, counterfeit love, counterfeit repentance, etc. in the world, so there is a great deal of counterfeit assurance in the world.** Many there are who talk high, and look big, and bear it out bravely—that they are thus and thus, and that they have such and such glorious assurance, whereas, when their assurance comes to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, it is found too light; and when it comes to withstand temptations, it is found too weak; and when it should put the soul upon divine action, it is found to be but a lazy presumption. Shall the counterfeit gold which is in the world make men active and diligent to get that which is genuine, and which will abide the touchstone and the fire? and shall not that counterfeit assurance that is in the world provoke your hearts to be so much the more careful and active to get such a well-grounded assurance that God accounts as genuine, and which will abide his touchstone in the day of discovery, and which will keep a man from shame and blushing when the thrones shall be set and the books shall be opened?

I have been the longer upon these motives to provoke your souls to get a well-grounded assurance, because it is of an eternal concernment to you, and a work to which men's hearts are too backward.

Though assurance carries a reward in its own bosom—yet few look after it; though the pains of getting it are nothing, compared to the profit which accompanies it—yet few will sweat to gain it.

If the inducements laid down will not awaken and provoke you to be restless until you have got the "white stone" and "new name," until you have got the assurance of your pardon in your bosoms, I know not what will.

**Showing the several ways and means of gaining a well-grounded assurance.**

(1.) The first means. If ever you will attain to assurance, then **be much in the exercise and actings of grace.** As the believing Ephesians, Eph 1:13, were in the very exercise and actings of grace, the Spirit of the Lord "sealed them up to the day of redemption." Assurance flows in upon the actings of grace. Assurance is bred and fed, it is raised and maintained in the soul, by the actings of grace. Grace is most discernible when it is most in action, and grace is made more and more perfect by acting. Neglect of your graces is the ground of their decrease. Wells are the sweeter for drawing; you get nothing by dead and useless theories; talents hidden in a napkin gather rust; the noblest faculties wither when not improved; grace in the theory is no more discernible than fire under the ashes, than gold in the ore, than a dead man in the grave; but grace, in its lively actings and operations, is as a prince upon his throne, sparkling and shining. A Christian who would have assurance, must never leave blowing his little spark until he has blown it into a flame.

Ah, Christians! were your grace more active, it would be more visible; and were your grace more visible, your assurance would be more clear and full. As Paul once spoke to Timothy, "Stir up the gift of God that is in you," (the words are an allusion to the fire in the temple, which was always to be kept burning;) so say I to you, If ever you would have assurance, stir up the grace of God that is in you, blow up that heavenly fire, raise up those noble spirits, never cease believing nor repenting, until it be clearly given into your bosoms, that you are sure that you do believe, and that you do repent, as you are sure that you live, as you are sure that God rules in Jacob, and dwells in Zion.

Remember, Christians, all the honor which God has from you in this life, is from the actings and exercise of your grace, and not from mere theories of grace. Remember, Christians, that all your consolations flow, not from the theories—but from the acts of grace. Remember, Christians, that the lack of the exercise of grace is the reason why you do not discern your grace, and why you have no more assurance of your future happiness. He who will be rich, must still be turning the penny; and he who will attain unto the riches of assurance, must still be acting his graces, Col 2:2. There are none but lively, active Christians, who know and feel those joys, comforts, and contentments which attend the exercise of grace. If you

would not be always a babe in grace, and a stranger to assurance, then see that your lamp is always burning, see that your golden wheels of grace is always going.

(2.) The second means. If you would, Christians, attain unto assurance, then **you must mind your work more than your wages; you must be better at obeying than disputing; at doing, at walking, than at talking and wrangling.** Assurance is the heavenly wages which Christ gives, not to loiterers—but to holy laborers. Though no man merits assurance by his obedience, yet God usually crowns obedience with assurance. "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." John 14:21-23

In these words you see, that doing Christians, working Christians, are the only Christians who shall have most of the love of the Father and the Son, and who shall have the choicest manifestations of grace and favor, and who shall have most of their presence and company. So in Psalm 50:23, "Unto him that orders his conduct aright, will I declare the salvation of God." That is, I will declare myself to be his Savior, I will show him salvation, and I will show him his interest in salvation; I will save him, and I will make him see that I have saved him. He shall see the worth of salvation, and test the sweetness of salvation. So Gal 6:16, "And as many as walk according to this rule" (that is, the rule of the new creature), "peace be on them, and mercy upon the Israel of God." The Greek word that is here rendered "walk," signifies not simply to walk—but to walk by rule, in order, and measure, without turning aside—but making straight steps to our feet.

Now those choice souls who thus walk according to the law of the new creature, shall have peace and mercy *in* them, and peace and mercy *with* them, and peace and mercy *on* them. "As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be on them." **Assurance is a jewel of too high a price to be cast into any of their bosoms, who walk contrary**

**to the laws of the new creature.** Such may talk of assurance, and make a stir and a noise about assurance—but it is the close walking Christian, who shall be crowned with assurance. Assurance is a choice part of a believer's happiness, and therefore God will never give it out of a way of holiness. "The Lord has set apart for the godly man himself," Psalm 4:3. None are favorites in God's court, nor are admitted to be of his counsel—but those who are all glorious within, and whose raiment is of embroidered gold. That is, such whose principles are full of spiritual glory, and whose practices are amiable and answerable in purity and sanctity. These are the people who shall have the honor to have God's ear, and the happiness to know his heart. "Would you never be sad? Then live well," says Bernard.

(3.) The third means. To **gain assurance, is to be kind to the Spirit, hear his voice, follow his counsel, live up to his laws.** The Spirit is the great revealer of the Father's secrets, he lies in the bosom of the Father, he knows every name that is written in the book of life; he is best acquainted with the inward workings of the heart of God towards poor sinners; he is the great comforter, and the only sealer up of souls to the day of redemption. [Rom 8:26; John 14:26; Eph 1:13] If you set him a-mourning by your willful sinnings, who alone can gladden you—by whom will you be gladdened? Truly, Christians, when you turn your back upon the Spirit, he will not turn his face upon your souls. Your vexing of the Spirit will be but the disquieting of yourselves, Isa 63:10. *Look! as all lights cannot make up the lack of the light of the sun—so all creatures cannot make up the lack of the testimony of the Spirit.*

So say I, behold the Spirit of the Lord, who is your guide and guard, he also is only able to make a soul-satisfying view of his love and favor to you; therefore, as ever you would have assurance, beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not; for if you do by willful transgressions, he will neither comfort you nor counsel you; he will neither be a sealing nor a witnessing Spirit unto you; nay, he will raise storms and tempests in your souls; he will present to you the Father frowning, and your Savior bleeding, and himself as grieving; and these sights will certainly rack and torture your doubting souls.

The Spirit of the Lord is a delicate visitant, a holy visitor, a blessed guest,

who makes every soul happy where he lodges. "Therefore grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption," Eph 4:30. You will not grieve your guests, your friends—but courteously and friendly entertain them; why then do you make so little conscience of grieving that Holy Spirit who alone can stamp the image of the Father upon you, and seal you up to life and glory?

Ah, Christians! the way to assurance is not to sit down sighing and complaining of the lack of assurance—but it lies in your **eyeing** of the Holy Spirit, in your **complying** with the Spirit, in your **cleaving** to the Spirit, in your **following** of the Spirit, in your **welcoming** of the Spirit, and in your **honoring** and **obeying** of the Spirit. As he said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like it!" 1 Sam 21:9. Just so, say I, "There is no means like this, to gain a well-grounded assurance of a man's happiness and blessedness". And as he said, "If there be any way to heaven on horseback, it is by prayer;" so say I, if there be any way to assurance, it is by being fearful to offend, and careful to please the Spirit of the Lord, whose office it is to witness to poor souls the remission of their sins, and the salvation of their souls.

(4.) The fourth means. If you would obtain assurance, then **be sincere, be diligent and constant in assuring ordinances**. He who will meet the king, must wait on him in his walks, Isa 64:5. Christ's ordinances are Christ's walks; and he who would see the beauty of Christ, and taste of the sweetness of Christ, and be ravished with the love of Christ, must wait at wisdom's door—they must attend Christ in his own appointments and institutions, Rev 2:1; Prov 8:34-35. That comfort and assurance which flows not in through the *golden pipes of the sanctuary*, will not better the soul, nor long abide with the soul; it will be as the morning dew, and as the flowers of the field which soon fade away, Hos 6:4; 1 Pet 1:24.

I have in the former discourse showed at large how the Lord is graciously pleased to cause his love and glory to beam forth upon souls in ordinances; and therefore I shall say no more unto this particular at this time.

(5.) The fifth means to obtain assurance is, **wisely and seriously to**

**observe what gift of God there is in you, which brings you within the compass of the promises of eternal mercy.** Now, let the gift be this or that, if it be a gift which brings you within the compass of the promise of eternal mercy, that gift is an infallible evidence of your salvation.

For the better and further opening of this truth, premise with me these two things:

[1.] First, **No man can have any sure evidence to himself of his happiness and blessedness, from the promises of Scripture.**

[Isa 42:6; Isa 49:8; Joel 2:28; Ezek 32:26-27; Jer 32:40; Heb 8:10-12; Isa 32:15] The promises do not describe to whom salvation and all eternal blessings belong. The promise of giving Christ, of giving the Spirit, of giving a new heart, and of pardoning and blotting out sin—are all general promises. Now God is free to make good these to whom he pleases; therefore he often steps over the **rich** and chooses the poor; he often steps over the **learned**, and chooses the ignorant; he often steps over the **strong**, and chooses the weak; he often steps over the **noble**, and chooses the vile; he often steps over the **sweet** nature, and chooses the wicked nature, etc., that no flesh may glory, and that all may shout out "Grace, grace!" 1 Cor 1:25-29.

[2.] Secondly, Though no man can have any sure evidence of his happiness and blessedness from the promises, because **the promises do not describe the persons to whom salvation and all eternal blessings belong**; yet these promises are of most choice and singular use.

(1.) In that they discover to us that our salvation is only from free grace, and not from anything good in us or done by us.

(2.) They are a most sure and glorious foundation for the very worst of sinners to stay their filthy, guilty, wearied, burdened, perplexed souls upon. Seeing that God looks not for any penny or pennyworth, for any goodness or merit in the creature to draw his love—but he will justify, pardon, and save for his name's sake, Isa 55:1-2; seeing all the motives which move God to show mercy are in his own bosom; seeing they are all

within doors, there is no reason why the vilest of sinners should sit down and say, 'There is no hope, there is no help,' Deut 7:7-8; Psalm 68:18.

[3.] Thirdly, **Promises may, and doubtless often are, choice cordials to many precious souls, who perhaps have lost the sense and feeling of divine favor.** Promises are waters of life to many precious sons of Zion. They are a heavenly fire at which they can sit down and warm themselves when they cannot blow their own spark into a flame, and when all candlelight, torchlight, and starlight fails them. When all other comforts can yield a perplexed, distressed soul no comfort, yet then the promises will prove full breasts of consolation to the distressed soul.

These things being promised, see now what gift of God there is in you who brings you within the compass of the promise of everlasting happiness and blessedness; and to help you a little in this, I shall put you in mind of these following particulars.

1. The first gift. **FAITH** is a gift of God which brings the soul within the promise of everlasting blessedness, as the Scripture does everywhere evidence: "He who believes shall be saved;" "he who believes shall not come into condemnation;" "he shall not perish;" "he shall have eternal life," etc. [Mark 16:16; John 3:15-16, etc.; John 1:12] Now believing is nothing else but the accepting of Christ for your Lord and Savior, as he is offered to you in the gospel; and this accepting is principally, though not only, the act of your will. Just so, that if you are sincerely and cordially willing to have Christ upon his own terms, upon gospel terms, that is, to save you and rule you, to redeem you and to reign over you—then you are a believer. Your sincere willingness to believe is your faith; and this gift brings you within the compass of the promise of eternal happiness and blessedness.

Christian reader, in the following discourse you will find the nature, the properties, and the excellencies of a sound saving faith clearly and largely laid open before you; and therefore I shall say no more to it in this place—but refer you to what follows.

2. The second gift. **WAITING** patiently on God is a gift which brings you

within the promise of everlasting happiness and blessedness. And he who has but a waiting frame of heart, has that which God will eternally own and crown: Isa 30:18, "Blessed are all those who wait for him." Truly, it is no iniquity to pronounce them blessed, whom God pronounces blessed. It is no piety—but cruelty and inhumanity, for any not to be as merciful to themselves, as God is merciful to them; not to have as sweet and precious thoughts of their present condition, as God has. If God says the waiting soul is blessed, who dares judge, who dares say it is not blessed? "Let God be true, and every man a liar," Rom 3:4; Isa 64:4, "For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what he has prepared for the one who waits for Him." Prov 8:34, "Blessed is the man that hears me, watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the posts of my doors." Isa 49:23, "They shall not be ashamed, who wait for me;" that is, I will never fail the waiting soul; I will never put him to blushing by frustrating his patient waiting on me. The waiting soul shall carry away the crown at last.

Truly, God's glorious love and power is as much seen in keeping up a poor soul in a patient waiting on God—as it was in raising Christ from the grave, and as it is in bringing souls to glory. Nothing can make the waiting soul miserable. Hold out faith and patience but a little, and he who shall come will come, and bring his reward with him," Rev 22:11-12.

3. The third gift. **HUNGERING** and **THIRSTING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS** is a gift which brings the soul within the compass of the promise of everlasting happiness and blessedness: Matt 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"; or as it runs in the Greek, "Blessed are those who are hungering and thirsting," intimating that wherever this is the present disposition of men's souls, they are blessed, and may expect spiritual repletions.

Considerable to this purpose is that of Isa 44:2-5: "But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour *water* on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees

by flowing streams. One will say, 'I belong to the Lord'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's,' and will take the name Israel." By *water* is meant the Spirit, say some; others understand it of the spiritual waters of grace, which God will pour out upon those who thirst and long after an abundance of grace, etc.

Of the like consideration is that of Isa 35:6-7, "The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will shout and sing! Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the desert. The parched ground will become a pool, and springs of water will satisfy the thirsty land. Marsh grass and reeds and rushes will flourish where desert jackals once lived."

To the like purpose is that in Psalm 107:9, "For he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."

But that none may mistake nor miscarry in this business, that is of an eternal concernment to them, I shall desire them to premise with me these following things, for a better and fuller clearing of this particular truth that is under our present consideration.

First, Premise this with me: **All real hungerings and thirstings after righteousness are earnest and vehement thirstings and longings.** They are like Rachel's longing for children, and like Samson's longing for water: Psalm 42:1-2, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" Naturalists observe, that of all the animals, the deer is most thirsty by nature—but most of all thirsty when she is hunted and pursued by dogs. Says David: As the hunted deer, as the wounded deer, yes, as the she-deer, in whom the passions of thirst are strongest, pants after the water-brooks, so does my soul pant after you, O God. A gracious soul pants and faints, it breathes and thirsts, for the longing it has at all times after the righteousness of Christ imputed and infused, Psalm 119:20.

The Greeks derive their word for *desire* from a root that signifies to *burn*. Ah, Christians! real desires are burning desires; they set the soul all in a

holy flame after God and Christ. If they are not vehement, if they do not put an edge upon your affections, if they do not make you like a burning seraphim, Christ will take no pleasure in them; they shall return into your own bosom without working any wonders in heaven, as those desires do, which flow from the soul's being touched with a coal from the altar.

Secondly, Premise this with me: **All real hungerings in the soul after righteousness, arise from spiritual and heavenly considerations;** [Psalm 63:1-4; Psalm 27:4; Phil 3:7-10] they spring in the soul from some convictions, some apprehensions, some persuasions that the soul has—of a real worth, of a real beauty, glory, and excellency that is in Christ, and in his righteousness, imputed and imparted. Such desires after righteousness which flow from external considerations, are of no worth, weight, or continuance, but those desires after righteousness which flow from spiritual considerations, are full of spirit, life, and glory; they are such that God will not only observe but accept, not only record but reward, Psalm 145:19.

Thirdly, **Real hungerings and thirstings after Christ and his righteousness, etc., will put the soul upon lively endeavors.** If they are trueborn desires, they will not make the soul idle, but active; not negligent, but diligent, in the use of all holy means, whereby the soul may enjoy Christ and his righteousness: Isa 26:9, "With my soul have I desired you in the night, yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early." Real desires will make us earnest and early in seeking to obtain the thing desired, as the Hebrew word imports—which signifies to seek in the morning, when it is but dim and dusky, and it notes both an earnest and an early seeking.

A **thirsty** man will not only long for drink—but labor for it; the **condemned** man will not only desire his pardon—but he will write, and entreat, and weep, and set this friend and that, to solicit for him; the **covetous** man does not only wish for wealth—but will rise early and go to bed late, he will turn every stone, and make attempts upon all hopeful opportunities, whereby he may fill his bags and fill his barns. Even so, all holy desires will put souls upon the use of the means, whereby the mercy desired may be gained. And thus to run, is to attain; thus to will, is to work; thus to desire, is to do the will of our Father, who accepts of pence

for pounds, of mites for millions.

The Persian monarch was not so famous for accepting a little water from the hand of a loving subject, as our God is for accepting a handful of meal for a sacrifice, and a pinch of goat's hair for an oblation; for accepting of that little which we have, and for accounting our little much, Lev 2:2; Exod 35:6; 2 Cor 8:12.

Noah's sacrifice could not be great, and yet it was greatly accepted and highly accounted of by God. *Such is God's condescending love to weak worms, that he looks more at their will than at their work; he minds more what they would do, than what they do do; he always prefers the willing mind before the worthiest work, and where desires and endeavors are sincere, there God judges such to be as good as they desire and endeavor to be.*

Fourthly, **Spiritual hungerings and thirstings are only satisfied with spiritual things.** John 14:8, "Show us the Father, and it suffices us." All things in the world cannot suffice us; but a sight of the Father—that will satisfy us: Psalm 63:5-6, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips; when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night-watches." Psalm 65:4, "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple." It is only God, and the precious things of his house, which can satisfy a thirsty soul.

It was a sweet saying of one, "As what I have, if offered to you, pleases you not, O Lord, without myself. Just so, the good things we have from you, though they may refresh us, yet they cannot satisfy us, without yourself." **The rattle without the breast will not satisfy the child, the house without the husband will not satisfy the wife, the cabinet without the jewel will not satisfy the virgin, nor the world without Christ will not satisfy the soul.**

Luther, in a time of great need, receiving unexpectedly a good sum of money from the elector of Germany, at which being somewhat amazed, he turned himself to God and protested, that God should not put him off with such poor low things. The hungry soul will not be put off with any

bread but with the bread of life; the thirsty soul will not be put off with any water but with the wellsprings of life. As the king of Sodom said once, "You take the goods, give me the people," Gen 14:21. Just so, says the hungry soul, "You take goods—take your honors, and riches, and the favor of creatures, take you the grain, the oil, and the wine; give me Christ, give me the light of his countenance, give me the joy of his Spirit, etc." Oh the answering of spiritual breathings is very sweet to the soul: Prov 13:19, "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." Returns from heaven make a paradise in the soul.

I have read of Darius, that when he fled from his enemy, and being in great thirst, he met with a dirty puddle of water, with carrion lying in it, and he sucked in and drank very heartily of it, and professed, "That it was the sweetest draught that ever he drunk in his life." Ah, how sweet then are those waters of life that are at God's right hand! How sweet are the droppings of God's honeycomb upon the hungry soul! Water out of the rock, and manna in the wilderness, was not so sweet to the hungry, thirsty Israelites—as spiritual answers and spiritual returns are to those who hunger and thirst after spiritual things.

(6.) The sixth means to obtain a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness is, **to be much, yes, to excel in those choice particular things which may clearly and fully difference and distinguish you, not only from the profane**—but also from the highest and most glistening hypocrites in all the world. Many are much *in* and *for* church ordinances and activities, whose hearts are very carnal, and whose lives are very vain. "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to desecrate My sanctuary--the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection." Ezekiel 24:21. "My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice." Ezekiel 33:31-32.

You have expressions of carnal hearts prizing church privileges. Just so, "The multitude of your sacrifices--what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I

have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations--I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong!" Isaiah 1:11-16. Zech 7:4-7; Isa 58:1-3, etc.

It is nothing to be much in those religious duties and performances wherein the worst of sinners may equalize, yes, go beyond the best of saints. Oh! but to excel in those things that the most refined hypocrites cannot reach to, this cannot but much help you on to assurance. He who has those jewels in his bosom that God gives only to his choicest favorites, needs not question whether he be a favorite, etc. If he does it, it is his sin, and will hereafter be his shame.

But you may say to me, **What are those choice particular things that may difference and distinguish Christ's *true Nathanaels* from all other people in the world?** Now, to this question I shall give these following answers:

[1.] The first distinction. **A true Christian, in his constant course, labors in all duties and services to be approved and accepted of God.** He is most studious and industrious to approve his heart to God, in all that he puts his hand to. So David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psalm 139:23-24. This signifies *to make a strict search and inquisition*. So Peter approves his heart to Christ three several times together: "Lord, you know that I love you; Lord, you know that I love you; Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you," John 21:15-17. You know the sincerity and reality of my love, and therefore to you I do appeal. To the same purpose the apostle speaks: 2 Cor 5:9, "Therefore we *labor*, that, whether present or absent,

we may be accepted of him." The Greek word which is here rendered *labor*, is a very emphatic word; it signifies to labor and endeavor with all earnestness and might, to endeavor with a high and holy ambition to be accepted of God, judging it the greatest honor in the world to be owned and accepted of the Lord. Ambitious men are not more diligent, earnest, studious, and laborious to get honor among men, than we are, says the apostle, to get acceptance with God.

Ah! but your most refined hypocrites labor only to approve themselves to men in their praying, fasting, talking, hearing, giving, etc. Let them have but man's eye to see them, and man's ear to hear them, and man's tongue to commend them, and man's hand to reward them, and they will sit down and bless themselves, saying "it is enough; aha! so would we have it." Matt 6 and Matt 23. It is Chrysostom's observation, that "she who paints tears and blubberings, is worse than a promiscuous woman who paints to seduce."

They say of the **nightingale**, that when she is solitary in the woods, she is careless of her melody; but when she perceives that she has any auditors, or is near houses—then she composes herself more harmoniously and elegantly. Truly, this is the frame and temper of the best of hypocrites. Oh! but a sincere Christian labors in all places, and in all times, to approve himself to God; he labors as much to approve himself to God in a forest, where no eye sees him, as he does when the eyes of thousands are fixed upon him. The **sun** would shine bright, though all men were asleep at high noon, and no eyes open to see the glory of his beams. Just so, a sincere heart will shine, he will labor to do good; though all the world should shut their eyes, yet he will eye his work, and eye his God. He knows that God is *totes oculus*, **all eye**, and therefore he cares not though others have never an eye to observe him, to applaud him. Let God but secretly whisper him in the ear, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" and it is enough to his soul, enough to satisfy him, enough to cheer him, and enough to encourage him in the ways and the work of his God.

[2.] The second distinction. **He labors to get up to the very top of holiness; he labors to live up to his own principles.** He cannot be satisfied with so much grace as will bring him to glory—but he labors to

be high in grace, that he may be high in glory: Phil 3:11, "I desire if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, that is, to that perfection that the dead shall attain to in the morning of the resurrection." **He cannot be satisfied with so much grace as will keep him from dropping into hell;** but he must have so much grace as will make him shine gloriously in heaven.

Truly, that man is ripe for heaven, who counts it his greatest happiness to be high in holiness; that man shall never be low in heaven, a doorkeeper in heaven, who cannot be satisfied until he be got up to the very top of Jacob's ladder, until he has attained to the highest perfection in grace and holiness. Psalm 45:13, "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." Her **inward** principles are all glorious, and her **outward** practice echoes to her inward principles: "her clothing is of wrought gold."

It was the honor and glory of Joshua and Caleb, that they followed the Lord fully, Num 14:24, that is, they lived up to their own principles. So those virgins in Rev 14:4-5, who were without spot before the throne of God, they followed the Lamb wherever he went, that is, they lived up to their profession; there was a sweet harmony between their principles and practices. And thus the apostles lived: 2 Cor 1:12, "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." 1 Thess 2:10, "You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed." Thus we see these worthies living up to their own principles. Blessed Bradford and Bucer so lived up to their principles, that their friends could not sufficiently praise them, nor their foes find anything justly to fasten on them.

Believers know,

(1.) That their living up to their own principles, does best evidence Christ living in them, and their union with him, Gal 2:20.

(2.) They know that it is not their profession—but living up to their

principles, which will effectually stop the mouths, and convince the consciences of worldly men: 1 Pet 2:15, "For so is the will of God, that by well-doing," that is, by living up to your own principles, "you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." There is no greater way in the world to still and silence wicked men, to make them dumb and speechless, to muzzle and tie up their mouths, as the Greek word notes—as by living up to your own principles. The **lives** of men convince more strongly than their words; the **tongue** persuades—but the life **commands**.

(3.) They know by living up to their principles, they cast a general glory upon Christ and his ways. This makes Christ and his ways to be well thought on and well spoke on, Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:11-12; 2 Pet 1:5-13.

(4.) They know that the ready way, the only way to get and keep assurance, joy, peace, etc., is to live up to their principles.

(5.) They know that by living below their own principles, or contrary to their own principles, they do but gratify Satan, and provoke wicked men to blaspheme that worthy name by which they are called; they know that by their not living up to their own principles, they do but multiply their own fears and doubts, and put a sword into the hand of conscience, and make sad work for future repentance.

Now these and such like considerations do exceedingly stir and provoke believers to labor with all their might to live up to their own principles, to get to the very top of holiness, to be more and more a-pressing towards the mark; and to think that nothing is done, until they have attained the highest perfection which is attainable in this life. It is true, many hypocrites may go up some rounds of Jacob's ladder, such as make for their profit, pleasure, applause, and yet tumble down at last to the bottom of hell, as Judas and others have done. Look! Hypocrites **do** not, nor **like**, nor **love**—to come up to the top of Jacob's ladder, Gen 28:12, to the top of holiness, as you may see in the Scribes and Pharisees, and all other hypocrites that the Scripture speaks of. James 2:7. The very heathen, as Salvian observes, did thus reproach Christians who walked contrary to their principles, "Where is that good law which they do believe? They read and hear the holy Scriptures, and yet are drunk and unclean; they

profess to follow Christ, and yet disobey Christ; they profess a holy law, and yet do lead impure lives."

[3.] The third distinction. **It is their greatest desire and endeavor that sin may be cured, rather than covered.** Sin most afflicts a gracious soul. David cries out, "I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me," Psalm 51:3. Daniel complains not, we are reproached and oppressed—but we have rebelled, Dan 9:5. Paul cries not out of his persecutors—but of the law in his members rebelling against the law of his mind, Rom 7:23. A gracious soul grieves more that God by his sin is grieved and dishonored, than that for it he is afflicted and chastened.

The deer feeling within her the working of the serpent's poison, runs through the thorns and thickets, and runs over the green and pleasant pastures, that she may drink of the fountain and be cured. So gracious souls, being sensible of the poison and venom of sin, runs from the creatures, which are but as thorns and thickets; and runs over their own duties and righteousness, which are but as pleasant pastures—to come to Christ the fountain of life, that they may drink of those waters of consolation, of those wells of salvation that are in him, and cast up and cast out their spiritual poison, and be cured forever.

If a snake were to sting your dearly beloved spouse to death, would you preserve it alive, warm it by the fire, and hug it in your bosom? Would you not rather stab it with a thousand wounds? You are wise, and know how to apply it.

Believers know that their sins do most pierce and grieve the Lord, they lie hardest and heaviest upon his heart, and are most obvious to his eye, Amos 2:13. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, Jer 17:1; their sins are against beams of strongest light, they are against the affections of tenderest mercy, they are against the manifestations of greatest love, they are against the nearest and dearest relations, they are against the choicest and highest expectations; and this makes believing souls cry out, "Oh, a cure, Lord! a cure, Lord! Oh give me purging grace, give me purging grace; though I should never taste of pardoning mercy, yet give me purging grace." When Brutus went to stab Julius Caesar, he cried out, "What, you my son Brutus!" So may God

well cry out, "What, you my son! What, will you stab me with your sins? Is it not enough that others stab my honor? but will you, my son?"

It was a notable speech of Cosmus, duke of Florence, "I have read," says he, "that I must forgive my enemies—but never that I must forgive my friends." The sins of God's friends, of God's people, provoke him most, and sadden him most, and this makes them sigh and groan it out, "Who shall deliver us from this body of death?" Rom 7:24. Oh! but now wicked men labor, not that sin may be **cured**—but only that sin might be **covered**, Hos 7:10-16; and that the consequences of sin, namely, affliction and the stinging of conscience, may be removed, as you may see in Cain, Saul, Judas, and many others:" Hos 5:14-15, "In their affliction they will seek me early," says God; they will then seek to be rid of their *affliction*—but not to be rid of their *sins* which have brought down the affliction upon them! Like the patient who would gladly be rid of the pain and torment, under which he groans—but cares not to be rid of those evil habits which have brought the pain and torment upon him.

"Whenever God slew them, they would seek him; they eagerly turned to him again. They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues; their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant." Psalm 78:34-37. In these words you see plainly, that these people are very early and earnest in seeking God, to take off his hand, to remove the judgments which were upon them—but not that God would cure them of those sins which provoked him to draw his sword; and to make it drunk with their blood; for, notwithstanding the sad slaughters which divine justice had made among them, they did but flatter and lie, and play the hypocrites with God. They would gladly be rid of their *sufferings*—but did not care to be rid of their *sins*!

Ah! but a gracious soul cries out, Lord, do but take away my sins, and it will satisfy me and cheer me, though you should never take off your heavy afflicting hand. A true Christian sighs it out under his greatest affliction, as Augustine did, "**Deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man—myself!**" There is no burden like the burden of sin. "Lord! says the believing soul; deliver me from my inward burden of sin—and lay upon

me whatever outward burden you please."

Sin is evil in the eye, worse in the tongue, worser in the heart—but worst of all in the life.

(4.) The fourth distinction. **Are not your souls taken with Christ as chief?** is he not in your eye the chief of ten thousand? Is he not altogether lovely? Song 5:10,16. Yes, have you any in heaven but he, and is there any on earth that you desire in comparison of him? Prov 3:15; Psalm 73:25-26; Phil 3:7-8. No! Do not you lift up Jesus Christ as high as God the Father lifts him? God the Father lifts up Christ above all principalities and powers, Eph 1:21; Phil 2:9; he lifts up Christ above all your **duties**, above all your **privileges**, above all your **mercies**, above all your **graces**, above all your **contentments**, above all your **enjoyments**; do not you thus lift up Jesus Christ? Yes! "None but Christ, none but Christ!" cries the martyr.

As he is the Father's chief jewel, so he is your choicest jewel, is he not? Yes! Truly, none can lift up Christ as chief, unless Christ has their hearts, and they dearly love him, and believe in him, for Christ is only precious to those who believe, 1 Pet 2:7. Luther had rather be in hell with Christ—than in heaven without him; is not that the frame of your heart? Yes! Surely none but those who have union with Christ, and who shall eternally reign with Christ, can set such a high price upon the person of Christ. The true believer loves Christ for Christ; he loves Christ for his personal excellencies, Song 5:10-16.

What Alexander said of his two friends, is applicable to many in our day; says he, "Haehestion loves me as I am Alexander—but Craterus loves me as I am *King* Alexander." One loved him for his person, the other for the benefits he received by him. So true Christians love Christ for his person, for his personal excellency, for his personal beauty, for his personal glory; they see those perfections of grace and holiness in Christ, which render him very lovely and desirable in their eyes; though they should never get a kingdom, a crown by it. But most of those who profess to belong to Christ, do it only in respect of the *benefits* they receive by him. When one asked Cato's daughter why she would not marry again, she being young when her husband died, answered, 'Because she could not find a man that

loved her more than her goods.' Few there are, who love Christ more than his *benefits*, etc.

It was Augustine's complaint of old, that 'scarcely any love Christ but for his *benefits*.' Few follow him for love—but for loaves, John 6:26; few follow him for his inward excellencies, many follow him for their outward advantages; few follow him that they may be made godly by him—but many follow him that they may be great by him. Certainly, you are the bosom friends of Christ, you are in the very heart of Christ, who prize Christ above all, who lift up Jesus Christ as high as God the Father lifts him, and that because of his rich anointings, and because all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, Psalm 45:6-8. This is a work too high and too hard, too great and too noble, for all who are not true Christians, who are not twice born, who are not of the blood-royal, who are not partakers of the divine nature.

[5.] The fifth distinction. **Are not your greatest and your hottest conflicts against inward pollutions, against those secret sins which are only obvious to the eye of God and your own souls?** The light of nature's education, and some *common convictions of the Spirit*, may put men upon combating with those sins which are obvious to every eye—but it must be a supernatural power and principle which puts men upon conflicting with the inward motions and secret operations of sin. "I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." Romans 7:23. The apostle complains of a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. The war was within doors, the fight was inward. The apostle was deeply engaged against the sin within him, which made him sigh it out, "O What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

So David cries out, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse me from secret faults," Psalm 19:12. So Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, or for the lifting up of his heart, as the Hebrew has it, 2 Chron 32:26. His recovery from sickness, his victories over his enemies, and his rich treasures, lifted up his heart with pride. Oh! but for those outward risings and vauntings of heart, Hezekiah humbles himself, he abases and lays himself low before the Lord. A sincere heart weeps and laments

bitterly over those secret and inward corruptions, which others will scarcely acknowledge to be sins. Many a man there is—who bleeds inwardly, and dies forever; many a soul is eternally slain by the inward workings of sin, and he sees it not, he knows it not, until it be too late.

The Persian kings reign powerfully, and yet are seldom seen in public. Secret sins reign in many men's souls powerfully and dangerously, when least apparently.

Oh! but a true Christian mourns over the inward motions and first risings of sin in his soul, and so prevents an eternal danger. Upon every stirring of sin in the soul, the believer cries out, "O Lord, help; O Lord, undertake for me; oh dash these brats of Babylon in pieces; oh stifle the first motions of sin, that they may never conceive and bring forth, to the wounding of two at once, your honor and my own conscience!

[6.] The sixth distinction. **Are you not subject to Christ as a head?** Yes! Devils and wicked men are subject to Christ as a Lord—but those who are by faith united to him, and who have a spiritual interest in him, are subject to him as a head. I shall open this particular thus unto you.

First, The members are **willingly** and **sweetly** subject to the head; their subjection is voluntary, not compulsory. It is so with a believing soul: Psalm 27:8, "When you said, Seek you my face, my heart said unto you, Your face, Lord, will I seek." So Psalm 110:3, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power, in the beauties of holiness." So Paul cries out, "What will you have me to do?" Acts 9:6, and professes that he is willing not to be bound only—but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of Christ, Acts 21:13. A gracious soul is in some measure naturalised to the work of Christ, and Christ's work is in some measure naturalised to the soul.

Secondly, The members are subject to the head **universally**, they do all the head enjoins. Their obedience is universal,

(1.) in respect of the act of eschewing all evil, doing all good;

(2.) in respect of the rule, the whole word of God;

(3.) in respect of their general and particular calling.

The real members of Christ do in sincerity, endeavor universally to subject to all that Christ their head requires, without any exception or reservation. Luke 1:5-6, "Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in *all* the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They walked without halting or halving of it with God; they fell in with every part and point of God's revealed will, without prejudice or partiality, without tilting the balance on one side or another. Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse a man after my own heart, who shall fulfill all my will," or rather all my wills," to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience.

Thirdly, The members are subject to the head **constantly, unweariedly**. The members are never weary of obeying the head; they obey in all places, cases, and times. Just so, are the real members of Christ. Acts 24:16, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have *always* a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." That is, *always*, or throughout in all cases, or at all times. I use all diligence, skill, cunning, and conscience, to be sincere and inoffensive in all my motions and actions towards God and towards men. So David, Psalm 119:112, "I have inclined my heart" (or rather, as the Hebrew word signifies, "I have stretched out my heart," as a man would do a piece of parchment) "to do your statutes" (the Hebrew word signifies to do accurately, exactly, perfectly) "always, even unto the end."

A gracious soul is not like a deceitful bow, nor like the morning dew—but he is like the sun, which rejoices to run his race; he is like the stone in Thracia, that neither burns in the fire nor sinks in the water.

Now tell me, pray tell me, O you doubting souls, whether you do not,

(1.) Labor in all duties and services to approve your hearts to God?

(2.) Whether you do not endeavor to get up to the very top of holiness, and to live up to your own principles?

(3.) Whether it be not your greatest desire and endeavor that sin may be

cured rather than covered?

(4.) Whether you are not taken with Christ as chief? whether you do not, in your judgments and affections, lift up Christ above all, as God the Father does?

(5.) Whether your greatest and hottest conflicts and combats be not against inward pollutions, against those secret stirrings and operations of sin, which are only obvious to the eye of God and your own souls?

(6.) Whether you do not, in respect of the general bent and frame of your hearts, subject to Christ as your head?

[1.] Freely and sweetly.

[2.] Universally, in one thing as well as another, without any exception or reservation.

[3.] Constantly and unwearily.

Yes; we do these things; we would belie the grace of God if we should say otherwise. These things the Lord has wrought in us and for us, Isa 26:12. Well, then, know,

First, That your estate is good; you have certainly a blessed interest in the Lord Jesus. None can do these things but souls who have union with Christ, that are savingly interested in Christ, who are acted by the peculiar and special influences of Christ, and who are highly beloved by Christ. Truly, these are such flowers of paradise that cannot be gathered in nature's garden; they are pearls of great price which God bestows upon none but those who are the price of Christ's blood. All the men in the world cannot prove by the Scripture that these jewels can be found in any men's breasts but in theirs who have union and communion with Christ, and that shall reign forever with Christ. If these things could be found in the most shining hypocrites, or any others but real saints, they could not possibly be either a first or second evidence.

Secondly, Know that it is no iniquity—but rather **your duty, for you to suck sweetness out of these honeycombs, and to look upon**

**these things as infallible pledges and evidences of divine favor, and of your everlasting happiness and blessedness.** Some there are, who make the witness of the Spirit, of which I shall, towards the close of this discourse, speak at large, the only evidence of our interest in Christ, and deny all other evidences from the fruit of the Spirit; but this is to deny the fruit, growing upon the tree, to be an evidence that the tree is alive, whereas all know, that the fruit growing upon the tree is an infallible and undeniable evidence that there is life in the tree. Certainly it is one thing to **judge** by our graces, and another thing to **rest** upon our graces, or to put **trust** in our graces. When one argues from the beams of the sun, that there is a sun, one would think that the most caviling spirit in the world should lie quiet and still. We have cause enough to keep off doubtings and distress of spirit upon the bare sight of our evidences. This, complaining, caviling souls will not understand.

(7.) The seventh means to get a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness is, **to grow and increase more and more in grace.** 2 Pet 1:5-11, "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge, etc. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." By entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ, is not meant a local entrance into heaven; for heaven is nowhere called the kingdom of Christ—but the Father's kingdom. 2 Pet 1:9 shows clearly that it is meant of assurance. Now, the way to full assurance is by adding grace to grace. The Greek word that is here rendered "add," has a greater emphasis; it signifies to link our graces together, as people in a dance do link their hands together. Oh! we must be still a-joining grace to grace, we must still be adding one grace to another, we must still be a-leading up the dance of graces.

Though our graces be our best jewels, yet they are imperfect, and do not give out their full luster; they are like the moon, which, when it shines brightest, has a dark spot. Therefore, we should add still grace to grace.

Great measures of grace carry with them great evidence of truth; little measures carry with them but little evidence. Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest evidence of the soul's union and communion with Christ; and the more evident your union and communion with

Christ is, the more clear and full will your assurance be.

Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest and clearest evidences of the glorious indwellings of the Spirit in you, and the more you are persuaded of the real indwellings of the Spirit in you, the higher will your assurance rise. Great measures of grace will be a fire which will consume and burn up the dross—the stubble, the fears and doubts which perplex the soul, and that cause darkness to surround the soul. Now, the more you are rid of your fears, doubts, and darkness, the more easily, and the more effectually will your hearts be persuaded that the thoughts of God towards you are thoughts of love; that you are precious in his eyes, and that he will rejoice over you, to do you good forever, Jer 32:41, etc.

'If moral virtue,' says Plato, 'could be seen with mortal eyes, it would soon draw all hearts to itself.' Oh how much the more should our hearts be drawn out after the highest measures of grace! the least grain of grace being more worth than all moral virtue.

(8.) The eighth means to gain a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness is, **to take your hearts when they are in the best and most spiritual frame and temper God-wards, heaven-wards, and holiness-wards.** Times of temptation and desertion, etc., are praying times, hearing times, mourning times, and believing times; but they are not trying times, they are not seasonable times for doubting souls to set themselves about so great and so solemn a work as that is, of searching and examining how things stand, and are likely to stand, between God and them forever, 2 Cor 13:5.

Be diligent and constant, be studious and conscientious in observing the frame and temper of your own hearts, and when you find them most plain, most melting, most yielding, most tender and humble, most sweetly raised, and most divinely composed—then, oh then, is the time to single out the most convenient place where you may with greatest freedom open your bosom to God, and plead with him as for your life, that he would show you how things stand between him and you, and how it must fare with your soul forever. And when you have thus set yourself before God, and opened your bosom to God, then wisely observe what report God and your own renewed conscience do make concerning your

eternal condition: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," says David; "for he will speak peace unto his people, and they shall not return to folly," so the Hebrew may be read.

"I will listen to what God the Lord will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints--but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him." Psalm 85:8-9. Oh! so must you stand still, when you have sincerely opened yourself before the Lord, and listened and hearkened what God will say unto you. Surely he will speak peace unto you, he will say, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven, your heart is upright with me; my soul is set upon you; I have already blessed you, and I will hereafter glorify you.'

I have read of one who was kept from destroying of himself, being much tempted by Satan unto suicide—by remembering that there was a time when he solemnly set himself in prayer and self-examination before the Lord, and made a diligent inquiry into his spiritual condition; and in the close of that work, it was evidenced to him that his heart was upright with God, and this kept him from laying of violent hands upon himself. A good conscience is *a thousand witnesses*; therefore make much of its testimony. Oh! a wise and serious observing what that testimony is, which God, conscience, and the word gives in upon solemn prayer and self-examination, may beget strong consolation, and support the soul under the greatest affliction, and strengthen the soul against the most violent temptations, and make the soul look and long for the day of dissolution—as princes do for their day of coronation.

(9.) The ninth means to gain a well-grounded assurance is, to **make a diligent inquiry whether you have those things which accompany eternal salvation**: Heb 6:9, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation;" or as it is in the Greek, "who have salvation," as it were in the very heart of them, which comprehend salvation and which touch upon salvation.

Oh! beloved, if you have those choice things which accompany salvation, which comprehend salvation, you may be abundantly assured of your salvation.

But you may say to me—**What are those things which accompany salvation?**

To this question I shall give this answer, namely, that there are seven special things which accompany salvation, and they are these:

1, Knowledge; 2, Faith; 3, Repentance; 4, Obedience; 5, Love; 6, Prayer; 7, Perseverance.

(1.) **KNOWLEDGE** is one of those special things which accompanies salvation: John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Divine knowledge is the beginning of eternal life; it is a spark of glory, it works life in the soul, it is a taste and pledge of eternal life: 1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him who is true: and we are in him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God, and eternal life." 2 Pet 1:3, "According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue." What this knowledge is, which accompanies salvation, I shall show you shortly.

In reading Scripture and pious books, let us not look so much for intellectual learning, as a savouriness of the truth upon our own hearts.

(2.) Secondly, **FAITH** is another of those special things which accompanies salvation: 2 Thess 2:13, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 1 Pet 1:5, "You who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Heb 10:39, "But we are not of those who draw back to perdition—but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." John 3:14-16, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish—but have everlasting life." John 3:36, "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life." John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation—but

has passed from death unto life." John 6:40, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:47, "*Truly, truly*, I say unto you, he who believes on me has everlasting life." This double assertion is used only in matters of weight. Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9; Isa 45:22; Phil 2:8; John 11:25-26; 1 John 5:10. All these and many more scriptures speak out the same truth.

(3.) Thirdly, **REPENTANCE** is another of those choice things which accompanies salvation: 2 Cor 7:10, "For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world works death." Jer 4:14, "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved." Acts 11:18, "God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life." Matt 18:3, "Truly I say unto you, except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Acts 3:19, "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

The very word *repent* was very displeasing to Luther until his conversion—but afterward he took delight in the work—to sorrow for his sin, and then rejoice in his sorrow.

(4.) Fourthly, **OBEDIENCE** is another of those precious things which accompanies salvation. Heb 5:9, "And being made perfect," speaking of Christ, "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all those who obey him." Psalm 50:23, "If you keep to my path, I will reveal to you the salvation of God."

(5.) Fifthly, **LOVE** to God, is another of those singular things which accompanies salvation. 2 Tim 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only—but unto all those who love his appearing." When God crowns us, he does but crown his own gifts in us.

James 2:5, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?" 1 Cor 2:9, "It is written, eye has not

seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man—the things which God has prepared for those who love him." James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive a *crown of life*, which the Lord has promised to those who love him." The word *crown* notes to us,

(1.) the perpetuity of that life the apostle speaks of, for a crown has neither beginning nor ending;

(2.) it notes plenty; the crown fetches a range on every side;

(3.) it notes dignity;

(4.) it notes majesty. Eternal life is a coronation day; it notes all joys, all delights; in a word, it notes all good, it notes all glory.

Matt 19:29, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." The whole is as if Christ had said, Whoever shall show love to me, this way or that, in one thing or another, out of respect to my name, to my honor, mercy shall be his portion here, and glory shall be his portion hereafter.

(6.) Sixthly, **PRAYER** is another of those sweet things which accompanies salvation. Rom 10:10,13, "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:21, "And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is, says one, he shall be certainly sealed up to salvation. Or as another says, He who has this grace of prayer, it is an evident sign and assurance to him, that he shall be saved. Therefore to have grace to pray, is a better and a greater mercy than to have gifts to prophesy, Matt 7:22. Praying souls shall find the gates of heaven open to them, when prophesying souls shall find them shut against them.

(7.) Seventhly and lastly, **PERSEVERANCE** is another of those prime things which accompanies salvation. Matt 10:22, "And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake—but he who endures to the end, the same

shall be saved." The same words you have in Mark 13:13.

Matt 24:12-13, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; but he who endures unto the end, the same shall be saved." Rev 2:10, "Fear none of those things which you shall suffer; behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto the death, and I will give you a crown of life." *A crown without cares, fears, co-rivals, envy, end.* God turns the crown of thorns into a crown of glory.

Rev 3:5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life—but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne."

In the previous chapter, you saw the seven choice things which accompany salvation. But for your further and fuller edification, satisfaction, confirmation, and consolation, it will be very necessary that I show you,

- (1.) What **knowledge** that is, which accompanies salvation.
- (2.) What **faith** that is, which accompanies salvation.
- (3.) What **repentance** that is, which accompanies salvation.
- (4.) What **obedience** that is, which accompanies salvation.
- (5.) What **love** that is, which accompanies salvation.
- (6.) What **prayer** that is, which accompanies salvation.

(7.) What **perseverance** that is, which accompanies salvation.

I hope when I have fully opened these precious things to you, that you will be able to sit down much satisfied and cheered in a holy confidence and blessed assurance of your everlasting well-being.

**I.** I shall begin with the first, and show you what that **KNOWLEDGE** is, which accompanies salvation; and that I shall open in these following particulars:

(1.) The first property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is a **WORKING** knowledge, an **OPERATIVE** knowledge: 2 Cor 4:6, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our *hearts*, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Divine light reaches the *heart* as well as the head. The beams of divine light shining in upon the soul through the glorious face of Christ are very working; they warm the heart, they affect the heart, they new-mold the heart. Divine knowledge masters the heart, it guides the heart, it governs the heart, it sustains the heart, it relieves the heart. Knowledge which swims in the head only, and sinks not down into the heart, does no more good than the unicorn's horn in the unicorn's head.

1 John 3:6. "Whoever sins" (that is, customarily, habitually, delightfully,) "has neither seen him, nor known him."

Rom 6:6, "We know that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Divine knowledge puts a man upon crucifying of sin; it keeps a man from being a servant, a slave to sin, which no other knowledge can do. Under all other knowledge, men remain servants to their lusts, and are taken prisoners by Satan at his will. No knowledge lifts a man up above his lusts, but that which accompanies salvation. The wisest philosophers and the greatest doctors, as Socrates, and others, under all their sublime notions and rare speculations, have been kept in bondage by their lusts.

That knowledge which accompanies salvation is *operative* knowledge: 1 John 2:3-4, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, I know him, and keeps not his

commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." He is a liar in a double respect: (1.) in that he *says* he has that saving knowledge, which he has not; (2.) in that he denies that in his *works*, which he affirms in his *words*.

By keeping his commandments they knew that they did know him; that is, they were assured that they did know him. To know that we know, is to be assured that we know.

So James 3:17, "But the wisdom which comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." James 3:13, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by *deeds* done in the humility that comes from wisdom." Divine knowledge fills a man full of spiritual activity; it will make a man work *as if* he would be saved by his works; and yet it will make a man believe that he is saved only upon the account of free grace, Eph 2:8. **That knowledge which is not operative and working, will only serve to guide souls to hell, and to double damn all who have it,** Matt 23:14.

(2.) The second property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is **transforming** knowledge, it is metamorphosing knowledge. It is knowledge which transforms, which metamorphoses the soul: 2 Cor 3:18, "But we with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, are *changed* into the same image, from glory to glory." Divine light beating on the heart, warms it, and betters it; it transforms and changes it, it moulds and fashions it into the very likeness of Christ.

The naturalists observe that the pearl, by the often beating of the sunbeams upon it, becomes radiant. Just so, the often beating and shining of the Sun of righteousness, with his divine beams, upon the saints, causes them to glisten and shine in holiness, righteousness, heavenly-mindedness, humbleness, etc. Divine light casts a general beauty and glory upon the soul; it transforms a man more and more into the glorious image of Christ.

Look! as the child receives from his parents features—member for member, limb for limb; or as the paper from the press receives letter for

letter, the wax from the seal receives print for print, or as the face in the mirror answers to the face of the man, or as indentation answers to indentation—so the beams of divine light and knowledge shining into the soul, stamp the living image of Christ upon the soul, and make it put on the Lord Jesus, and resemble him to the life.

A father stands obliged, not only in point of honor—but also by the law of nature, to receive his child that bears his image. Just so, does Christ stand obliged to receive those who by divine light have his image stamped upon them.

Mere **notional** knowledge may make a man excellent at *praising* the glorious and worthy acts and virtues of Christ; but that **transforming** knowledge which accompanies salvation, will work a man divinely to *imitate* the glorious acts and virtues of Christ. "For you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness (or virtues) of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light." 1 Peter 2:9. When God causes his divine light, his marvelous light, to shine in upon the soul, then a Christian will preach forth the virtues of Christ in an imitable practice, and until then a man, under all other knowledge, will remain an incarnate devil.

When a beam of divine light shined from heaven upon **Paul**, ah, how did it change and metamorphose him! How did it alter and transform him! It made his rebellious soul obedient: Acts 9:6, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" God bids him arise and go into the city, and it should be told him what he should do; and he obeys the heavenly vision, Acts 26:19. Divine light lays upon a man *a happy necessity of obeying God*. Divine light makes this lion into a lamb, this persecutor into a preacher, this destroyer of the saints into a strengthener of the saints, this tormenter into a comforter, this monster into an angel, this notorious blasphemer into a very great admirer of God, and the actings of his free grace, as you may see by comparing Acts 9 and Acts 26 together.

Just so, when a spark of this heavenly fire fell upon the heart of **Mary Magdalene**, Luke 7:36-37, oh what a change, what a transformation does it make in her! Now she loves much, and believes much, and repents

much, and weeps much. Oh what a change did divine light make in **Zacchaeus**, and in the **jailor**! Truly, if your light, your Biblical knowledge does not better you, if it does not change and transform you, if, under all your light and knowledge you remain as vile and base as ever, your light, your knowledge, your notions, your speculations, will be like to fire, not on the hearth—but in the room, that will burn the house and the inhabitant too; it will be like mettle in a blind horse, that serves for nothing but to break the neck of the rider. That knowledge that is not a transforming knowledge, will torment a man at last more than all the devils in hell; it will be a sword to cut him, a rod to lash him, a serpent to bite him, a scorpion to sting him, and a vulture, a worm eternally gnawing him!

When Tamberlain was in his wars, one having found and dug up a great pot of gold, brought it to him; Tamberlain asked whether it had his father's stamp upon it; but when he saw it had the Roman stamp, and not his father's, he would not own it. So God at last will own no knowledge—but that which leaves the stamp of Christ, the print of Christ, the image of Christ upon the heart—but that which changes and transforms the soul; which makes a man a new man, another man than what he was before divine light shined upon him.

(3.) The third property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is **EXPERIMENTAL** knowledge. **It is knowledge which springs from a spiritual sense and taste of holy and heavenly things.** Song 1:2, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love (plural loves) is better than wine." She means all the fruits of his love, namely, righteousness, holiness, joy, peace, assurance, etc. The spouse had experienced the sweetness of Christ's love; "his loves," says she, "is better than wine," though wine is an excellent cordial, a useful cordial, a comfortable and delightful cordial, a reviving and restorative cordial. And this draws out her heart, and makes her insatiable in longing, and very earnest in coveting, not a kiss—but kisses; not a little—but much of Christ. Her knowledge being experimental, she is impatient and restless, until she was drawn into the nearest and highest communion and fellowship with Christ.

So in Song 1:13, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall

lie all night between my breasts." "Myrrh is marvelous sweet and savory, so is my well-beloved unto me," says the spouse; "I have found Jesus Christ to be marvelous sweet and savory to my soul. Myrrh is bitter to the taste, though it is sweet to the smell. Just so, is my well-beloved unto me. I have found him to be bitter and bloody to the *old man*, to the ignoble and worser part of man; and I have found him to be sweet and lovely to the new man, to the regenerate man, to the noble part of man. I have found him to be a bitter and a bloody enemy to my sins, and at the same time to be a sweet and precious friend unto my soul." Every godly man has in him two men, Rom 7:15-26; Gal 5:17.

Myrrh is of a **preserving** nature, as the naturalists observe. "Just so, is my well-beloved unto me," says the spouse. "Oh! I have found the Lord Jesus preserving my soul from falling into such and such temptations, and from falling under the power of such and such corruptions, and from fainting under such and such afflictions, etc." Austin thanks God that his heart and the temptation did not meet together.

Considerable to the same purpose is that of Phil 1:9, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." The Greek word that is here rendered "judgment," properly signifies *sense*, not a corporal—but a *spiritual sense and taste, an inward experimental knowledge of holy and heavenly things*. The soul has her senses as well as the body, and they must be exercised, Heb 5:14. The apostle well knew that all notional and speculative knowledge would leave men on this side heaven, and therefore he earnestly prays that their knowledge might be experimental, that alone being the knowledge which accompanies salvation—which will give a man at last a possession of salvation. Truly, that knowledge which is only notional, speculative, and general; which is gathered out of books, discourses, and other outward advantages, is such a knowledge that will make men sit down in hell, as: it did Judas, Demas, the scribes and pharisees, etc. What is the scholar's knowledge of the strength, riches, glories, and sweetness of far countries, obtained by maps and books—compared to their knowledge, who daily see and enjoy those things?

Christ will at last shut the door of hope, of help, of consolation and salvation, upon all those who know much of him notionally—but nothing

feelingly, as you may see in his shutting the door of happiness against the foolish virgins, Matt 25:11-12, and against those forward professors, preachers, and workers of miracles, Matt 7:22, who had much speculative knowledge—but no experimental knowledge; who had much outward general knowledge of Christ—but no spiritual inward acquaintance with Christ.

A man who has that experimental knowledge which accompanies salvation, will from his experience tell you, that sin is the greatest evil in the world—for he has found it so, Rom 7; that Christ is the one thing necessary—for he has found him so, Psalm 27:4; that the favor of God is better than life—for he has found it so, Psalm 63:3; that pardoning mercy alone makes a man happy—for he has found it so, Psalm 32:1-2; that a wounded spirit is such a burden that none can bear—for he has found it so, Prov 18:14; that a humble and a broken heart is an acceptable sacrifice to God—for he has found it so, Psalm 51:17; that the promises are precious pearls—for he has found them so, 2 Pet 1:4; that the smiles of God will make up the lack of any outward mercies—for he has found it so, Psalm 4:6-7; that only communion with God can make a heaven in a believer's heart—for he has found it so, Psalm 48:10; that if the Spirit is pleased and obeyed, he will be a comforter to the soul—for he has found it so, John 16:7; but if his motions and laws are slighted and neglected, he will stand far off from the soul, he will vex and gall the soul--for he has found it so, Lam 1:16; Isa 63:10-11.

Well! souls, remember this, that knowledge which is not experimental will never turn to your account, it will only increase your guilt and torment, as it did the Scribes' and Pharisees'. What advantage had the men of the old world, by their knowing that there was an ark, or by their clambering about the ark—when they were shut out and drowned in the flood! What does it profit a man to see heaps of jewels and pearls, and mountains of gold and silver, when he is moneyless and penniless? It is rather a torment than a comfort to know that there is a pardon for other malefactors—but none for me; that there is bread for such and such hungry souls—but none for me; that there is water and wine to cheer, comfort, and refresh such and such—but not a sip, a drop, for me; that my bottle is empty, and I may die for thirst—while others are drinking at

the fountainhead; that there are houses and clothes to shelter such and such from colds, storms, and tempests—while I lie naked, exposed to the misery of all weathers. This kind of knowledge does rather torment men, than comfort them; it does but add fuel to the fire, and make their hell the hotter. The knowledge that devils and apostates have of God, Christ, and the Scriptures, etc., being only notional, is so far from being a comfort to them, that it is their greatest torment; it is a worm which is eternally gnawing them; it makes them ten thousand times more miserable than otherwise they would be. They are still a-crying out, "Oh that our light, our light were put out! Oh that our knowledge, our knowledge were extinguished! Oh that we might but change places with the heathens, with the barbarians, who never knew what we have known! Oh how happy would damned devils and apostates judge themselves in hell, if they should escape with those dreadful stripes that shall be eternally laid upon the backs of fools!"

Remember, reader, that a little heart-knowledge, a little experimental knowledge, is of greater efficacy and worth than the highest notions of the most acute scholars. He does well, who discourses of Christ—but he does infinitely better who, by experimental knowledge, feeds and lives on Christ. It was not Adam's seeing—but his tasting, of forbidden fruit which made him miserable; and it is not your seeing of Christ—but your experimental tasting of Christ, which will make you truly happy. As no knowledge will save, but what is experimental; so let no knowledge satisfy you, but what is experimental, Psalm 34:8.

(4.) The fourth property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is a **heart-affecting** knowledge. It affects the heart with Christ, and all spiritual things. Oh, it does wonderfully endear Christ and the things of Christ to the soul: Song 2:5, "Oh, feed me with your love—your 'raisins' and your 'apples'—for I am utterly lovesick!" Oh, says the spouse, my heart is taken with Christ, it is raised and ravished with his love; my soul is burning, my soul is beating towards Christ. Oh, none but Christ, none but Christ! I cannot live in myself, I cannot live in my duties, I cannot live in external privileges, I cannot live in outward mercies, I cannot live in common providences; I can live only in Christ, who is my life, my love, my joy, my crown, my all in all. Oh, the hearing of Christ affects me, the

seeing of Christ affects me, the taste of Christ affects me, the glimmerings of Christ affects me; the more I come to know him in his natures, in his names, in his offices, in his discoveries, in his appearances, in his beauties, the more I find my heart and affections to prize Christ, to run after Christ, to be affected with Christ, and to be wonderfully endeared to Christ! Psalm 73:25-26. "Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever!"

Song 5:10. "He is white and ruddy, the chief of ten thousand!" The knowledge that she had of Christ did so affect and endear her heart to Christ, that she cannot but make use of all her rhetoric to set forth Christ in the most lovely and lively colors. Gal 6:14, "God forbid that I should glory in anything, except in Christ Jesus." Oh, God forbid that my heart should be affected or taken with anything in comparison of Christ. The more I know him, the more I like him; the more I know him, the more I love him; the more I know him, the more I desire him; the more I know him, the more my heart is knit unto him. His beauty is captivating, his love is ravishing, his goodness is attracting, his manifestations are enticing, and his person is enamoring. His lovely looks please me, his pleasant voice delights me, his precious Spirit comforts me, his holy word rules me; and these things make Christ to be a heaven unto me!

Oh, but all that mere notional knowledge, that speculative knowledge, which leaves a man short of salvation, never affects the heart; it never draws it, it never endears the heart to Christ, or to the precious things of Christ. Hence it is that such men, under all their notions, under all their light and knowledge, have no affection to Christ, no delight in Christ, no workings of heart after Christ.

Well, reader! remember this, if your knowledge does not now *affect* your heart, it will at last with a witness *afflict* your heart; if it does not now endear Christ to you, it will at last the more provoke Christ against you; if it does not make all the things of Christ to be very precious in your eyes, it will at last make you the more vile in Christ's eyes! A little knowledge which divinely affects the heart, is infinitely better than a world of that theoretical knowledge which swims in the head—but never sinks down into the heart, to the bettering, to the warming, and to the affecting of it.

Therefore strive not so much to know, as to have your heart affected with what you know; for heart-affecting knowledge is the only knowledge which accompanies salvation, that will possess you of salvation.

(5.) The fifth property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation, is **a world-despising, a world-crucifying, and a world-forsaking** knowledge. "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14. Divine knowledge made the apostle easily overlook all the world, as a man does easily overlook other things, who looks to find a jewel, a pearl of great price, etc. Divine knowledge makes a man have low, poor, base thoughts of the world; it makes a man slight it, and trample upon it as a thing of no value. That divine light which accompanies salvation, makes a man to look upon the world as mixed, as mutable, as momentary; it makes a man look upon the world as a liar, as a deceiver, as a flatterer, as a murderer, and as a witch that has bewitched the souls of thousands to their eternal overthrow, by her golden baits and offers.

Divine knowledge put Paul upon trampling upon all the bravery and glory of the world, Phil 3:4-9. I shall only transcribe Phil 3:7-8, and leave you to turn to the rest. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung" (dog's dung or dog's meat, coarse and contemptible), "that I may win Christ." Divine knowledge raises his heart so high above the world, that he looks upon it with an eye of scorn and disdain, and makes him count it as an excrement, yes, as the very worst of excrements, as dogs' dung, as dogs' meat. Of the like import is that of Heb 10:34, "You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." Divine knowledge will make a man rejoice, when his enemies make a bonfire of his goods. This man has bills of exchange under God's own hand, to receive a pound for every penny, a million for every mite, that he loses for him. And this makes him to rejoice, and to trample upon all the glory of this world, as one did upon the philosopher's crown, Matt 19:27-30.

It was heavenly knowledge which made Moses to disdain and scorn the pomp and pleasures, the bravery and glory, the riches and advantages of Egypt and Ethiopia too, as some writers observe, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." Hebrews 11:24-26.

So when a beam of divine light had shined upon Zacchaeus, Oh, how does it work him to part with the world, to cast off the world, to slight it and trample upon it, as a thing of nothing! "And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord! the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day has salvation come to this house, for so much as he also is the son of Abraham," Luke 19:2-10. Before the candle of the Lord was set up in Zacchaeus's soul, he dearly loved the world, he highly prized the world, he eagerly pursued after the world; he would have it right or wrong, his heart was set upon it, he was resolved to gather riches, though it was out of others' ruins. Yes, but when once he was divinely enlightened, he throws off the world, he easily parts with it, he sets very light by it, he looks with an eye of disdain upon it. His knowledge lifts him up above the smiles of the world, and above the frowns of the world; the world is no longer a snare, a bait, a temptation to him. He knows that it is more to be a son of Abraham, that is, to be taken into covenant with Abraham, to tread in the steps of Abraham's faith, as children tread in the steps of their fathers, and to lie and rest in the bosom of Abraham, as sons do in their fathers' bosoms, than to be rich, great, and honorable in the world, Rom 4:12,16, and Rom 9. And this made him shake hands with the world, and say to it, as to his idols, "Get you hence, for what have I more to do with you?" Isa 30:22; Hos 14:8. Truly, that light, that knowledge, will never lead you to heaven, it will never possess you of salvation, that leaves you under the power of the world, that leaves you in league and friendship with the world, 1 John 2:15; James 4:4. If your knowledge does not put the world under your feet—it will never put a crown of glory upon your head. The church has the moon under her feet, Rev 12:1, which is clothed with the sun, and which

has a crown upon her head.

Ah, knowing souls, knowing souls! do not deceive yourselves! Truly, if you are clothed with the loveliness and righteousness of the sun, which is Jesus Christ, and have a crown of victory and glory upon your heads, you will have the moon under your feet, you will tread and trample upon the trash of this world; all the riches, glories, and braveries of the world will be under your feet, in respect of your non-subjection to it and your holy contempt of it. If your knowledge does not enable you to set your feet upon those things that most people set their hearts on, you are undone forever; your knowledge will be so far from lifting you up to heaven, that it will cast you the lower into hell. Therefore let no knowledge satisfy you—but that which lifts you above the world—but that which weans you from the world—but that which makes the world a footstool. This knowledge, this light will at last lead you into everlasting light.

(6.) The sixth property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is **soul-abasing, soul-humbling** knowledge. It makes a man very little and low in his own eyes, as you may see in the most knowing apostle: Eph 3:8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." **Paul's** great light makes him very little. Though he was the greatest apostle, yet he looks upon himself as less than the least of all saints. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I am the worst of them." 1 Timothy 1:15

Christ wonderfully extols **John the Baptist**. Says Christ, he is a prophet, yes, and more than a prophet, yes, a greater is not born of woman. But the greatest wonder of all is, that John is so low in his own eyes! John 1:26-27, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." In this phrase John alludes to the custom of the Hebrews. Those among them which were more noble than others, had boys who carried their shoes, and untied them when they laid them aside. Oh! says John, I am a poor, weak, worthless creature; I am not worthy to be admitted to the basest, to the lowest service under Christ; I am not worthy to carry his shoes, to unloose his shoes.

After **Peter** had been in the mount, and instructed and enlightened by Christ, he cries out, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a *sinful man*," that is—a man, a sinner, a very mixture and compound of dirt and sin, of vileness and baseness, as you may see in comparing Matt 17:1-5; Luke 5:8.

**Abraham**, under all his light and knowledge, acknowledges himself to be but dust and ashes, Gen 18:27. **Jacob**, under all his knowledge, acknowledges, "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant," Gen 32:10. **David**, under all his knowledge, acknowledges himself to be a worm, and no man, Psalm 22:6; he acknowledges himself to be foolish and ignorant, and as a beast before the Lord, Psalm 73:22. **Job**, under all his knowledge, abhors himself in dust and ashes, Job 42:1-5. **Agur** was very godly and his knowledge very great; and yet under all his knowledge, oh, how did he vilify, yes, nullify himself! "Surely," says he, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy," Prov 30:1-4. The evangelical prophet **Isaiah**, under all his knowledge and visions, which were very great and glorious, acknowledges himself to be a man of unclean lips, and to dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," Isa 6:1-8.

Divine and heavenly knowledge brings a man near to God; it gives a man the clearest and fullest sight of God; and the nearer any man comes to God, and the clearer visions he has of God, the more low and humble will that man lie before God. None so humble as those who have nearest communion with God. The angels that are near unto him cover their faces with their wings, in token of humility. Divine knowledge makes a man look inwards; it anatomizes a man to himself; it is a mirror which shows a man the spots of his own soul, and this makes him little and low in his own eyes.

In the beams of this heavenly light, a Christian comes to see his own pride, ignorance, impatience, unworthiness, conceitedness, worthlessness, frowardness and nothingness. That knowledge which swells you with self importance, will undo you; that knowledge which puffs you with pride, will sink you; that knowledge which makes you delightful in your own eyes will make you despicable in God's and godly

men's eyes: 1 Cor 8:1-2, "Knowledge puffs up;" that is, notional knowledge, speculative knowledge, knowledge which ripens a man for destruction, which will leave him short of salvation. This knowledge puffs and swells a man, and makes him think himself something when he is nothing: "And if any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know," says the apostle. Will not the heathen rise in judgment against many of our high-flown professors, who swell, who look big, and talk big under their notional knowledge.

Well! if that knowledge you have be that knowledge which accompanies salvation, it is a soul-humbling and a soul-abasing knowledge. If it be otherwise, then will your knowledge make you both a prisoner and a slave to the devil at once.

(7.) The seventh property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is an **APPROPRIATING** knowledge, a knowledge which appropriates and applies spiritual and heavenly benefits to a man's own particular soul. This is the pith and power of heavenly knowledge—to appropriate Christ to a man's self. As you may see in Job, "*my Redeemer lives,*" and "*my witness is in heaven,*" and "*my record is on high,*" Job 19:25, and Job 16:19. Just so, David, "*the Lord is my portion,*" Psalm 16:5. In Psalm 18:2, he uses this word of propriety eight times together, "*The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*" So the spouse, "*My beloved is mine, and I am his,*" Song 2:16. Just so, Thomas, "*My Lord and my God,*" John 20:28. Just so, Paul, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I—but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me, and gave himself for me,*" Gal 2:20.

Personal applicatory knowledge is the sweetest knowledge; it revives the heart, it cheers the spirits, it rejoices the soul, it makes a man go singing to duties, and go singing to his grave, and singing to heaven; whereas others, though gracious, who lack this applicatory knowledge, have their hearts full of fears, and their lives full of sorrows, and so go sighing and mourning to heaven. Those who have a *blemish in their eye* think the sky to be ever cloudy; and nothing is more common to weak spirits, than to be criticizing and contending, etc.

But lest any precious soul should turn this truth into a sword to cut and wound himself, let me desire him to remember, that every believer who has such knowledge which accompanies salvation, has not this applicatory knowledge, which makes so much for the soul's consolation, and which does accompany *some* men's salvation—not *all* men's salvation. If you find your knowledge to be such a knowledge as is before described in the six former particulars, though you have not attained to this applicatory knowledge, yet have you attained to that knowledge which accompanies salvation, and which will, my soul for yours, give you a possession of salvation. This applicatory knowledge which accompanies salvation, is only to be found in such eminent saints, who are high in their communion with God, and who have attained some considerable assurance of their interest in God.

Many men's salvation is accompanied with an applicatory knowledge—but all men's salvation is not accompanied with *an applicatory knowledge of man's particular interest in Christ*, and those blessed favors and benefits which come by him. Your soul may be safe, and your salvation may be sure, though you have not attained unto this appropriating knowledge—but your life cannot be comfortable without this appropriating knowledge; therefore, if you have it not, labor for it as for life. It is a pearl of great price, and if you find it, it will make your soul amend for all your digging, seeking, working, sweating, weeping, etc.

A man does not attain to health by reading Galen's or Hippocrates's medical aphorisms—but by the practical application of them to remove his diseases. You know how to apply it.

(8.) The eighth property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is accompanied and **ATTENDED** with these things:

[1.] The first attendant. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is attended with **holy endeavors, and with heavenly desires, thirstings, and pantings after a further knowledge of God, after clearer visions of God.** Prov 15:14, "The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly." The Hebrew word that is here rendered "seeks" signifies an earnest and diligent seeking; to seek

as an **hungry** man seeks for food; or as a **covetous** man for gold—the more he has, the more he desires; or as a **condemned** man seeks for his pardon; or as the **diseased** man seeks for his cure. The word signifies to seek studiously, laboriously, industriously; to seek by pleading, praying, inquiring, and searching up and down, that we may find what we seek; to seek as men do for hidden treasure. So in Prov 18:15, "The mind of the discerning acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks it."

A man who is divinely taught, will set his heart and his ear, his inward and outward man, to know more and more. Divine knowledge is marvelous sweet, pleasing, comforting, satisfying, refreshing, strengthening, and supporting; and souls who have found the sweetness and usefulness of it, cannot but look and long, breathe and pant after more and more of it. The newborn babe does not more naturally and more earnestly long for the breasts, than a soul who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, does long for more and more tastes of God, 1 Pet 2:2-3. David, under all his knowledge, cries out, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me. My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times," Psalm 119:18-19. Job, under all his knowledge, which was very great, cries out, "Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I won't do it again." Job 34:32.

[2.] The second attendant. A second thing which attends and accompanies that knowledge which accompanies salvation, is **holy endeavors to edify others, to instruct others, to enlighten and inform others in the knowledge of spiritual and heavenly things**. Heavenly light cannot be hidden under a bushel. You may as easily hinder the sun from shining, as you may hinder a gracious soul from diffusing and spreading abroad that knowledge and light that God has given him. The way to get more knowledge, is to communicate that which we have. Thus did Philip of Bethsaida, John 1:45; thus did the woman of Samaria, John 4:28-29; thus did the spouse, Song 5:10-16; thus did that seraphic preacher Paul, Acts 26:29.

Divine light in the soul is like a light in a bright lantern, which shines forth every way; or like a light in a room, or on a beacon, which gives light to others. A Christian who is divinely taught, is like the lamp in the story,

that was always burning and shining, and never went out. So in Gen 18:17,19, "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do; for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." He who communicates his knowledge to others, shall, be both of God's court and counsel; he shall lie in the bosom of God, he shall know the secrets of God.

Prov 15:7, "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge—but the heart of the foolish does not so." The Hebrew word that is here rendered, "disperse," is a metaphor taken from seedsmen scattering abroad their seed in the furrows of the field. Heavenly knowledge is very spreading and diffusive; it is like the sun: the sun casts his beams upward and downward, upon good and upon bad. Just so, divine light in a gracious soul will break forth for the advantage and profit of friends and enemies, of those who are in a state of nature, and of those who are in a state of grace.

Acts 4:18-20, "And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach, in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge you. For *we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard.*" Opposition is the black angel which dogs the gospel at the heels. Divine knowledge is like new wine; it must have vent; it is heavenly fire which will break forth, Jer 5:14, and Jer 20:2.

The bee does store her hive out of all sorts of flowers for the common benefit. Just so, a heavenly Christian sucks sweetness out of every mercy and every duty, out of every providence and out of every ordinance, out of every promise and out of every privilege—that he may give out the more sweetness to others. "We learn—that we may teach," is a proverb among the Rabbis. "And I do therefore lay in, and lay up," says the heathen, "that I may draw forth again, and lay out for the good of many." This heathen [Socrates, etc.,] will rise in judgment against those who monopolize knowledge to themselves, who imprison their light within their own breasts, lest others should outshine and darken them.

Synesius speaks of some, who, having a treasure of rare abilities in

themselves, would as soon part with their hearts as share their abilities. Truly, such men are far off from that knowledge which accompanies salvation; for that knowledge will make a man willing to spend and be spent for the edification, consolation, and salvation of others, 2 Cor 6:10; Gal 4:19. Prov 10:21, "The lips of the righteous feed many."

[3.] The third attendant. A third thing which attends and accompanies that knowledge which accompanies salvation, is **holy zeal, courage, and resolution for God**. Divine knowledge makes a man as bold as a lion, Prov 28:1. Dan 11:32, "The people who know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." So Prov 24:5, "A wise man is strong; yes, a man of knowledge increases strength," or, "He strengthens might," as it is in the Hebrew. Divine light makes a man full of zeal for God; it makes the soul divinely fearless and courageous. Josh 24:15, "Choose whom you will serve; I and my household will serve the Lord." Come what will of it, we will never change our Master, nor leave his service.

Those beams of light which shined in upon Chrysostom, did so heat and warm his heart, that he stoutly tells Eudoxia the empress, that for her covetousness she would be called a second Jezebel; whereupon she sent him a threatening message, to which he returned this answer, "Go tell her, that I fear nothing but sin."

Ah, Christians! there is an earthquake a-coming, and therefore as you would stand fast, as you would not have any earthquakes to make your hearts quake, get this zeal and courage which attends divine knowledge, and then you shall in the midst of all earthquakes be as mount Zion, which can never be moved, Psalm 125:1-2.

Those who write the story of the travels of the apostles, report that Simon the Zealot preached here in England. Ah, England, England! if ever you need some zealots, it is now! Oh how secure, how dull, how drowsy, how sleepy in the midst of dangers are you! For this and other of your abominations, I desire my soul may weep in secret.

[4.] The fourth attendant. The fourth and last thing which attends or accompanies that knowledge which accompanies salvation is, **faith and confidence in God**. Knowledge and faith are twins, they live, and lodge,

and act together; they are two lovers, which may be distinguished one from another—but they cannot be separated one from another.

Psalm 9:10, "They that know your name will put their trust in you; for you, Lord, have not forgotten those who seek you." 2 Tim 1:12, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." I shall not enlarge upon this branch, because I shall speak at large concerning faith in the next particular.

And thus I have showed you from the Scriptures what that **knowledge** is, which accompanies salvation.

**II.** Now, the second thing that I am to show you is, what that **FAITH** is, which accompanies salvation. I have formerly showed you that faith does accompany salvation—but now I will show you **what faith that is, which accompanies salvation**; and that I shall do, by divine assistance, thus:

First, That faith which accompanies salvation, that comprehends salvation, that will possess a man of salvation, is known, by the **OBJECTS** about which it is exercised. And, by the **PROPERTIES** of it.

First, **the OBJECTS about which faith is exercised are these:**

(1.) The first object of faith. First, **the person of Christ** is the foremost object of faith. Christ, as Redeemer, is the immediate object of faith, and God the Father is the ultimate object of faith; for we believe in God through Christ, Rom 6:11; 1 Pet 1:21; 2 Cor 3:4. It is Christ in the promises, which faith deals with. The promise is but the shell, Christ is the kernel; the promise is but the jewel casket, Christ is the gem in it; the promise is but the field, Christ is the treasure which is hidden in that field; the promise is a ring of gold, and Christ is the pearl in that ring; and upon this sparkling, shining pearl, faith delights most to look. Song 3:4, "I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go." So Song 7:5, "The king is held in the galleries."

Faith has two hands, and with both she lays earnest and fast hold on King Jesus. Christ's beauty and glory is very captivating and entrancing. Faith,

when it sees Christ—will lay hold on him. Christ is the principal object about which faith is exercised, for the obtaining of righteousness and everlasting happiness. Acts 16:30-31, "And the jailor said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Christ is in the scriptures held forth to be the object about which faith is most conversant; and the more faith is exercised upon the person of Christ, the more it buds and blossoms, like Aaron's rod. Faith looks upon him as the express image and character of his Father; faith beholds him as the chief of ten thousand; faith sees him to be *the most glorious object in all the world!*

Not but that the Father is also the object of believers' faith, John 14:1. Isa 63:15-16, with many other scriptures. But Christ is the object held forth by the Father for our faith to close with, in respect of our justification and salvation. God is the ultimate or highest object of faith; and Christ the mediate object thereof.

(2.) The second object of faith. Secondly, The second object that faith is exercised about, is **the righteousness of Jesus Christ**. Phil 3:9, "I desire to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." Paul would not be found in a legal righteousness, for he knew all his legal righteousness was but as "filthy rags," Isa 54:6. All his legal righteousness, sewed together, would but make up a coat of patches, a beggar's coat, which is good for nothing but to be cast away; therefore he desired to be found in the righteousness of Christ by faith. He knew that Christ's righteousness was a pure righteousness, a spotless righteousness, a matchless righteousness, a complete righteousness, a perfect righteousness, an absolute righteousness, a glorious righteousness. Faith loves to fix her eye upon that rich and royal robe, that blameless and spotless righteousness of Christ, with which the soul stands gloriously clothed before God, as being all beauteous, as being without spot or wrinkle in the divine account. [Col 2:10; Song 4:7; Rev 14:5; Eph 5:27]

Oh, it is the actings of faith upon this blessed object, this glorious righteousness of Christ, which makes a man intimate and bold with God, which makes a man active and resolute for God, which strengthens a man

against temptations, which supports a man under afflictions, which makes a man long for the day of his dissolution, which makes him prefer his coffin above a prince's crown, the day of his death above the day of his birth; which makes him triumph over sin and Satan, hell and wrath. Adam's righteousness was but the righteousness of a *creature*—but the righteousness about which faith is exercised is the righteousness of a God, Rom 3:21, and Rom 10:3. Adam's righteousness was a *mutable* righteousness, a righteousness that might be sinned away; but the righteousness that a believer's faith is exercised about is an everlasting righteousness, a righteousness that cannot be sinned away, 2 Cor 5:21: Prov 8:18.

The righteousness of angels is but the righteousness of creatures—but the righteousness that the saints are clothed with is the very righteousness of God; and in this respect the lowest saint is more excellent and glorious than the most glorious angel.

Psalm 119:142, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth." The righteousness of Adam was a righteousness subject to shaking, and we know that Satan did shake all his righteousness about his ears, as I may say. Oh but that glorious righteousness about which faith is conversant, is an unshaken righteousness, a righteousness which cannot be shaken: Psalm 36:6, "Your righteousness is like the great mountains," or rather, as it is in the Hebrew, "Your righteousness is like the mountains of God." The Hebrew notes excellent things, by adding the name of God; as cedars of God, Psalm 80:10; rivers of God, Psalm 65:9; wrestlings of God, Gen 30:8; harps of God, Rev 15:2. What more stable than a mountain! and what mountain so stable as the mountain of God! The mountains cannot be shaken, no more can that glorious righteousness of Christ, about which a believer's faith is exercised.

Adam's righteousness was a low righteousness, a righteousness within his own reach, and a righteousness within Satan's reach; it was not so high—but Adam could lay his hand upon it, as I may say; it was not so high—but Satan could reach to the top of it, yes, to the overtopping of it, as we have all found by woeful experience. Oh—but that righteousness which faith is conversant about, is a righteousness of such a height, as that neither

Satan nor the world can reach to it: Psalm 71:15-16,19, "My mouth shall show forth your righteousness and your salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours alone. Your righteousness also, O God, is very high, who has done great things: O God, who is like unto you?"

This glorious righteousness of Christ, about which faith is busied, is called the righteousness of faith, because faith apprehends it, and applies it, and feeds upon it, and delights in it, Rom 3:28. Rom 4:13, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law—but through the righteousness of faith." Rom 9:30, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." The righteousness of Christ about which faith is employed, is called the righteousness of faith, because faith puts on this righteousness upon the soul. Faith wraps the soul up in this righteousness of Christ, and so justifies it before God instrumentally.

Rom 10:6. "but the righteousness which is by faith," that is which is apprehended by faith, etc. Mark, faith is only the instrument; it cannot be the substance of that righteousness, as it were, whereby we are justified and saved,

- (1.) because it is imperfect;
- (2.) the acts of faith are transient;
- (3.) then should men have something within them whereof to boast;
- (4.) faith is a part of inherent holiness;
- (5.) then some men should be justified more, and some less, according to the different measures of faith in them, Gen 27:15; Rom 5:1; 1 Pet 1:8; Acts 10:48.

The actings of faith on this glorious righteousness does most strengthen the soul: Isa 45:24, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness

and strength." The actings of faith on this blessed righteousness, does most gladden and rejoice the soul: Isa 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garment of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness." The actings of faith upon this complete righteousness of Christ, renders souls just and righteous, pure and holy—in the account of God: Rom 10:4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone who believes." Christ fulfills the law for believers, and they by believing do fulfill the law in him; and so Christ by doing, and they by believing in him who does it, do fulfill the law, and so are reputed fair and spotless, complete and perfect, before the throne of God.

Faith's putting this righteousness on the soul, brings down blessings upon the soul. When Jacob had put on his elder brother's garment, he carried the blessing away. The actings of faith upon this peerless righteousness of Christ, brings down the blessing of peace, and the blessing of joy, and the blessing of remission of sins; and, in a word, all other blessings that contributes to the making us blessed here and happy hereafter, etc.

(3.) The third object of faith. Thirdly, The third object that faith is exercised about is, the **precious promises**, which are a Christian's magna charta.

2 Pet 1:4. Mark, the whole word of God is the object of faith; but the promises, more especially, are the prime object about which faith is most conversant.

As every precious stone has a rich virtue in it, so has every promise. The promises are a precious book, every leaf drops myrrh and mercy; and upon these precious promises, precious faith looks and lives. From these breasts, faith sucks comfort and sweetness. Psalm 119:49-50, "Remember your word (that is, your promise) unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has quickened me." So in Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;" Heb 11:13, "These all died in faith (or according to faith), not having received the promises—but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and

embraced them" (or, as the Greek has it, saluted them by faith; they kissed the promises, and kissed Christ in the promises), "and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." It would be an endless thing to show you how the faith of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and other saints has been acted and exercised upon promises of sanctification, upon promises of justification, upon promises of salvation, upon promises of glorification, upon promises of protection, upon promises for direction, upon promises for support, etc. Look! as the lamp lives upon the oil, and the child upon the breasts, so does faith upon the promises.

For the further advantage and comfort of your souls in eyeing the promises, let me give you these **two sweet hints**:

First, **In your looking upon the promises, mind most, eye most, spiritual promises, absolute promises**, namely, such as you see here— Jer 32:40-41; Ezek 11:19-20; Ezek 36:25-27; Isa 42:1; Ezek 20:41-43; Psalm 91:15; Isa 65:24; Jer 33:3; Isa 32:15; Ezek 34:30-31, with many others of the like import. These spiritual and absolute promises are of nearest and greatest concernment to you; these carry in them most of the heart of Christ, the love of Christ, the goodwill of Christ; these are of greatest use to satisfy you, and to settle you when you are wavering; to support you when you are falling; to recover you when you are wandering; to comfort you when you are fainting; to counsel you when you are staggering, etc. Therefore make these your choicest and your chief companions, especially when it is night within your souls, when you are sensible of much sin and but a little grace, of much corruption but of little consolation, of much deadness but of little quickness, of much hardness but of little tenderness, of many fears and but a little faith.

The Jews under the law had more temporal promises than spiritual—but we under the gospel have far more spiritual promises than temporal; therefore sit down at this fire, and be warmed; drink of these springs, and be satisfied; taste of these delicacies, and be cheered. Let the eye of faith be cast upon all the promises—but fixed upon spiritual promises, upon absolute promises; they will have the greatest influence upon the heart to holiness, and to prepare it for everlasting happiness. Spiritual and absolute promises are the most precious mines to enrich you; in them you

will find the greatest pearls of price.

Look not only upon some of the riches, the jewels, the pearls, that be wrapped up in the promises—but enlarge and expatiate your understandings to an effectual contemplation of all those riches and treasures which God has laid up in the promises. Cast not the eye of your faith only upon one beam of the sun—but endeavor to see all the beams of the sun; look not upon one branch of the tree of life—but upon every branch of that tree; look not upon one bunch of the grapes of Canaan—but look upon the whole land. Haman took notice, yes, and would have his friends take notice, of all his greatness, honors, and riches, Esther 5:10-12; and will not you stir up your hearts to see all those riches and pleasures that be in precious promises?

As understanding heirs, when they come to read over their documents, they will see what they will inherit in houses, what in goods, what in lands, what in money, what in jewels, what at home, what abroad; they will not sit down and say, 'Well! we find in our documents, that such and such land is ours, and look no further.' No, no, they will look all over, and take exact notice of everything; they will say, 'We have so much land, and so much money, etc.' O beloved, there is much marrow and fatness, there is much honey and sweetness, much grace and glory wrapped up in the promises. Oh press them, and squeeze them until you have obtained all the riches and sweetness which is in them.

Ah, Christians! did you this, God would be more honored, the promises more prized, your graces more strengthened, your fears more abated, your hearts more warmed and engaged, and your lives more regulated, and Satan more easily and frequently vanquished. And so much for this third object, about which faith is exercised.

(4.) Fourthly, The fourth object of faith. The fourth object and last that I shall mention that faith is set and fixed upon is, **that glory, blessedness, and life, which God has laid up for those who love him.** The things of eternity are the greatest things, they are the most excellent things. They are most excellent in their natures, in their causes, in their operations, in their effects, in their ends; and upon these faith looks and lives. Faith realizes eternal realities; it makes absent things

present. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb 11:1. The substance, that is, that which gives a substantial being to the things of eternal, life. Faith alters the tenses; it puts the future into the present, Psalm 60:6; Heb 12:2. Faith makes absent glory present, absent riches present, absent pleasures present, absent favors present. Faith brings an invisible God, and sets him before the soul. Moses by faith saw him who was invisible. Faith brings down the recompense of reward, and sets it really though spiritually before the soul. Faith sets divine favor before the soul. It sets peace, it sets pardon of sin, it sets the righteousness of Christ, it sets the joy of heaven, it sets salvation, before the soul; it makes all these things very near and obvious to the soul: "Faith is the evidence of things not seen."

Faith makes invisible things, visible; absent things, present; things which are afar off, to be very near unto the soul—by convincing demonstrations, by arguments and reasons drawn from the word, 2 Cor 4:17-18, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen—but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal." Faith looks with a diligent eye, as men do at the mark whereat they shoot. Faith trades in invisible things, in eternal things. Its eye is always upwards, like the fish *uranoscopos*, which has but one eye, and yet looks continually up to heaven. Heb 6:19; Rom 8:18; Heb 10:34; Acts 7:56-56. An adopted heir to a crown cannot but have his heart at court; his mind and thoughts will be upon his future glorious condition: he will be still a-creating ideas and images of it.

Faith enters within the veil, and fixes her eye upon those glorious things of eternity, which are so **many** that they exceed number, so **great** that they exceed measure, so **precious** that they are above all estimation. Says faith, "The spangled skies are but the footstool of my Father's house; and if the footstool, the outside, is so glorious, oh how glorious is his throne! Truly, in heaven there is that life which cannot be expressed, that light which cannot be comprehended, that joy which cannot be fathomed, that sweetness which cannot be dissipated, that feast which cannot be consumed; and upon these pearls of glory I look and live!"

And thus I have showed you the choice and precious objects about which that faith is exercised which accompanies salvation.

I shall now in the next place show you the **PROPERTIES of that faith which accompanies salvation**, and they are these that follow.

[1.] The first property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this: **it puts forth itself into vital operation**. It makes a man full of life and activity for God; it will make a man diligent and venturesome in the work and ways of God. Faith is a most active quality in itself, and so it makes a Christian most active. Faith is a doing thing, and it makes the person doing. Faith will not allow the soul to be idle. Faith is like the virtuous woman in the last chapter of the Proverbs, who puts her hand to every work, who would allow none of her handmaids to be idle.

Saving faith puts the soul upon **grieving** for sin, upon **combating** with sin, upon **weeping** over sin, upon **trembling** at the occasions of sin, upon **resisting** temptations that lead to sin, upon **fighting** it out to the death with sin, Zech 12:10. Faith puts a man upon walking with God, upon waiting on God, upon working for God, upon wrestling with God, upon bearing for God, and upon parting with anything for God. Heb 11 is a full proof of these things; Gal 2:20. Faith makes pious duties to be easy to the soul, to be delightful to the soul, to be profitable to the soul. Faith makes the soul to be serious and conscientious in doing, to be careful and faithful in doing, to be delightful and cheerful in doing, to be diligent and faithful in doing. James 2:17-26. Faith looks to precepts as well as to promises: Psalm 119:66, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge; for I have believed your commandments." That faith which is not a working faith is not saving faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a dead faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a deluding faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a worthless faith; that faith that is not a working faith will leave a man short of heaven and happiness in the latter day.

Faith which accompanies salvation is better at doing than at thinking, at obeying than at disputing, at walking than at talking: Titus 3:8, "This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good

works." The word signifies to bend their wits, and beat their brains, to maintain good works, Isa 65:24; Gen 4:4; 2 Pet 3:11; Song 2:14. Luther prefers the lowest work of a country Christian or poor maid above all the victories and triumphs of Alexander and of Julius Cesar, Matt 27:66; Isa 41:10-11; Heb 13:5-6; Ezek 36:26-27, etc. Faith will make a man endeavor to be good, yes, to be best, at everything he undertakes. It is not leaves but fruit, not words but works—which God expects; and if we cross his expectation, we frustrate our own salvation, we further our own condemnation. Faith makes the soul much in doing, abundant in working, and that partly by persuading the soul that all its works, all its duties and services, shall be owned and accepted of God, as in Isa 56:7, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." **Faith assures the soul that every prayer, every sigh, every groan, every tear is accepted.** And this makes the soul pray much, and sigh much, and mourn much.

Again, **faith spreads the promises of divine assistance before the soul.** Oh! says faith, here, O soul, is assistance suitable to the work required. And this makes a man work, as for life; it makes a man work and sweat, and sweat and work.

Again, **faith sets the recompense, the reward, before the soul,** Heb 11:25-26. Oh! says faith, look here, soul, here is a great reward for a little work; here is great wages for weak and imperfect services; here is an infinite reward for a finite work. Work, yes, work hard, says faith, O believing soul, for your actions in passing pass not away; every good work is as a grain of seed for eternal life. **There is a resurrection of works as well as of people,** and in that day wicked men shall see that it is not a vain thing to serve God; they shall see the most doing souls to be the most shining souls, to be the most advanced and rewarded. Oh the sight of this crown, of this recompense, makes souls to abound in the work of the Lord, they knowing that their labor is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor 15:58. One good work of a Christian is more precious than heaven and earth, says Luther, Rev 14:13.

Again, **faith draws from Christ's fullness; it sucks virtue and**

**strength from Christ's breasts.** Faith looks upon Christ as a head, and so draws from him; it looks upon Christ as a husband, and so draws from him; it looks upon him as a fountain, and so draws from him; it looks upon him as a sea, as an ocean of goodness, and so draws from him; it looks upon him as a father, Col 1:19, and so draws from him; it looks upon him as a friend, and so draws from him, John 1:16. And this divine power and strength sets the soul a-working hard for God; it makes the soul full of motion, full of action.

In a word, faith is such a working grace as sets all other graces a-working. Faith has an influence upon every grace; it is like a silver chain which runs through a set of pearls; it puts strength and vivacity into all other virtues. **Love** touched by a hand of faith flames forth; **hope** fed at faith's table grows strong, and casts anchor within the veil, Acts 5 and Acts 16; Rom 15:13. **Joy, courage, and zeal** being smiled upon by faith, is made invincible and unconquerable, etc. Look! what oil is to the wheels, what weights are to the clock, what wings are to the bird, what sails are to the ship, that faith is to all pious duties and services, except it be winter with the soul.

And thus you see, that that faith which accompanies salvation is a working faith, a lively faith, and not such a dead faith as most please and deceive themselves with forever.

[2.] The second property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this: **it is of a GROWING and INCREASING nature.** It is like the waters of the sanctuary, which rise higher and higher, as Ezekiel speaks. It is like a tender plant, which naturally grows higher and higher; it is like a grain of mustard-seed, which though it be the least of all seeds, yet by a divine power it grows up beyond all human expectations, Matt 13:32.

Faith is imperfect, as all other graces are—but yet it grows and increases gradually. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, Psalm 92:12-14. Now, the palm tree never loses his leaf or fruit, says Pliny. Rom 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." As a gracious soul is still a-adding knowledge to knowledge, love to love, fear to fear, zeal to zeal, so he is a-adding faith to faith. A gracious soul knows, that if he is rich in faith—he

cannot be poor in other graces; he knows the growth of faith will be as "the former and the latter rain" to all other graces; he knows that *there is no way to outgrow his fears but by growing in faith*; he knows that all the pleasant fruits of paradise, namely, joy, comfort, and peace—flourish as faith flourishes; he knows that he has much work upon his hands, that he has many things to do, many temptations to withstand, many mercies to improve, many burdens to bear, many corruptions to conquer, many duties to perform. And this makes the believing soul thus to reason with God: 'Ah, Lord! whatever I am weak in, let me be strong in faith; whatever dies, let faith live; whatever decays, let faith flourish. An old man being once asked if he grew in grace, answered, Yes, doubtless I believe I do; for God has said in his word that we shall flourish and bring forth fruit in old age. Lord, let me be low in repute, low in parts, low in estate, so you will make me high in faith. Lord! let me be poor in anything, poor in everything, so you will make me rich in faith. Lord! let the eye of faith be more opened, let the eye of faith be more quick-sighted, let the eye of faith be the more raised, and it shall be enough to me, though Joseph be not, though Benjamin be not.

It was the glory of the Thessalonians, that "their faith grew exceedingly," 2 Thess 1:3. A growth in faith will render a man glorious in life, lovely in death, and twice blessed in the morning of the resurrection. That is but a wooden leg that grows not, no more is that any more but a wooden faith, a counterfeit faith, that grows not. So will *not* a growth in honors, a growth in riches, a growth in notions, a growth in worldly knowledge. That faith which accompanies salvation unites the soul to Christ, and keeps the soul up in communion with Christ. And **from that union and communion which the soul has with Christ, flows such a divine power and virtue, that causes faith to grow.** The union between Christ and the saints is the nearest and the highest union; and so it advantages their graces, and advances them to a higher degree of happiness than any other creatures whatever, John 17. Christ would have his people one with him and the Father, though not essentially, nor personally, yet really and spiritually.

**Yet that no weak believer may be stumbled, or saddened, let them remember—**

(1.) That though that faith which accompanies salvation be a growing faith, yet **there are some certain seasons and cases wherein a man may decay in his faith, and wherein he may not have the exercise and the actings of his faith.** This blessed *babe of grace* may be cast into a deep slumber; this *heavenly pearl* may be so buried under the thick clay of this world, and under the ashes of corruption and temptation, as that for a time it may neither stir, nor grow—as might be shown in Abraham, David, Solomon, Peter, and others.

(2.) Secondly, Remember this, that **the strongest faith at times is subject to shakings**, as the strongest men are to faintings, as the stoutest ships are to tossings, as the wisest men are to doubtings, as the brightest stars are to twinklings, etc. Therefore, if at certain times you should not be sensible of the growth of your faith, yet do not conclude that you have no faith. Faith may be in the root when it is not in the act. There may be life in the root of the tree, when there are neither leaves, blossoms, nor fruit upon the tree; the life which is in the root will show itself at the spring, and so will the habits of faith break forth into acts, when the Sun of righteousness shall shine forth, and make it a pleasant spring to your soul. And thus much for this second particular.

[3.] The third property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this: **it makes those things which are great and glorious in the world's account—to be very little and low in the eyes of the believer.** Faith makes a believer to live in the land of *promise* as in a strange country, Heb 11:9. It is nothing to live as a stranger in a strange land—but to live as a stranger in the land of promise, this is the excellency and glory of faith.

Faith will make a man set his feet where other men sets their hearts. Faith looks with an eye of scorn and disdain upon the things of this world. 'What,' says faith, 'are earthly treasures, compared to the treasures of heaven? What are stones compared to silver, dross compared to gold, darkness compared to light, hell compared to heaven?' Matt 6:19-20. 'No more,' says faith, 'What are all the treasures, pleasures, and delights of this world, compared to the light of your countenance, to the joy of your Spirit, to the influences of your grace?'

Psalm 4:6-7. I see nothing, says David, in this wide world, only "your commandments are exceeding broad." Faith makes David account his crown nothing, his treasures nothing, his victories nothing, his attendants nothing, etc. Faith will make a man write '*worthless*' upon the best of worldly things; it will make a man trample upon the pearls of this world, as upon dross and dirt, Heb 11:24-26. Faith deadens a man's heart to the things of this world: "I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me," says Paul, Phil 3:8; Gal 6:14. This world, says faith, is not my house, my habitation, my home; I look for a better country, for a better city, for a better home, 2 Cor 5:1-2. He who is the heir to a crown, a kingdom, looks with an eye of scorn and disdain upon everything below a kingdom, below a crown. Faith tells the soul that it has a crown, a kingdom in expectation; and this makes the soul to scorn the things of this world, 2 Tim 4:8.

Faith raises and sets the soul high. "And has raised us up together, and has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," says the apostle, Eph 2:6. Faith makes a man live high: "Our life is in heaven," Phil 3:20; and the higher any man lives, the less, the lower will the things of this world be in his eye.

The view of Lucian is very pleasant, who going to the top of a high mountain, saw all the affairs of men, and looked on their greatest, richest, and most glorious cities, as **little birds' nests**. Faith sets the soul upon the hill of God, the mountain of God, that is, a high mountain; and from thence, faith gives the soul a sight, a prospect of all things here below. And, ah! how like birds' nests do all the riches, honors, and glories of this world look and appear to them, that faith has set upon God's high hill.

Faith having set Luther upon this high hill, he protests that God should not put him off with these poor low things. Faith set Moses high, it set him among invisibles; and that made him look upon all the treasures, pleasures, riches, and glories of Egypt, as little birds' nests, as molehills, as dross and dirt, as things that were too little and too low for him to set his heart upon. Truly, when once faith has given a man a sight, a prospect of heaven, all things on earth will be looked upon as little and low. And so much for this third property of faith.

[4.] The fourth property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this: **it purifies the heart, it is a heart purifying faith.** "Purifying their hearts by faith," Acts 15:9. Faith has two hands, one to lay hold on Christ, and another to sweep the heart, which is Christ's house. Faith knows that Christ is of a dove-like nature; he loves to lie clean and sweet. Faith has a neat housewife's hand, as well as an eagle's eye. Faith is as good at purging out of sin, as it is at discovering of sin. There is a cleansing quality in faith, as well as a healing quality in faith. Sound faith will purge the soul from the love of sin, from a delight in sin, and from the reign and dominion of sin, Ezek 16. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law—but under grace," Rom 6:14,21.

Now faith purges and cleanses the heart from sin, sometimes by pressing and putting God to make good the promises of sanctification. Faith takes that promise in Jer 33:8, "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me." This is an allusion to the purifications prescribed in the law for the cleansing of polluted persons, till which purifications were performed they could not be admitted into the camp or congregation. And that promise in Mic 7:19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities, and you will cast all their sins into the bottom of the sea;" and that promise in Psalm 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, you shall purge them away;" and that promise in Isa 1:25, "And I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your sin;" and spreads them before the Lord, and will never leave urging and pressing, seeking and suing, until God makes them good.

Faith makes the soul divinely impudent, divinely shameless. 'Lord!' says faith, 'are not these your own words? Have you said it, and shall it not come to pass? Are you not a faithful God? Is not your honor engaged to make good the promises which you have made? Arise, O God, and let my sins be scattered; turn your hand upon me, and let my sins be purged.' And thus faith purifies the heart.

Again, sometimes faith purifies the heart from sin, by engaging against sin in Christ's strength, as David engaged against Goliath, 1 Sam 17:47, not in his own strength—but in the strength and name of the Lord

Almighty. Faith leads the soul directly to God, and engages God against sin, so as that the combat is changed, and made now rather between God and sin than between sin and the soul; and so sin comes to fall before the power and glorious presence of God.

That is a choice word, Psalm 61:2, "From the ends of the earth will I cry to you, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Look! as a child who is attacked by one who is stronger than he, cries out to his father to help him, and to fight for him against his enemy. Just so, faith, being sensible of its own weakness and inability to get the victory over sin, cries out to Christ, who is stronger than the strong man, and so Christ binds the strong man, and casts him out. Faith tells the soul, that all purposes, resolutions, and endeavors, without Christ, will never set the soul above its sins, they will never purify the heart from sin; therefore faith engages Christ, and casts the main of the work upon Christ, and so it purges the soul from sin.

Luther reports of Staupicius, a German divine, that he acknowledged, before he came to understand the free and powerful grace of Christ, that he vowed and resolved a hundred times against some particular sin, and could never get power over it; he could never get his heart purified from it, until he came to see that he trusted too much to his own resolutions, and too little to Jesus Christ; but when his faith had engaged Christ against his sin, he had the victory.

Again, **faith purifies the heart from sin, by the application of Christ's blood.** Faith makes a plaster of Christ's blessed blood, and lays it on upon the soul's sores, and so cures it. Faith makes a heavenly purgative of this blessed blood, and gives it to the soul, and so makes it vomit up that poison which it has drunk in. It is the excellency of faith, that it can turn the blood of Christ both into food and into physic. Faith tells the soul, that it is not all the tears in the world, nor all the water in the sea, which can wash away the uncleanness of the soul; it is only the blood of Christ which can make a blackmoor white; it is only the blood of Christ which can cure a leprous Naaman, which can cure a leprous soul. 'This fountain of blood,' says faith, 'is the only fountain which can wash heart from all uncleanness and filthiness of flesh and spirit.' Zech 13:1. Those spots which a Christian finds in his own heart, can only be washed

out in the blood of the Lamb, by a hand of faith.

Again, **faith purifies the soul from sin, by putting the soul upon heart-purifying ordinances, and by mixing and mingling itself with ordinances:** "The word profited them not," says the apostle, "because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard it," Heb 4:2. Faith is such an excellent ingredient, that it makes all potions work for the good of the soul, for the purifying of the soul, and for the bettering of the soul. Yet no potion, no means will profit the soul, if this heavenly ingredient is not mixed with it. Now, faith puts a man upon praying, upon hearing, upon the fellowship of the saints, upon public duties, upon family duties, and upon closet duties; and faith then comes and joins with the soul, and mixes herself with these soul-purifying ordinances, and so makes them effectual for the purifying of the soul more and more from all filthiness and uncleanness.

Faith puts out all her virtue and efficacy in ordinances, to the purging of souls from their dross and tin; not that faith in this life shall wholly purify the soul from the indwelling of sin, or from the motions or operations of sin, no; for then we would have our heaven in this world, and then we might bid ordinances adieu. But that faith which accompanies salvation does naturally purify and cleanse the heart from the remainders of sin by degrees. Sound faith is still a-making the heart more and more neat and clean—that the king of glory may delight in his habitation, that he may not remove his gracious—but may abide with the soul forever. And thus you see that that faith which accompanies salvation is a heart-purifying faith. Sin is like the wild fig tree, or ivy in the wall, cut off stump, body, bough, and branches, yet some sprigs or other will sprout out again, until the wall be plucked down, etc.

(5.) The fifth property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this: **it is soul-softening, it is soul-mollifying.** Oh nothing breaks the heart of a sinner like faith. Peter believes soundly—and weeps bitterly, Matt 26:75; Mary Magdalene believes much—and weeps much, Luke 7:44. Faith sets a wounded Christ, a bruised Christ, a despised Christ, a pierced Christ, a bleeding Christ—before the soul, and this makes the soul sit down and weep bitterly: "I will pour upon the house of David, the Spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall *look* upon him whom they

have pierced, and they shall mourn for him" (all gospel-mourning flows from believing), "as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one who is in bitterness for his firstborn," Zech 12:10, etc. Oh! the sight of those wounds which their sins have made, will wound their hearts through and through; it will make them lament over Christ with a bitter lamentation. They say nothing will dissolve the adamant but the blood of a goat. Ah! nothing will kindly, sweetly, and effectually break the hardened heart of a sinner—but faith's beholding the blood of Christ trickling down his sides.

Pliny reports of a serpent, that when it stings, it fetches all the blood out of the body; but it was never heard that ever any sweat blood but Christ, and the very thoughts of this makes the believing soul to sit down sweating and weeping. That Christ should love man when he was most unlovely, that man's extreme misery should but inflame Christ's affections of love and mercy—this melts the believing soul. That Christ should leave the eternal bosom of his Father; that he who was equal with God should come in the form of a servant; that he who was clothed with glory, should be wrapped in rags; that he whom the heaven of heavens could not contain should be cradled in a manger; that from his cradle to his cross, his whole life should be a life of sorrows and sufferings; that the judge of all flesh should be condemned; that the Lord of life should be put to death; that he who was his Father's joy should in anguish of spirit cry out, *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* that that **head** which was crowned with honor, should be crowned with thorns; that those **eyes** which were as a flame of fire, which were clearer than the sun, should be closed up by the darkness of death; that those **ears** which were accustomed to hear nothing but hallelujahs, should hear nothing but blasphemies; that that **face** which was white and ruddy should be spit upon by the beastly Jews; that that **tongue** which spoke as never any man spoke, yes, as never any angel spoke, should be accused of blasphemy; that those **hands** which swayed both a golden scepter and an iron rod, and those **feet** that were as fine brass, should be nailed to the cross—and all this for man's transgression, for man's rebellion! Oh! the sight of these things, the believing of these things, the acting of faith on these things, makes a gracious soul to break and bleed, to sigh and groan, to mourn and lament! That faith which accompanies salvation is more or

less a heartbreaking, a heart-melting faith.

(6.) The sixth property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this: **it is a world-conquering faith, it is a world-overcoming faith.** 1 John 5:4, "For whoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." Faith overcomes the **frowning** world, the **fawning** world, the **tempting** world, and the **persecuting** world, and that it does thus:

(1.) **Faith, by uniting the soul to Christ, does interest the soul in all the victories and conquests of Christ, and so makes the soul a conqueror with Christ:** John 16:33, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace; in the world you shall have tribulation—but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." We have to deal but with a conquered enemy; our Jesus has given the world a mortal wound; we have nothing to do but to set our feet upon a subdued enemy, and to sing it out with the apostle, "Over all these we are more than conquerors," Rom 8:37.

(2.) **Faith overcomes the world, by outbidding sights.** Faith outbids the world, and so makes the soul victorious. The world set honors, pleasures, etc., before Moses—but his faith outbid the world. Faith presents the recompense of reward, it brings down all the glory, pleasures, and treasures of heaven, of the eternal world, and sets them before the soul; and so it overtops and overcomes the world by outbidding it. So Christ, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb 12:2.

(3.) **Faith overcomes the world, by telling the soul that all things are its own.** Says faith—This God is your God, this Christ is your Christ, this righteousness is your righteousness, this promise is your promise, this crown is your crown, this glory is your glory, these treasures are your treasures, these pleasures are your pleasures. "All things are yours," says the apostle, "things present are yours, and things to come are yours," 1 Cor 3:22. Thus the faith of the martyrs acted, and so made them victorious over a tempting and a persecuting world, Heb 11:35.

(4.) **Faith overcomes the world, by valuing the things of this**

**world as they are.** Most men over-value them, they put too great a price upon them; they make the world an idol, and then they cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Oh but faith now gives all things their correct value; faith presents all worldly things as impotent, as mixed, as mutable, as momentary—in comparison with the soul, and so makes the soul victorious. Faith makes a man to see the prickles which are on every rose, the thorns which are in every crown, the scabs which are under every shirt, the poison which is in the golden cup, the snare which is in the delicious dish, the spot which is in the shining pearl—and so makes a Christian count and call all these things, as indeed they are, "vanity of vanities!" And so the believing soul slights the world, and tramples upon it as dirt and dross. And lastly,

(5.) **Faith overcomes the world, by presenting Jesus Christ to the soul as a most excellent, glorious, and comprehensive good, as such a good which comprehends all good.** There is no good without Christ, the chief good. Christ is that one good which comprehends all good; that one excellency which comprehends all excellencies. All the beauties, all the rarities, all the excellencies, all the riches, all the glories of all created creatures—are comprehended in Christ. As the worth and value of many pieces of copper are less than one precious jewel, so all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth is epitomized in Christ; and the sight and sense of this makes the soul to triumph over the world. Faith presents more excellencies and better excellencies in Christ, than can be lost for Christ, and so it makes the soul a conqueror.

I have been long upon these things, because they are of much weight and worth. I shall be the briefer in what follows. But before I leave this point, I shall give you these hints:

In the first place, I shall give you some hints concerning strong faith.

In the second place, I shall give you some hints concerning weak faith.

My design in both is, to keep precious souls from mistaking and fainting. Concerning **STRONG faith**, I shall give you these short hints:

(1.) The first hint. Strong faith will make a soul resolute in resisting, and happy in conquering the strongest temptations, Heb 11:3, etc., Dan 6:10, etc.

(2.) The second hint. Strong faith will make a man own God, and cleave to God, and hang upon God, in the face of the greatest difficulties and dangers, Rom 4:18, etc., Psalm 44:16-18. So Job will trust in God, though he slays him, Job 13:15-16.

(3.) The third hint. Strong faith will enable men to prefer Christ's cross before the world's crown, to prefer tortures before deliverance, Heb 11:3, etc.

(4.) The fourth hint. Strong faith will make a soul divinely fearless, and divinely courageous. It will make a man live as the child lives in the family—without fear or care, Psalm 23:4. Dan 3:16, "We are not afraid to answer you, O king; our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us," etc. Mic 7:7-9.

(5.) The fifth hint. Strong faith will make a man cleave to the promise, when providence runs cross to the promise, Num 10:29; 2 Chron 20:9-11. Psalm 60:6-7, "God has spoken in his holiness," says David; "I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine," etc. Though David was in his banishment, yet his faith accounts all his, as if he had all in possession, and that because God had spoken in his holiness. His faith hangs upon the promise, though present providences did run cross to the promise, etc. So Joshua and Caleb, Num 14:22-24.

(6.) The sixth hint. Strong faith will make men comply with those commands which most cross them in their most desirable comforts, Heb 11:8-9, and Heb 10:34; Gen 22.

Now, O precious souls! you are not to argue against your own souls, that surely you have no faith, because that your faith does not lead you forth to such and such noble things. You may have *true* faith, though you have not so *great* faith as others of the Lord's worthies have had. As it is dangerous to make false definitions of sin, so it is dangerous to make

false definitions of grace.

The philosophers say that there are eight **degrees** of heat. Now, if a man should define heat only by the highest degree, then all other degrees will not be considered as being heat. So if a man should define faith only by the highest degrees and operations of it, then that will not be considered as being faith—which indeed is faith, as I shall presently show.

In the second place, I shall give you some hints concerning **WEAK faith**.

(1.) The first hint. **A weak faith does as much justify and as much unite a man to Christ—as a strong faith does.** It gives a man as much propriety and interest in Christ as the strongest faith in the world. The babe has as much interest in the father, as he who is of grown years. A weak faith gives a man as good a title to Christ, and all the precious things of eternity, as the strongest faith in the world. A weak hand may receive a pearl—as well as the strong hand of a giant. Faith is a receiving of Christ, John 1:12.

(2.) The second hint. The promises of eternal happiness and blessedness are not given only to the *strength* of faith—but to the *truth* of faith; not to the *highest degrees* of faith—but to the *reality* of faith. He who believes shall be saved, though he has not such a strength of faith as to stop the mouth of lions, as to work miracles, as to move mountains, as to subdue kingdoms, as to quench the violence of fire, as to resist strong temptations, as to rejoice under great persecutions, Heb 11:33-35. No man that is saved upon the account of the *strength* of his faith—but upon the account of the *truth* of his faith. In the great day Christ will not bring balances to *weigh* men's graces—but a touchstone to *try* their graces; he will not look so much at the *strength* as at the *truth* of their graces.

(3.) The third hint. The weakest faith shall grow stronger and stronger. A weak believer shall go on from faith to faith. Christ is the finisher as well as the author of our faith, Rom 1:17; Heb 12:2. *Christ will nurse up this blessed babe, faith, and will not allow it to be strangled in its infancy.* He who has begun a good work will perfect it, Phil 1:6; 1 Pet 1:5. Christ is as well bound to look after our graces as he is to look after our souls. Grace is Christ's work, therefore it must prosper in his hand; he is the

great builder and repairer of our graces; he will turn your **spark** into a flame, your **drop** into an ocean, your **penny** into a pound, your **mite** into a million, Matt 12:20, and Matt 13:32. Therefore do not sit down discouraged because your faith is weak. That which is sowed in weakness, shall rise in power. Your weak faith shall have a glorious resurrection. Christ will not allow such a pearl of great price to remain buried under a clod of earth.

(4.) The fourth hint. A little faith is faith, as a spark of fire is fire, a drop of water is water, a little star is a star, a little pearl is a pearl. Truly, your little faith is a jewel which God does highly prize and value; and your little faith will make you put a higher price upon Christ and grace than upon all the world, Matt 18:10; 1 Pet 2:7. Well! remember this, that the least measure of true faith will bring you to salvation, and possess you of salvation—as well as the greatest measure. A little faith accompanies salvation—as well as a great faith; a weak faith—as well as a strong faith. Therefore do not say, O precious soul, that you have not that faith which accompanies salvation, because you have not such a strong faith, or such and such a high degree of faith. **A GREAT faith will yield a man a heaven here; a LITTLE faith will yield him a heaven hereafter.**

**III.** The third thing that I am to show you is, what that **REPENTANCE** is, which accompanies salvation. That repentance *does* accompany salvation, I have formerly showed. Now, I shall manifest in the following particulars what that repentance is, which accompanies salvation, which comprehends salvation.

(1.) The first property. First, That repentance which accompanies salvation, is **a general, a universal change of the whole man**; a change in every part—though it be but in part. That repentance which accompanies salvation changes both heart and life, word and work; it makes an Ethiopian an Israelite, a leper an angel. "Wash, make yourself clean;" there is the change of your hearts. "Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well," Isa 1:16-18; there is the change of their practices.

So the prophet Ezekiel, "Cast away all your transgressions," says he, "whereby you have transgressed;" there is the change of life: "And make a

new heart, and a new spirit," Ezek 18:30-32; there is the change of the heart. True repentance is a thorough change both of the mind and manners. That repentance which accompanies salvation works a change in the whole man; in all the qualities of the inward man, and in all the actions of the outward man. The **understanding** is turned from darkness to light; the **will** from a sinful servility to a holy liberty; the **affections** from disorder into order; the **heart** from hardness into softness. So in the outward man, the lustful **eye** is turned into an eye of chastity; the wanton **ear** is turned into an obedient ear; the **hands** of bribery are turned into hands of liberality; and the wandering **feet** of vanity are turned into ways of purity. And truly, that repentance which changes a man in some part—but not in every part; which only makes a man a Herod, or an Agrippa, a *half* Christian, an *almost* Christian—that repentance will never bring down heaven into a man's bosom here, nor never bring a man up to heaven hereafter!

That repentance which accompanies salvation makes a man all glorious within, and his raiment to be of embroidered gold, Psalm 45:13; it stamps the image of God both upon the inward and the outward man; it makes the heart like the ark, all gold within; and it makes the life like the sun, all glorious without.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, That repentance which accompanies salvation is **a total turning as well as a universal turning; a turning from all sin, without any reservation or exception.** "I hate and abhor every false way—but I love your law," Psalm 119:163. So in Ezek 18:30, "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall." So in Ezek 33:11. **As Noah's flood drowned his nearest and his dearest friends, so the flood of penitent tears drowns men's nearest and their dearest lusts!** Be they Isaacs or Benjamins, be they right eyes or right hands, repentance which accompanies salvation puts all to the sword; it spares neither father nor mother, neither Agag nor Achan; it casts off all the rags of old Adam; it leaves not a horn nor a hoof behind; it throws down every stone of the old building; it scrapes off all leviathan's scales; it washes away all leprous spots. And God has engaged himself to

cleanse the hearts of his people from all sin, and to set their souls against all sin, Jer 33:8; Ezek 36:25,29,33; 1 John 1:9. Repentance for sin is worth nothing, without repentance from sin.

Ezek 14:6, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." **Sin is a turning the back upon God, and the face towards hell; but repentance is a turning the back upon sin, and a setting the face towards God!** He who looks upon both *Jerusalem* and upon *Babylon* with an alluring eye at the same time; he who looks upon *God*, and at the same time looks upon any *sin* with an alluring eye, has not yet reached unto this repentance which accompanies salvation; his repentance and profession cannot secure him from double damnation. Thus did Herod and Judas, to their eternal ruin, James 2:20.

He who serves *God* in some things, and his *lusts* in other things, says to God as David said to Mephibosheth concerning his lands, "You and Ziba divide the lands," 2 Sam 19:29. Just so, you and Satan divide my soul, my heart between you. Ah! does not such a soul deserve a double hell? Christ takes every sin at a penitent man's hands, as Caesar did his wounds from him of whom he merited better usage, with, "And you, my son." "What, *you* wound me! What, *you* stab me!" One stab at the heart kills, one hole in the ship sinks her, one act of treason makes a traitor. Just so, one sin not forsaken, not turned from, will undo a soul forever. Sin always ends tragically, and this puts the penitent in battle array against every sin.

There are no wounds which are so grievous and terrible to Christ, as those who he receives in the house of his friends, and this sets the penitent man's heart and hand against everything which is against Christ. A true penitent looks upon every sin as poison, as the vomit of a dog, as the mire of the street, as the menstruous cloth, which of all things in the law was most unclean, defiling, and polluting. And his looking thus upon every sin, turns his heart against every sin, and makes him not only to refrain from sin—but to forsake it, and to loathe it more than hell.

(3.) The third property. Thirdly, That repentance which accompanies salvation is not only a turning from all sin—but it is also **a turning unto**

**God.** The Hebrew word for repentance signifies to *return*, implying a going back from what a man had done. It notes a returning or converting from one thing to another, as from sin to God, from evil to good, from hell to heaven. It is not only a ceasing from doing evil—but it is also a learning to do well; it is not only a turning from darkness—but it is also a turning to light; as the apostle speaks, Acts 26:18, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." So in Isa 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." It is not enough for the man of iniquity to forsake his evil way—but he must also return unto the Lord; he must subject his heart to the power of divine grace, and his life to the will and word of God. As negative goodness can never satisfy a gracious soul, so negative goodness can never save a sinful soul. It is not enough that you are thus and thus *bad*—but you must be thus and thus *good*, or you are undone forever: Ezek 18:21, "But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die."

Negative righteousness and holiness is no righteousness, no holiness, in the account of God. It was not the Pharisee's negative righteousness, nor his comparative goodness, which could prevent his being rejected of God, his being shut out of heaven, his burning in hell, Luke 18:5; Matt 20:13-14. It is not enough that the tree bears no *bad* fruit—but it must bring forth *good* fruit—else it must be cut down and cast into the fire. That tree which is not for *fruit*—is for the *fire*. "Every tree which brings not forth good fruit," says Christ, "is hewn down, and cast into the fire," Matt 7:19. Men who content themselves with negative righteousness, shall find at last heaven-gates bolted upon them with a double bolt. *All that negative righteousness and holiness can do, is to help a man to one of the best chambers and easiest beds in hell.* That repentance which accompanies salvation, brings the heart and life not only off from sin—but on *to God*; it makes a man not only cease from walking in the ways of death—but it makes him walk in the ways of life: "They do no iniquity, they walk in his ways," Psalm 119:3. He who holds not wholly with Christ, does very shamefully neglect Christ. And therefore if Christ tramples upon them at

last, it is just.

(4.) The fourth property. Fourthly, That repentance which accompanies salvation, **strikes most effectually and particularly against that sin or sins, that the sinner was most apt and prone to before his conversion.** The hand of repentance is most *against* that sin, it is most *upon* that sin, which the soul has looked most with an alluring eye upon. Augustine, a great sinner, wrote twelve books on repentance, and walked most contrary to the particular sins which he had most lived in. The chief and principal sins which Israel were guilty of, were idolatry and sinful compliance. Now, when God works kindly upon them, they put the hand of repentance upon those particular sins, as you may see: Isa 27:9, "By this, then, will Jacob's guilt be atoned for, and this will be the full fruitage of the removal of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones to be like chalk stones crushed to pieces, no Asherah poles or incense altars will be left standing." (This was the great sin of Israel—but after their return out of captivity, they never again set up idols—but were wonderful zealous to keep their temple from such defilements, both in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and of the Romans, and do account them as a menstruous cloth, to this very day. The Jews were willing in the Romans' time, rather to die than to allow the eagle, the Roman imperial arms, to be set upon the temple.) Here you see, when God appears and acts graciously for and towards his people, they put the *hand of repentance* upon their groves and images; these must torn down, these must no longer stand. The groves and the images shall not stand up, they shall be utterly abandoned and destroyed, demolished, and abolished.

So in Isa 30:22, "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them—Away with you!" Here you see the hand of repentance is against their idols of silver and gold; and not only against their idols—but also against whatever had any relation to them. Now they show nothing but a detestation of their idols, and a holy indignation against them: "Away with you!" The hand of repentance makes a divorce between them and their idols, between their souls and their darling sins. Now they are as much in hating, abhorring, abominating, and despising their idols and images, as they were formerly in adoring, worshiping, and

honoring of them.

So Mary Magdalene, Luke 7, walks quite contrary to her former self, her sinful self, she crosses the flesh, in those very things wherein formerly she did gratify the flesh. So the penitent jailor, Acts 16, washes those very wounds that his own bloody hands had made. He acts in ways of mercy, quite contrary to his former cruelty. At first there was none so fierce, so furious, so cruel, so bloody, so inhuman in his conduct to the Christians as Paul; at last, none so gentle, so soft, so sweet, so courteous, so affectionate to them. The same you may see in Zacchaeus, Luke 19:8, etc. In Paul, Acts 9, and in Manasseh, in 2 Chron 33:6.

(5.) The fifth property. Fifthly, That repentance which accompanies salvation, is **very large and comprehensive**. It comprehends and takes in these following particulars, besides those already named.

[1.] True repentance includes a **SIGHT and SENSE of sin**. Men must first see their sins, they must be sensible of their sins, before they can repent of their sins. Ephraim had first a sight of his sin, and then he repents and turns from his sin. "After I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh," Jer 31:18-19. A man first sees himself out of the way, before he returns into the way. Until he sees that he is out of the way, he walks still on—but when he perceives that he is out of the way, then he begins to make inquiry after the right way. So when the sinner comes to see his way to be a way of death, then he cries out, "Oh lead me in the way of life, lead me in the way everlasting," Psalm 139:24. It was so with Paul, who thought himself in as good a way for heaven as any; Acts 9 and Acts 26 compared.

[2.] For I shall but touch upon these things. That repentance which accompanies salvation, includes not only a sight and sense of sin—but also **CONFESSION and acknowledgment of sin**. Psalm 51, and Psalm 32:3-5, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin." Job 33:21-27. The promise of forgiveness is made to confession.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." So Prov 28:13, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." If we confess our sins sincerely, seriously, humbly, cordially—then pardon attends us. *Confession* of sin must be joined with *confusion* of sin—or all is lost, God is lost, Christ is lost, heaven lost, and the soul lost forever!

The true penitent can say, with Vivaldus, "I hide not my sins—but I show them; I wipe them not away—but I sprinkle them; I do not excuse them—but I accuse them. "My sins hurt me not, if I like them not." The beginning of my salvation—is the knowledge of my transgression.

[3.] That repentance which accompanies salvation includes, not only confession of sin—but also **CONTRITION for sin**; Psalm 51:4; 1 Sam 7:2; Zech 12:10-11; Ezra 10:1-2; 2 Cor 7:11; Jer 13:17; Joel 2:13. Basil wept when he saw the *rose*, because it brought to his mind the first sin, from whence it had the prickles, which it had not, while man continued in innocence, as he thought. You know how to apply it. True repentance breaks the heart with sighs, sobs, and groans—that a loving Father is offended, a blessed Savior crucified, and the sweet Comforter grieved. Penitent Mary Magdalene weeps much, as well as loves much. Tears, instead of jewels, were the ornaments of penitent David's bed. Surely that sweet singer never sang more melodiously, than when his heart was broken most penitentially.

How shall God wipe away my tears in heaven—if I shed none on earth? And how shall I reap in joy—if I sow not in tears? "I was *born* with tears, and shall *die* with tears; why should I then *live* without them in this valley of tears?" says the true penitent. **The sweetest joys are from the sourest tears; penitent tears are the breeders of spiritual joy.** When Hannah had wept, she went away and was no more sad, 1 Sam 1:18. The bee gathers the best honey off the bitterest herbs. Christ made the best wine of water; the strongest, the purest, the truest, the most permanent, and the most excellent joy is made of the waters of repentance. If God is God, "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy." Psalm 126:5. True repentance is a sorrowing for sin because it is offensive to God. Peter was sorry for his *sin*; Judas was sorry his for *punishment*. Peter grieves because Christ was grieved; Judas grieved

because he would be damned.

But that no mourner may drown himself in his own tears, let me give this CAUTION, namely, that **there is nothing beyond remedy—but the tears of the damned.** A man who may persist in the way to paradise, should not place himself in the condition of a little hell; and he who has a genuine hope for *that great all*, ought not to be dejected nor overwhelmed for anything.

[4.] That repentance which accompanies salvation does include not only contrition for sin—but also **a holy SHAME and blushing for sin.** Ezra 9:6; Jer 3:24-25; Jer 31:19; Ezek 16:63, "Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Sovereign Lord." When the penitent soul sees his sins pardoned, the anger of God pacified, and divine justice satisfied, then he sits down ashamed.

So Rom 6:21, "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!" **Sin and shame are inseparable companions.** A Christian man cannot have the *seeming sweet* of sin, but he shall have the *real shame* which accompanies sin. These two God has joined together, and all the world cannot put them asunder.

Shame signifies to blush, to be abashed, to wax pale and wan, etc. So much the more God has been displeased with the blackness of sin, the more will he be well pleased with the blushing of the sinner.

It was the vile and impenitent Caligula who said of himself "that he loved nothing better in himself than that he could not be ashamed."

And doubtless, *only those things which are sinful, are shameful.* **A soul who has sinned away all shame is a soul ripe for hell, and given up to Satan!** A greater plague cannot befall a man in this life than to sin and not to blush!

[5.] That repentance which accompanies salvation, comprehends

**LOATHING and ABHORRING of sin, and of ourselves for sin**, as well as shame and blushing for sin, Job 42:6; Ezek 16:61-63; Amos 5:15; Ezek 20:43, "You will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and *you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done.*" The sincere penitent loathes his sins, and he loathes himself also because of his sins. He cries out, "Oh these wanton eyes! Oh these wicked hands! Oh this deceitful tongue! Oh this crooked will! Oh this corrupt heart! Oh how do I loathe my sins, how do I loathe myself, how do I loathe *sinful* self; and how do I loathe my *natural* self, because of sinful self! My sins are a burden to me, and they make me a burden to myself; my sins are an abhorring to me, and they make me abhor myself in dust and ashes!" A true penitent has not only low thoughts of himself—but loathsome thoughts of himself.

It is very observable that those brave creatures, the eagle and the lion, were not offered in sacrifice unto God—but the poor lamb and dove; to note that God regards not your brave, high, lofty spirits—but poor, meek, and contemptible spirits.

None can think or speak so vilely of a Christian—as he thinks and speaks so vilely of himself. "Behold, I am vile!" Job 40:4. "Those who escape will remember me--how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, (as the heart of a husband is at the adulterous behavior of his wife), which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices." Ezekiel 6:9

If your repentance does not work you out with your sins, and your sins work you out of love with yourself—then your repentance is not that repentance which accompanies salvation. Some people can shed tears for nothing, some for anything; but a sound penitent sheds more tears for his sins than he does for his sufferings. And thus you see the particular things that that repentance that does accompany salvation does comprehend and include.

(6.) The sixth property. Sixthly, That repentance which accompanies salvation, has **these choice COMPANIONS attending of it.**

[1.] **FAITH.** Zech 12:10-11, "They shall *look* upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn," etc. Mourning and believing go together. So in Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14-15, "Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel."

[2.] **LOVE TO CHRIST** does always accompany that repentance which accompanies salvation, as you may see in Mary Magdalene, Luke 7.

[3.] A **FILIAL FEAR OF OFFENDING GOD**, and a holy care to honor God, does always accompany that repentance which accompanies salvation: 2 Cor 7:10, "For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation

not to be repented of: for, behold, this selfsame thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yes, what clearing of yourselves, yes, what indignation, yes, what fear, yes, what vehement desire, yes, what zeal, yes, what revenge! In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." Truly, repentance to life has all these lively companions attending of it; they are born together and will live together, until the penitent soul changes earth for heaven, grace for glory.

(7.) The seventh property. Seventhly and lastly, That repentance which accompanies salvation is a **CONTINUED act**, a repentance never to be repented of, 2 Cor 7:10. Repentance is a continual spring, where the waters of godly sorrow are always flowing. A sound penitent is still a-turning nearer and nearer to God; he is still a-turning further and further from sin. This makes the penitent soul to sigh and mourn that he can get no nearer to God, that he can get no further from sin, Rom 7. The work of repentance is *not* the work of an hour, a day, a year—but the continual work of this life. A sincere penitent makes as much conscience of repenting daily, as he does of believing daily; and he can as easily content himself with one act of faith, or love, or joy, as he can content himself with one act of repentance: "My sins are ever before me," says David, Psalm 51:3. Repentance is the fair daughter of a foul mother. Repentance is a fruitful womb. Oh, then, what then remains, but in our whole life to lament the sins of our whole life?

"Next to my being kept from sin, I count it the greatest mercy in the world to be still a-mourning over sin," says the penitent soul. The penitent soul never ceases repenting until he ceases living. He goes to heaven with the joyful tears of repentance in his eyes. He knows that his whole life is but a day of sowing tears, that he may at last reap everlasting joys. That repentance which accompanies salvation is a final forsaking of sin. It is a bidding sin an everlasting adieu; it is a taking an eternal farewell of sin; a never turning to folly more: "What have I to do any more with idols?" says Ephraim, Hos 14:8. "I have tasted of the bitterness that is in sin; I have tasted of the sweetness of divine mercy in pardoning of sin; therefore, away, sin! I will never have to do with you more! You have robbed Christ of his service, and me of my comfort and crown. Away,

away, sin! you shall never more be courted nor countenanced by me!"

That man who only puts off his sins in the day of adversity, as he does his garments at night when he goes to bed, with an intent to put them on again in the morning of prosperity, never yet truly repented: he is a dog that returns to its vomit again; he is a swine that returns to its wallowing in the mire. Such a dog was Judas; such a swine was Demas.

It is an extraordinary vanity in some men to lay aside their sins before solemn duties—but with a purpose to return to them again, as the serpent lays aside his poison when he goes to drink, and when he has drunk, he returns to it again, as they fable it. It is sad when men say to their lusts, as Abraham said to his servants, "Abide here, and I will go and worship, and return again to you," Gen 22:5. Truly, such souls are far off from that repentance which accompanies salvation, for that makes a final and everlasting separation between sin and the soul. It makes such a divorce between sin and the soul, and puts them so far asunder, that all the world can never bring them to meet as two lovers together. The penitent soul looks upon sin and deals with sin, not as a friend—but as an enemy. It deals with sin as Amnon dealt with Tamar: 2 Sam 13:15, "After this, Amnon hated Tamar with such intensity that the hatred he hated her with was greater than the love he had loved her with. 'Get out of here!' he said." Just thus does the penitent soul carry itself towards sin.

And thus you see what **repentance** that is, which accompanies salvation.

**IV.** The fourth thing I am to show is, what **OBEDIENCE** that is, which accompanies salvation. That obedience does accompany salvation, I have formerly proved. Now what this obedience is, which accompanies salvation, I shall show you in these following particulars:

[1.] The first property. That obedience which accompanies salvation is **CORDIAL** and **HEARTY**. The heart, the inward man, does answer and echo to the word and will of God. The believer knows that no obedience but hearty obedience, is acceptable to Christ. He knows that nothing takes Christ's heart—but what comes from the believer's heart. 'Christ was hearty in his obedience for me,' says the believer; 'and shall not I be

heartily in my obedience to him?' Christ will lay his hand of love, his hand of acceptance—upon no obedience but what flows from the heart. Rom 6:17, "You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." So in Rom 7:25, "So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God." My heart, says Paul, is in my obedience.

So in Rom 1:9, "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son." Many serve God with their bodies—but I serve him with my spirit; many serve him with the outward man—but I serve him with my inward man. Ezek 36:26-27; Isa 29:13; Matt 15:7-9. The heart is the presence-chamber of the King of heaven, and that upon which his eye, his hand, his heart, is most set. "My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways." Proverbs 23:26.

God has written his law in believers' hearts, and therefore they cannot but obey it from the heart: "I delight to do your will, O my God." How so? Why, "your law is within my heart," or, in the midst of my affections, as the Hebrew has it, Psalm 40:8. The heart within echoes and answers to the commandments without, as a book written answers to his mind, who writes it; as face answers to face; as the impression on the wax answers to the character engraved on the seal. The scribes and Pharisees were much in the outward obedience of the law—but their hearts were not in their obedience; and therefore all they did signified nothing in the account of Christ, who only accepts outward actions as they flow from the heart and affections. Their souls were not in their services, and therefore all their services were lost services. They were very glorious in their outward profession—but their hearts were as filthy sepulchers. Their outsides shined as the sun—but their insides were as black as hell, Matt 23. They were like the Egyptians' temples—beautiful without, but filthy within. Well! remember this: No action, no service, is accepted in heaven—but that which is sealed up with integrity of heart. God will not be put off with the *shell*, when we give the devil the *kernel*.

(2.) The second property. That obedience which accompanies salvation is **UNIVERSAL** as well as cordial. The soul falls in with every part and point of God's will, so far as he knows it, without prejudice or partiality, without tilting the balance on one side or another. A soul sincerely obedient, will not pick and choose what commands to obey and what to

reject, as hypocrites do; he has an eye to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to obey the first table as well as the second, and the second table as well as the first; he does not adhere to the first and neglect the second, as hypocrites do; neither does he adhere to the second and despise the first, as profane men do; he obeys not out of choice, but out of conscience: Psalm 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." He does not pick and choose. He obeys all, in respect of his sincere purpose, desire, and endeavor; and this God accepts in Christ for perfect and complete obedience, etc.

Look! as faith never singles out his object—but lays hold on every object God holds forth for it to close with; faith does not choose this truth and reject that, it does not close with one and reject another. Faith does not say, 'I will trust God in this case, but not in that case; I will trust him for this mercy, but not for that mercy; I will trust him in this way, but not in that way.' Faith does not choose its object. Faith knows that he who has promised is powerful and faithful, and therefore faith closes with one object as well as another. So a true obedient soul does not single out the commands of God, as to obey one and rebel against another; it dares not, it cannot say, 'I will serve God in this command but not in that.' No! In an evangelical sense it obeys all: Luke 1:5-6, "Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*." That is, without complaint. They walked not only in commandments, but also in ordinances; not only in ordinances—but also in commandments. They were good souls, and good at both.

An obedient soul is like a crystal glass with a light in the midst, which shines forth through every part thereof. So that royal law that is written upon his heart shines forth into every parcel of his life; his outward works do echo to a law within.

A man sincerely obedient, lays such a charge upon his whole man, as Mary, the mother of Christ, did upon all the servants at the feast: John 2:5, "Whatever the Lord says unto you—do it." Eyes, ears, hands, heart, lips, legs, body, and soul—all seriously and affectionately observe whatever Jesus Christ says unto you, and do it.

So David does: Psalm 119:34,69, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart." "The proud have forged a lie against me; but I will keep your precepts with my whole heart." The whole heart includes all the faculties of the soul and all the members of the body. Says David, I will put hand and heart, body and soul, all within me and all without me—to the keeping and observing of your precepts. Here is a soul, thorough in his obedience, he stands not halting nor halving of it, he knows the Lord loves to be served truly and totally, and therefore he obeys with an entire heart and a sincere spirit.

I have read of a very strange speech which dropped out of the mouth of Epictetus, a heathen: "If it be your will," says he, "O Lord, command me what you will, send me where you will, I will not withdraw myself from anything which seems good to you." Ah! how will this heathen at last rise in judgment against all Sauls, Jehus, Judases, Demases, scribes, and pharisees—who are partial in their obedience, who while they yield obedience to some commands, live in the habitual breach of other commands! Truly, he who lives in the habitual breach of one command, shall at last be reputed by God guilty of the breach of every command, James 2:10, and God accordingly will in a way of justice proceed against him, Ezek 18:10-13.

It was the glory of Caleb and Joshua, that they followed the Lord fully—in one thing, as well as another, Num 14:24. So Cornelius: "We are present before God, to hear whatever shall be commanded us by God," Acts 10:33. He does not pick and choose. So in Acts 13:22, "have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will carry out all My will;" or rather as it is in the Greek, "he shall fulfill all my wills," to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience. He minds not only general duties of religion—but also particular duties; as a magistrate, as a minister, as a father, as a master, as a son, as a servant.

A sincere heart loves all commands of God, and prizes all commands of God, and sees a divine image stamped upon all the commands of God; and therefore the main bent and disposition of his soul, is to obey all, to subject to all. God commands universal obedience, Josh 1:8; Deut 5:29; Ezek 18. The promise of reward is made over to universal obedience, Psalm 19:11; Josh 1:8. Universal obedience is a jewel that all will wish for,

or rejoice in, at the day of death and the day of judgement; and the remembrance of these things, with others of the like nature, provokes all upright souls to be impartial, to be universal in their obedience.

[3.] The third property. That obedience which accompanies salvation **springs from inward spiritual causes, and from holy and heavenly motives.** It flows from **faith.** Hence it is called "the obedience of faith," Rom 16:26. So in 1 Tim 1:5, "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith." Faith draws down that divine virtue and power into the soul, which makes it lively and active, abundant and constant, in the work and way of the Lord.

And as faith, so **love**, puts the soul forward in ways of obedience. John 14:21,23, "If any man loves me, he will keep my commandments." So Psalm 119:48, "My hands also will I lift up to your commandments, which I have loved." Divine love is said to be the *fulfilling of the commandments*, because it puts the soul upon keeping them. Divine love makes every weight light, every yoke easy, every command joyous. It knows no difficulties, it facilitates obedience, it divinely constrains the soul to obey, to walk, to run the ways of God's commands. Where love is, the soul says of every command, "it is a good saying." But where love is lacking, the man cries out, "it is a hard saying; who can bear it?"

And as sound obedience springs from faith and love, so it flows from a **filial fear of God:** Psalm 119:161, "My heart stands in awe of your word." So Heb 11:7, "By faith Noah, after being warned about what was not yet seen, *in reverence* built an ark to deliver his family." Ah! but hypocrites and temporary professors are not carried forth in their obedience from such precious and glorious principles, and therefore it is that God casts all their services as dung in their faces, Isa 1:11.

And as that obedience which accompanies salvation flows from inward spiritual principles, so **it flows from holy and heavenly motives**, as from the tastes of divine love, and the sweetness and excellency of communion with God, and the choice and precious discoveries which the soul in ways of obedience has had of the beauty and glory of God, Isa 64:5. The sweet looks, the heavenly words, the glorious kisses, the holy

embraces, which the obedient soul has had, makes it freely and fully obedient to the word and will of God.

Ah! but all the motives which move hypocrites and carnal professors to obedience, are only external and carnal—as the eye of the creature, the ear of the creature, the applause of the creature, the rewards of the creature; either the love of the loaves, or the gain of money, or the desire of ambition, Hos 7:14. Sometimes they are moved to obedience from the fear of the creature, and sometimes from the desire for the creature, and sometimes from the example of the creature, and sometimes from vows made to the creature. Sometimes the frowns of God, the displeasure of God, the rod of God—moves them to obedience, Hos 5:15; Psalm 78:34. Sometimes the quieting and stilling of conscience, the stopping of the mouth of conscience, and the disarming of conscience of all her whipping, racking, wounding, condemning, terrifying, and torturing power—puts them upon some ways of obedience. Their obedience always flows from some low, base, carnal, corrupt consideration or other.

Oh! but that obedience which accompanies salvation does always flow, as you see, from inward and spiritual *causes*, and from holy and heavenly *motives*.

[4.] The fourth property. That obedience which accompanies salvation is **a ready, free, willing, and cheerful obedience.**

(1.) It is **READY** obedience. Psalm 27:8, "When you said, Seek my face, my heart said unto you, Your face, Lord, will I seek." Psalm 119:60, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep your commandments." Psalm 18:44, "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me."

I have read of one who readily fetched water nearly two miles every day for a whole year—to pour upon a dry stick, upon the bare command of a superior, when no reason could be given for the thing. Oh how ready, then, does grace make the soul to obey those divine commands, which are backed with the highest, strongest, and choicest arguments.

(2.) As that obedience which accompanies salvation is ready obedience, so it is **FREE** and **WILLING** obedience. Acts 21:13, "Then Paul replied—

What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The beamings out of divine love and glory make gracious souls "willing in the day of his power," Psalm 110:3. Those divine principles which are in them make them willingly obey, without compulsion. So 2 Cor 8:3. The Macedonians were willingly obedient, or, as the Greek has it, they were volunteers not only to their power—but beyond their power.

All the motions and actings of **Christ** towards his people, for his people, and in his people—are free. He loves them freely, he pardons them freely, he intercedes for them freely, he acts them freely, and he saves them freely. And so they move and act towards Christ freely; they hear, they pray, they wait, they weep, they work, they watch freely and willingly. That Spirit of grace and holiness which is in them, makes them volunteers in all pious duties and services. [1 Chron 29:6-18; 1 Tim 6:18; 1 Thess 2:8]

It is reported of Socrates, that when the tyrant threatened death unto him, he answered, "He was willing." "No then," said the tyrant, "you shall live against your will." He answered again, "No, whatever you do with me, it shall be my will." If mere human nature, a little raised and refined, will enable a man to do this, will not grace, will not union and communion with Christ, enable a man to do as much, yes, infinitely more? A saint at worst is obedient, either with a *willing will*, or an *unwilling will*; like the merchant who is *unwillingly willing* to throw his goods overboard into the tempestuous sea, to save his life.

(3.) As that obedience which accompanies salvation is free and willing obedience, so it is **CHEERFUL** and **DELIGHTFUL** obedience. It is a believer's food and drink, it is his joy and crown, it is a pleasure, a paradise to his soul—to be still obeying his Father's will, to be still found about his Father's business: Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is in my heart." As the sun rejoices to run his race, so do the saints rejoice to run the race of obedience. God's work is wages, yes, it is better than wages; therefore they cannot but delight in it. Not only *for* keeping—but also *in* keeping of his commands, there is great reward: Psalm 112:1, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in his commandments;" that is, in the studying and obeying of his

commandments. Psalm 119:16, "I will delight myself in your statutes; I will not forget your word." Psalm 119:35, "Make me to go in the path of your commandments, for therein do I delight." Psalm 119:47, "And I will delight myself in your commandments, which I have loved." Psalm 119:143, "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet your commandments are my delight."

Divine commands are not grievous to a lover of Christ; for nothing is difficult, to him who loves. The love of Christ, the discoveries of Christ, the embraces of Christ, make a gracious soul studious and industrious to keep the commandments of Christ, in lip and life, in word and work, in head and heart, in book and bosom. Psalm 19:5,11, compared. A good work so much the more delights, by how much the more God, the chiefest and unchangeable good, is loved.

Thus you see that that obedience which accompanies salvation is ready, free, and cheerful obedience.

[5.] The fifth property. The obedience which accompanies salvation, is **RESOLUTE** obedience. Josh 24:15, "I and my household *will* serve the Lord." He is fully resolved upon it, come what may, come what can. In the face of all dangers, difficulties, impediments and discouragements, he will obey the Lord, he will follow the Lord. So those worthies, Heb 11:38, "of whom the world was not worthy," obeyed divine commands resolutely, resolvedly, in the face of all kinds of deaths and miseries. So Paul was "obedient to the heavenly vision," though bonds were awaiting him in every place, Acts 20:23. He is better at obeying than at disputing; "I conferred not," says he, "with flesh and blood," Gal 1:15-16.

So Peter and John, and the rest of the apostles, despite all threatenings and beatings—they obey the Lord, they keep fast and close to their Master's work. "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto your servants, that with all boldness they may speak your word. And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing

that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Acts 4:19-20,29, and Acts 5:40-42, compared.

Josephus reports of such resolute Christians, that in the face of all reproaches and difficulties, followed Christ to the cross. You may as well stop the sun from running his race, as you are able to hinder gracious souls from obeying divine commands, Psalm 44:13-14. As a wicked nature makes the wicked peremptory in their disobedience (Jer 44:15-17), so the divine nature makes gracious souls peremptory in their obedience.

Thus you see, no trials, no troubles, no terrors, no threats, no dangers, no deaths—could deter them from resolute obedience to divine precepts. It is not the fiery furnace, nor the lions' den, nor the bloody sword, nor the torturing rack, which can frighten gracious souls from obedience to their dearest Lord: Psalm 119:106, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep your righteous judgments."

[6.] The sixth property. **The end of that obedience which accompanies salvation is, divine glory.** The eye of the obedient soul, in prayer and praises, in talking and walking, in giving and receiving, in living and doing, is divine glory: Rom 14:7-8, "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." In all actions, the obedient soul most intends to glorify God. If Satan, the world, or the old man do at any time propound other ends to the soul, this great end, divine glory, out works all those ends; for this is most certain, that which a man makes his greatest and his highest end, will out work all other ends.

Look! as the light of the sun does extinguish and put out the light of the fire, so when a man makes the glory of God his end, that end will extinguish and put out all carnal, low, base ends. That man who makes himself the end of his actions, who makes honor, riches, applause, etc. the end of his actions—he must at last lie down in eternal sorrow, he must dwell in everlasting burnings. The man is as his end is; and his work is as his end is. If his end is bad—all is bad; if his end is good—all is good—and the man is happy forever, Isa 30:33, and Isa 33:14.

[7.] The seventh property. That obedience which accompanies salvation, is a **CONSTANT** obedience. If once you say, 'it is enough,' you are undone. Psalm 119:112, "I have inclined my heart to obey your statutes always, even to the end." The causes, springs, and motives of holy obedience are lasting and permanent, and therefore the obedience of a sound Christian is not like the morning dew, or a deceitful bow: Psalm 44:17-19, "All this comes upon us; yet have we not forgotten you, neither have we dealt falsely in your covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from your ways; though you have sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death."

The love of Christ, the promises of Christ, the presence of Christ, the discoveries of Christ, the example of Christ, and the recompense of reward held forth by Christ—makes a sound Christian hold on, and hold out, in ways of obedience, in the face of all dangers and deaths. Neither the hope of life, nor the fear of death, can make a sincere Christian either change his master or decline his work. History reports, that it has been the ancient custom of pious Christians under persecuting emperors, to meet, and to bind themselves forever to fly what was evil, and follow what was good, whatever it cost them. Phil 2:12, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only—but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This was the Philippians' glory, that they were constant in their obedience; whether Paul was present or absent, they constantly minded their work.

Ah! but hypocrites and temporary professors are but passionate, transient, and inconstant in their obedience; they talk of obedience, they commend obedience, and now and then they step in the way of obedience—but they do not *walk* in a way of obedience, they are only constant in inconstancy: Job 27:10, "Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty? Will he *always* call upon God?" Or, as the Hebrew has it—will he in every time call upon God? Will he call upon God in time of prosperity, *and* in time of adversity? in time of health, *and* in time of sickness? in time of strength, *and* in time of weakness? in time of honor, *and* in time of disgrace? in time of liberty, *and* in time of durance? etc.

The answer to be given in is, he will not always, he will not in every time call upon God. As a lame horse, when he is rested, will go well enough—but after a short time he halts downright; even so a hypocrite, though for a time he may go on fairly in a religious way, yet when he has attained his ends, he will halt-downright, and be able to go no further.

The monk in Melancthon lived strictly, and walked demurely, and looked humbly, so long as he was but a monk; but when, by his seeming extraordinary sanctity, he got to be made abbot, he grew intolerably proud and insolent, and being asked the reason of it, confessed that his former behavior and lowly looks was but to see if he could find the keys of the abbey. Ah! many unsound hearts there are, who will put on the cloak of religion, and speak like angels, and look like saints, to find the keys of preferment, and when they have found them, none prove more proud, base, and vain than they. Ah! but that obedience which accompanies salvation is constant and durable. A Christian in his course goes straight on heavenwards.

"The cows went *straight* up the road to Beth-shemesh. They stayed on that one highway, lowing as they went; they never strayed to the right or to the left." 1 Samuel 6:12. So gracious souls goes straight along the highway to heaven, which is the way of obedience; though they go lowing and weeping, yet they still go on, and turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left. If by the violence of temptation or corruption they are thrust out of the way at any time, they quickly return into it again. They may sometimes *step* out of the way of obedience—but they cannot *walk* out of the way of obedience. The honest traveler may step out of his way, but he soon returns into it again—and so does the honest soul, Psalm 119:3-4, "They do nothing wrong; they *walk* in his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be *fully* obeyed."

(8.) The eighth property, and lastly. **PASSIVE** obedience accompanies salvation as well as active. 2 Tim 3:12; 2 Tim 2:12, "Everyone that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution," from tongue or pen, from hand or heart. "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him," Rom 9:17-18. There is no passing into paradise but under the flaming sword. "Through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven," Acts 14:22. A sincere heart is as willing to obey Christ passively as

actively: Acts 21:13, "I am ready, not to be bound only—but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." I am willing, says Paul, to lose my comforts for Christ, I am ready to endure any dolours for Christ, I am willing to lose the creature, and to leave the creature for Christ. Friends may have the *milk* of a believer's love—but Christ has the *cream*.

So Paul, Phil 3:8, speaks of himself as having been like one in a sea-tempest, that had cast out all his precious wares and goods for Christ's sake "for whom," says he, "I have suffered the loss of all." So must we, in stormy times, cast all overboard for Christ, and swim to an immortal crown—through sorrows, blood, and death. But because I have in this treatise spoken at large of the sufferings of the saints, I shall say no more of it in this place; and thus you see what that obedience is, which accompanies salvation.

V. The fifth thing that I am to show you is, what **LOVE** that is, which accompanies salvation. That love *does* accompany salvation I have formerly showed you; but now I shall show you what that love is, which accompanies salvation; and that I shall do in these following particulars. I shall not speak of the firstness, freeness, fullness, sweetness, and greatness of Christ's love to us—but of *that love of ours* which accompanies salvation, concerning which I shall say thus:

(1.) The first property. First, That love which accompanies salvation is a **SUPERLATIVE love, a TRANSCENDENT love**. True love to Christ does wonderfully transcend and surpass the love of all relations; the love of father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister, yes, life itself, Matt 10:37-38; Luke 14:26-27,34. Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there are none upon earth that I desire besides you." Christ will be all—or nothing at all. There are the greatest causes of love, there are the highest causes of love, there are all the causes of love—to be found in Christ. In angels and men there are only some particular causes of love; all causes of love are eminently and only to be found in Christ: Col 1:19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell," There is not only fullness—but an overflowing of fullness in Jesus Christ. All wisdom, all knowledge, all light, all life, all love, all goodness, all sweetness, all blessedness, all joys, all delights, all pleasures, all beauties, all beatitudes,

all excellencies, all glories—are in Christ, Col 2:9.

The true lovers of Christ know that Christ loves as a head, as a king, as a father, as a husband, as a brother, as a kinsman, as a friend—and this raises up a believer to love Christ with a transcendent love. They know that *Christ loves them more than they love themselves*; yes, that he loves them above his very life, John 10:1,17-18.

Love is the loadstone of love. **Certainly they do not love Christ, who love anything more than Christ.** Christ is amiable and lovely; he is spotless and matchless in his names, in his natures, in his offices, in his graces, in his gifts, in his manifestations, in his appearances, in his ordinances. He is full of dignity, majesty, mercy, and glory. "He is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand." His mouth is sweetness; yes, he is full of delights, Song 5:10-16. Christ is wholly delectable; he is altogether desirable from top to toe; he is amiable and lovely, he is glorious and excellent. Christ is lovely, Christ is very lovely, Christ is most lovely, Christ is always lovely, Christ is altogether lovely. He is "the express image of God;" he is "the brightness of his Father's glory." If one could but anatomize him, it shall find in him all high perfections and supereminent excellencies. And upon these and such like considerations the saints are led forth to love Jesus Christ with a most transcendent love.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, That love which accompanies salvation is **OBEDIENTIAL love, it is OPERATIVE and WORKING love.** The love of Christ makes a man subject to the commands of Christ: "If any man loves me, he will keep my commandments;" and again, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me," John 14:21. Divine love is very operative: Psalm 116:1, "I love the Lord," says David. Well, but how does this love work? Why, says he, "I will walk in his ways, I will pay my vows, I will take the cup of salvation, I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the Lord as long as I live," Psalm 116:2,9,13-14,17.

I have read a story of an elephant, who being fallen down, and unable to help himself, or get up again, by reason of the inflexibility of his legs, a forester coming by, helped him up; wherewith the elephant, by the very instinct of nature, was so affected, that he followed this man, and would

do anything for him, and never left him until his dying day. Ah, sirs, will not divine love make a man do more?

Divine love is not stinted nor limited to one sort of duty—but freely obeys all. He who loves, flies; he who loves, runs; he who loves, believes; he who loves, rejoices; he who loves, mourns; he who loves, gives; he who loves, lends; he who loves, bears; he who loves, waits; he who loves, hopes, etc.

Heb 6:10, "For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and *labor of love*." Love makes the soul laborious. That love which accompanies salvation is very active and operative. It is like the virtuous woman in the Proverbs, who set all her maidens to work. It is never quiet—but in doing the will of God. It will not allow any grace to sit idle in the soul. It will incite and put on all other graces to act and operate. Love sets **faith** upon drawing from Christ, and **patience** upon waiting on Christ, and **humility** upon submitting to Christ, and **godly sorrow** upon mourning over Christ, and **self-denial** upon forsaking of the nearest and dearest comforts for Christ, etc. As the sun makes the whole earth fertile, so does divine love make the soul fruitful in works of righteousness and holiness. He who loves cannot be idle nor barren.

Love makes the soul constant and abundant in well-doing: 2 Cor 5:14, "The love of Christ constrains us." Love's property is to *do eternally*. It is an eternal, lasting principle, and actions will last as long as principles; its action is as abiding as itself. It urges us and puts us forward; it carries us on as men possessed with a vehemency of spirit, or as a ship which is driven with strong winds towards the desired haven. Natural love makes the child, the servant, the wife, obedient. Just so, does divine love make the soul better at obeying God, than at disputing with God. A soul who loves Christ will never cease to obey—until he ceases to be. That love which accompanies salvation is like the sun. The sun, you know, casts his beams upward and downward, to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. Just so, the love of a saint ascends to God above, and descends to men on earth; to our friends on the right hand, to our enemies on the left hand; to those who are in a state of grace, and to those who are in a state of nature. Divine love will still be a-working one way or another.

(3.) The third property. That love which accompanies salvation is a **SINCERE and INCORRUPT love**: Eph 6:24, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." That is, who love Christ in sincerity, and not in pretense and hypocritically. The true bred Christian, loves Christ for Christ; he loves Christ for that internal and eternal worth that is in him; he loves him for his incomparable excellency and beauty, for that transcendent sweetness, loveliness, holiness, and goodness that is in him. He is not of those who love Christ for loaves, neither will he with Judas kiss Christ and betray him; nor yet will he with those in the Gospel cry out, "Hosanna, Hosanna!" one day, and "Crucify him, crucify him!" the next, Matt 21:9,15.

They love Christ with a virgin love: Song 1:3, "The virgins love you." That is, they love you in much sincerity, purity, and integrity; they love you for that fragrant savor, for that natural sweetness, for that incomparable goodness which is in you. So Song 1:4, "The upright love you," or "They love you in uprightnesses," that is, most uprightly, most entirely, most sincerely, and not as hypocrites, who love you for base, carnal respects; who love you in compliment—but not in realities; who love you in word and tongue—but despise you in heart and life; who love the gift more than the giver.

That love which accompanies salvation is real and cordial love, it is sincere and upright love, it makes the soul love Christ, the giver, more than the gift; it makes the soul love the gift for the giver's sake; it will make the soul to love the giver without his gifts. And truly, they shall not be long without good gifts from Christ, who love Christ more than his gifts. Judas was kin to the bag, he was not kin to Christ. Christ hath many such kinsmen. A Christian cares not for anything that has not something of Christ in it. He says with him, 'without Christ, all plenty is scarcity.' Austin prays: 'Lord, whatever you have given, take all away; only, only give me yourself.' God gave him himself, and cast in many other mercies into the bargain.

Vespasian commanded a liberal gift should be given to a woman who came and professed that she was in love with him. Ah, Christians, shall Vespasian, an heathen prince, reward her liberally, who loved his person? and will not the Lord Jesus much more reward them with his choicest

gifts, who love him more than his gifts? Surely Christ will not be worse than a heathen, he will not act below a heathen! He shall never be a loser, who loves Christ for that spiritual sweetness and loveliness which is in Christ; Christ will not live long in that man's debts.

(4.) The fourth property. That love which accompanies salvation is a **VEHEMENT love, an ARDENT love**. It is a spark of heavenly fire, and it puts all the affections into a holy flame: Song 1:7, "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed?" etc. This amiable, amorous, passionate compellation, "O you whom my soul loves," speaks the spouse's love to be hot and burning towards Christ. So in Isa 26:8-9, "The desire of our souls is towards you, and to the remembrance of your name. With my soul have I desired you in the night, yes, with my spirit within me, will I seek you early." This affectionate, this passionate form of speech, "With my soul have I desired you," and that, "with my spirit within me will I seek you," does elegantly set forth the vehement and ardent love of the church to Christ.

Just so, does that pathological exclamation of the church, "Oh, feed me with your love—your 'raisins' and your 'apples'—for I am utterly lovesick!" Song 2:5. The betrothed virgin cannot show more strong and vehement love to her beloved, than by being utterly lovesick, when she meets him, when she enjoys him. It was so here with the spouse of Christ. The love of Christ to believers, is a vehement love, an ardent love—witness his leaving his Father's bosom, his putting upon us his royal robes, his bleeding, his dying, etc. And it does naturally beget vehement and ardent love in all the beloved of God. Where Christ loves, he always begets one who loves like himself. That love which is flat, lukewarm, or cold, will leave a man to freeze on this side heaven, it will fit him for the warmest place in hell. Dives' love was very cold, and he found the flames of hell to be very hot. That love which accompanies salvation is full of heat and fire.

(5.) The fifth property. That love which accompanies salvation is **LASTING love, it is PERMANENT love**. The objects of it are lasting, the springs and causes of it are lasting, the nature of it is lasting. The primitive Christians "did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death," Rev 12:11. Persecutors have taken away the martyrs' *lives* for Christ—but could never destroy their *love* to Christ: Eph 6:24, "Grace be

with all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity," or, "in incorruption," as the Greek word signifies; whereby the apostle gives us to understand, that true love to Christ is not liable to corruption, putrefaction, or decay—but is constant and permanent, lasting, yes, everlasting. 'Love never fails,' but shall last forever in heaven; in which respect the apostle lifts it up above faith, hope, and all the common gifts of the Spirit.

That love which accompanies salvation is like the oil in the cruse and the meal in the barrel, which never ran out. It is like the apple-tree of Persia, that buds, blossoms, and bears fruit every month. It is like the lamp in the story, which never went out. It is like the asbestos stone, which neither burns in the fire, nor sinks in the water. Song 8:6-7, "Love is stronger than death. Many waters cannot quench love; neither can rivers drown it. If a man tried to buy love with everything he owned, his offer would be utterly despised." Love rides in her chariot of triumph over all calamities and miseries, and cries, 'Victory, victory!' Love will outlive all enemies, temptations, oppositions, afflictions, persecutions, dangers, and deaths. Love's motto is 'I yield to none.' Love is like the sun; the sun beginning to ascend in his circle, never goes back until he comes to the highest degree thereof. True love abhors apostasy, it ascends to more perfection, and ceases not until, like Elijah's fiery chariot, it has carried the soul to heaven.

Many men's love to Christ is like the morning dew; it is like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and vanished in a night. But that love which accompanies salvation is like Ruth's love, a lasting and an abiding love, Ruth 1. It is love that will bed and board with the soul, that will lie down and rise up with the soul, that will go to the fire, to the prison, to the grave, to heaven with the soul.

(6.) The sixth property. Sixthly, that love which accompanies salvation, is **an ABOUNDING love, an INCREASING love**. This is clear throughout the whole book of Canticles, as all may run and read. Love in a saint, is like the waters in Noah's time, which rose higher and higher. The very nature of true love is to abound and rise higher and higher. Phil 1:9, "This I pray, that *your love may abound yet more and more.*"

The longer a believer lives, the more eminent and excellent causes of love

he sees in Christ. Christ discovers himself gradually to the soul. Now a believer's love to Christ rises answerable to the causes of love, which he sees in Christ. The more light the more love. Knowledge and love, like the water and the ice, beget each other. Man loves Christ by knowing—and knows Christ by loving. Man's love is answerable to his knowledge. He cannot love much—who knows but little of Christ; he cannot love little—who knows much of Christ. As a man rises higher and higher in his apprehensions of Christ—so he cannot but rise higher and higher in his affections to Christ.

Again, the daily mercies and experiences that they have—of the love of Christ, of the care of Christ, of the affections and compassion of Christ, working more and more towards them, cannot but raise their affections more and more to him. As fire is increased by adding of fuel unto it—so is our love to Christ increased, upon fresh and new manifestations of his great love toward us. As the husband abounds in his love to his wife—so the wife rises in her love to her husband. The more love the father manifests to the child—the more the sincere child rises in his affections to him. So the more love the Lord Jesus shows to us—the more he is beloved by us. Christ showed much love to Mary Magdalene—and this raises in her much love to Christ. "She loved much, for much was forgiven her," Luke 7:47-48.

As the Israelites, Num 33:29, removed their tents from Mithcah to Hashmonah, from *sweetness* to *swiftness*, as the words import—so the sweetness of divine love manifested to the soul makes the soul more sweet, swift, and high in the exercise and actings of love towards Christ. A soul under special manifestations of love, weeps that it can love Christ no more. Mr. Welch, a Suffolk minister, weeping at table, and being asked the reason of it, answered, it was because he could love Christ no more. The true lovers of Christ can never rise high enough in their love to Christ; they count a little love to be no love; great love to be but little love; strong love to be but weak love; and the highest love to be infinitely below the worth of Christ, the beauty and glory of Christ, the fullness, sweetness, and goodness of Christ. Their greatest misery in this life is, that they love Christ so little, though they are so much beloved by him.

(7.) The seventh property, and lastly, that love which accompanies

salvation, is **OPEN love, it is MANIFEST love**; it is love which cannot be hidden, which cannot be covered and buried. It is like the sun, it will shine forth, and show itself to all the world. A man cannot love Christ—but he will show it in these, and such like things as follow:

**First, Love to Christ makes the soul even ready to break, in longing after a further, clearer, and fuller enjoyment of Christ.** The voice of genuine love is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev 22:20. "Come quickly, my love! Move like a swift gazelle or a young deer on the mountains of spices!" Song 8:14. "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which for me is best of all," Phil 1:23. It is a mercy, says Paul, for Christ to be with me—but it is a greater mercy for me to be with Christ. I desire to die, that I may see my Savior; I refuse to live, that I may live with my Redeemer.

Love desires and endeavors forever to be present, to converse with, to enjoy, to be closely and eternally united to its object, Christ. The longing of the espoused maid for the marriage day, of the traveler for his inn, of the mariner for his haven, of the captive for his ransom, etc., is not to be compared to the longings of the lovers of Christ, after a further and fuller enjoyment of Christ. Austin longed to see that head, which was crowned with thorns.

The lovers of Christ do well know—that God has reserved the best wine, the best things, until last; that until they are taken up into glory, their chains will not fall off; until then their glorious robes shall not be put on; until then all sorrow and tears shall not be wiped from their eyes; until then their joy will not be full, their comforts pure, their peace lasting, their graces perfect; and this makes them look and long after the enjoyment of the person of Christ.

It was a notable saying of one, "Let all the devils in hell," says he, "attack me; let disease decay my body; let sorrows oppress my mind; let pains consume my flesh; let heat scorch me, or cold freeze me, let all these, and whatever more can come, happen unto me—just so that I may enjoy my Savior."

**Secondly, Love to Christ shows itself by working the soul to**

**abase itself, that Christ may be exalted**, to lessen itself to greaten Christ, to cloud itself that Christ alone may shine. Love cares not what it is, nor what it does—so that it may but advance the Lord Jesus; it makes the soul willing to be a footstool for Christ, to be anything, to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all. [Rev 4:10-11; John 3:26-81; Phil 3:7-8]

Thirdly, That love which accompanies salvation, sometimes shows itself by **working the soul to be cheerful and resolute, to be patient and constant in sufferings for Christ**: 1 Cor 13:7, "Love endures all things." Love will not complain, love will not say that the burden is too great, the prison is too dark, the furnace is too hot, the chains are too heavy, the cup is too bitter, etc., Acts 21:13. A true lover of Christ can slight his life, out of love to Christ, as that blessed virgin in Basil, who, being condemned for Christianity to the fire, and having her estate and life offered her, if she would worship idols, cried, "Let money perish, and life vanish! Christ is better than all!" That love which accompanies salvation, makes a Christian free and forward in suffering anything that makes for the glory of Christ.

Fourthly, that love which accompanies salvation, shows itself by **working the soul to be pleased or displeased, as Christ is pleased or displeased**. A soul who loves Christ has his eye upon Christ—and that which makes Christ frown makes him frown, and what makes Christ smile makes him smile. Love is impatient of anything which may displease a beloved Christ.

Look what Harpalus once said, 'What pleases the king pleases me,' that says a true lover of Christ, 'What pleases Christ, that pleases me.' 'Holiness pleases Christ and holiness pleases me,' says a lover of Christ. 'It pleases Christ to overcome evil with good, to overcome hatred with love, enmity with kindness, pride with humility, passion with meekness, etc., and the same pleases me,' says a lover of Christ. 1 John 4:17, "As he is—so are we in this world." 'Our love reflects Christ's love, and our hatred reflects Christ's hatred; he loves all righteousness and hates all wickedness. Just so, do we,' say the lovers of Christ, Psalm 119:113,128,163.

It is said of Constantine's children, that they resembled their father to the

life, that they put him wholly on. The true lovers of Christ resemble Christ to the life, and they put him wholly on. Hence it is that they are called Christ's body, 1 Cor 12:12.

Fifthly, True love to Christ shows itself sometimes by **working the lovers of Christ to expose themselves to suffering, to save Christ from suffering in his glory**; to venture the loss of their own crowns, to keep Christ's crown upon his head; to venture drowning, to save Christ's honor from sinking. Thus did the three children, Daniel, Moses, and other worthies of Hebrews 11.

I have read of a servant who dearly loved his master, and knowing that his master was hunted by his enemies, he put on his master's clothes, and was captured in place of his master, and suffered death for him.

Divine love will make a man do as much for Christ; it will make a man hang for Christ and burn for Christ: Rev 12:11, "They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." Christ and his truth was dearer to them than their lives. They slighted, disdained, yes, despised their very lives, when they stood in competition with Christ and his glory, and chose rather to suffer the greatest misery, than that Christ should lose the least grain of his glory.

Sixthly, That love which accompanies salvation shows itself sometimes by working the lovers of Christ to **be affected and afflicted with the dishonors which are done to Christ**: Psalm 119:136, "My eyes run down with rivers of tears, because men keep not your law," Jer 9:1-2. So Lot's soul was vexed, racked, and tortured with the filthy lives of the wicked Sodomites, 2 Pet 2:7-8. The turning of his own flesh, his wife, into a pillar of salt did not vex him—but their sins did rack his righteous soul. Psalm 69:9, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell upon me." A woman is most wounded in her husband, so is a Christian in his Christ. Though Moses was as a mute child in his own cause, yet when the Israelites, by making and dancing about their golden calf, had wounded the honor and glory of God, he shows himself to be much affected and afflicted for the dishonor done to God.

The statue of Apollo is said to shed tears for the afflictions of the

Grecians, though it could not help them. Just so, a true lover of Christ will shed tears for those dishonors which are done to Christ, though he knows not how to prevent them. It is between Christ and his lovers as it is between two lute strings that are tuned one to another; no sooner one is struck—but the other trembles. Just so, no sooner is Christ struck—but a Christian trembles, and no sooner is a Christian struck—but Christ trembles: "Saul, Saul, why persecute you me?" Acts 9:4.

Though king Croesus' son was mute all his lifetime, yet when one was about to kill his father, the affection that he had for his father broke the bars of his speech, and he cried out, "Take heed of killing the king!" You know how to apply it.

Seventhly, That love which accompanies salvation does show itself by working the soul **to observe with a curious critical eye Christ's countenance and demeanor**, and by causing the soul to be sad or cheerful, as Christ's demeanor and countenance is towards the soul. When Christ looks sad—then the soul is sad, as Peter was: Christ cast a sad look upon him—and that made Peter's heart sad; he went forth and wept bitterly. And when Christ looks sweetly, and speaks kindly, and acts lovingly, then to be cheerful and joyful, as the church was in Song 3:4, "It was but a little that I passed from them—but I found him whom my soul loves: I held him, and would not let him go." So the church in Isa 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

A true lover of Christ has still his eye upon Christ, and as his countenance stands, so is he glad or sad, cheerful or sorrowful. Tigranes, coming to redeem his wife, who was taken prisoner by King Cyrus, was asked what ransom he would give for his wife. He answered that he would redeem her liberty with his own life. Having prevailed for her liberty, Tigranes asked his wife what she thought of King Cyrus. "Truly," said she, "I cannot tell, for I did not so much as look on him or see him." "Whom then," said he, wondering, "did you look upon?" "Whom should I look upon," said she, "but him who would have redeemed my liberty with the loss of his own life." So a Christian, a true lover of Christ, esteems nothing

worth a looking upon, but Christ—who has redeemed him with his own blood.

Eighthly, That love which accompanies salvation, **reaches forth a hand of kindness to those who bear the image of Christ.** "He who loves not his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" Jerome professed how much he loved Christ in Augustine, and Augustine in Christ.

Now, because many mistake in their love to the saints, and the consequences which follow that mistake are very dangerous and pernicious to the souls of men, I shall therefore briefly hint to you the **PROPERTIES of that love to the saints**, which accompanies salvation. And,

(1.) The first property. The first is this, **true love to the saints is SPIRITUAL**; it is a love for the image of God, which is stamped upon the soul. Col 1:8, "Epaphras has declared to us your love in the Spirit." A soul who truly loves, loves the Father for his own sake, and the children for the Father's sake. Many there are, who love Christians for their goods, not for their good; they love them for the money that is in their purse—but not for the grace that is in their hearts. Love to the saints, for the image of God stamped upon them—is a flower which grows not in nature's garden. No man can love grace in another man's heart—but he who has grace in his own. Men do not more naturally love their parents, and love their children, and love themselves—than they do naturally hate the image of God upon his people and ways. Remember, wicked men, God himself is wronged by the injury which is done to his image. The contempt and despite is done to the king himself, which is done to his image or coin.

True love is for what of the divine nature, for what of Christ and grace—shines in a man. It is one thing to love a godly man, and another thing to love him for godliness. Many love godly men as they are kind, or influential, or learned, or of a sweet nature—but all this is but natural love; but to love them because they are spiritually lovely, because they are "all glorious within, and their raiment is of embroidered gold," Psalm 45:13, is to love them as becomes saints; it is to love them at so high and

noble a rate that no hypocrite in the world can reach to it. The wasps fly about the tradesman's shop, not out of love to him—but for the honey and the fruit which is there. This age is full of such wasps.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, **True love to the saints is UNIVERSAL**—to one Christian as well as another, to all as well as any; to poor Lazarus as well as to rich Abraham; to a despised Job as well as to an admired David; to an afflicted Joseph as well as to a raised Jacob; to a despised disciple as well as to an exalted apostle. Phil 4:21, "Greet every saint," the poorest as well as the richest; the weakest as well as the strongest; the lowest as well as the highest. They have all the same Spirit, the same Jesus, the same faith; they are all fellow-members, fellow-travelers, fellow-soldiers, fellow-citizens, fellow-heirs, and therefore must they all be loved with a sincere and cordial love. It was the glory of the Ephesians and Colossians that their faith and love reached to *all* the saints; it was not narrow, and confined to some particulars—but it was universal. Eph 1:15; Col 1:4.

The apostle James soundly condemn that partial love which was among professors in his days, James 2:1-2. Not that the apostle does absolutely prohibit a civil differencing of men—but when the rich man's wealth is more regarded than the poor man's godliness, and when men so favor the rich, as to cast scorn, contempt, disgrace, and discouragement upon the godly poor; this is a sin for which God will visit the sons of pride. It is not not race or place—but grace, which truly sets forth a man.

Pompey told his Cornelia, "It is no praise for you to have loved Pompey the *Great*—but if you love Pompey the *Miserable*, you shall be a pattern for imitation to all posterity." I will leave you to apply it.

Romanus the martyr, who was born of noble parentage, entreated his persecutors that they would not favor him for his nobility: "For it is not," said he, "the blood of my ancestors—but my Christian faith, which makes me noble."

Truly, he who loves one saint for the grace which is in him; for that holiness, that image of God, which is upon him—he cannot but fall in love with every saint who bears the lovely image of the Father upon him; he

cannot but love a saint in rags, as well as a saint in royal robes; a saint upon the ash-heap, as well as a saint upon the throne. Usually the most ragged Christians are the richest Christians; they usually have most of heaven who have least of earth, James 2:5. The true diamond shines best in the dark.

Yet there is a love of familiarity, which we may lawfully show more to one godly man than to another. Thus Christ loved John more than the other disciples.

(3.) The third property. Thirdly, Our love to the saints is right, **when we love them and DELIGHT in them**, answerable to the spiritual causes of love that shine in them, as the more holy and gracious they are, the more we love them. Yet this must be granted—that grace in a rugged, unhewn nature, is like a gold ring on a leprous hand, or a diamond set in iron. As a gold ring is most pleasing, when it is on a neat clean hand, and as a diamond when it is set in a ring of gold. Just so, grace is most pleasing and taking to us in a sweet nature, and not so much when it is in a rugged, unhewn nature; the beauty and glory of it being clouded and darkened by a rugged nature.

Psalm 16:3, "As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight." This is most certain, if godliness is the reason why we love any, then the more any excel others in the love, spirit, power, and practice of godliness, the more we should love them. There are some who seem to love such godly men as are weak in their judgments, low in their principles, and dull in their practices; and yet look with a squint eye upon those who are more sound in their judgments, more high in their principles, and more holy in their practices, which doubtless speaks out more hypocrisy than sincerity. Truly, he has either no grace, or but a little grace, who does not love most where the spiritual causes of love do most shine and appear. Surely those Christians are under a very great distemper of spirit, who envy those gifts and graces of God in others, which outshine their own. John's disciples muttered and murmured, because Christ had more followers and admirers than John; and *John's disciples are not all dead*, yes, they seem to have a new resurrection in these days.

Well, as the fairest *day* has its clouds, the finest *linen* its spots, the richest *jewels* their flaws, the sweetest *fruits* their worms—so when precious Christians are under temptations, they may, and too often do envy and repine at those excellent graces, abilities, and excellencies which cloud, darken, and outshine their own. **The best of men are too full of pride and self-love**, and that makes them sometimes cast dirt and disgrace upon that excellency that they themselves lack.

There is no greater argument that our grace is true, and that we do love others for grace's sake, than our loving them best who have most grace, though they have least of worldly goods. A pearl is rich, if found on a ash-heap, though it may glitter more when set in a ring of gold. Just so, many a poor believer is rich and glorious in the eye of Christ, and should be so in ours, though, like Job, he sits upon a ash-heap, though to the world he may seem to glisten most when adorned with riches, honor, and outward pomp, etc.

(4.) The fourth property. Fourthly, **True love to saints is CONSTANT**: 1 Cor 13:8, "Love never fails." It continues forever in heaven. That love is never true, which is not constant. Heb 13:1, "Let brotherly love continue." True love is constant in prosperity and adversity, in storms and calms, in health and sickness, in presence and in absence. "A friend," says the wise man, "loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity," Prov 17:17. Prosperity *makes* friends, and adversity will *try* friends. A true friend is neither known in prosperity, nor hidden in adversity. Consalvus, a Spanish bishop and inquisitor, wondered how the Christians had that commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' so indelibly printed on their hearts, that no torture could blot it out, and make them confess and betray one another, or cease from loving one another.

True love is like to that of Ruth's to Naomi, and that of Jonathan's to David—permanent and constant. Many there are whose love to the saints is like Job's brooks, Job 6:15-16, which in winter when we have no need, overflows with offers of service and shows of love; but when the season is hot and dry, and the poor thirsty traveler stands in most need of water to refresh him, then the brooks are quite dried up. They are like the swallow that will stay by you in the *summer*—but fly from you in the *winter*.

It is observed by Josephus of the Samaritans, that whenever the Jews' affairs prospered, they would be their friends, and profess much love to them; but if the Jews were in trouble, and needed their assistance, then they would not own them, nor have anything to do with them. This age is full of such Samaritans, yet, such as truly love will always love. In the primitive times it was very much taken notice of by the very heathen, that in the depth of misery, when fathers and mothers forsook their children, Christians, otherwise strangers, stuck close to one another; their love of piety, and one of another, proved firmer than that of nature. "They seem to take away the sun out of the world," said the orator, "who takes away friendship from the life of men," and we do not more need fire and water than constant friendship.

Ninthly, That love which accompanies salvation, does **manifest and show itself by working the soul to be quiet and still under Christ's rebukes**. Peter sits down quiet under a threefold reproof, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you," John 21:16-18. So Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his own eyes," 1 Sam 3:18. And Aaron "held his peace," when he saw the flames about his sons' ears, Lev 10:3. So David, "I was silent, I opened not my mouth, because you did it," Psalm 39:9. The lovers of Christ are like the Scythian, who went naked in the snow; and when Alexander wondered how he could endure it, he answered, "I am all forehead." Oh the lovers of Christ are all *forehead*, to bear the rebukes of the Lord Jesus.

The lovers of Christ know that all his rebukes are from love; "whom he loves, he rebukes," Rev 3:19; they can see smiles through Christ's frowns; they know, that to argue that Christ hates them because he rebukes them, is the devil's logic; they know, that all the rebukes of Christ are in order to their spiritual and eternal good, and that quiets them; they know, that all the rebukes of Christ are but forerunners of some glorious manifestations of greater love to their souls. Psalm 71:20-21, "You, who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." They know that **it is the greatest judgment in the world, to go on freely in a way of sin without rebukes**. "Ephraim is joined to idols—let him alone," Hos 4:17. And therefore they

keep silence before the Lord, they lay one hand upon their mouths, and the other upon their hearts, and so sit mute before the holy one.

Tenthly, That love which accompanies salvation, shows itself by **working the heart to be affected and afflicted with the least dishonors that are done to Christ**. Love is sensitive of little things; it is as much afflicted with an idle word or with an impure dream, as lovers of Christ are with adultery or blasphemy. David did but cut off the tip of Saul's garment, and his heart smote him, 1 Sam 24:5; though he did it to convince Saul of his false jealousy, and his own innocency. Love will not allow of the least infirmity. Rom 7:15, "That which I do, I allow not." Love will make a man *aim* at angelic purity and perfect innocency; love will strive to be getting up to the top of Jacob's ladder; love can rest in nothing below perfection; love makes a man look more at what he should *be*, than at what he *is*; it makes a man strive as for life, to imitate the highest examples, and to write after the choicest copies. Love fears every approach of sin; it trembles at the appearance of sin; it does not, it cannot allow itself to do anything which looks like sin; it hates "the garment spotted with the flesh;" it shuns the *occasions of sin* as it shuns hell itself. This is the divine sensitivity of a Christian's love. Love says—it is better to die with hunger, than to eat that which is offered to idols. "The sin, and the coat of sin, is to be hated," says Ambrose.

Marcus Arethusius, out of his love to Christ and hatred of idolatry, would not give one halfpenny toward the building of an idol's temple, though he was punished with intolerable torments. Love knows that the least evils are contrary to the greatest good; they are contrary to the nature of Christ, the commands of Christ, the spirit of Christ, the grace of Christ, the glory of Christ, the blood of Christ. Love knows that little sins, if I may call any sin little, make way for greater sins—as little thieves unlock the door and make way for greater. Love knows that little sins multiplied, become great. As love knows that there is nothing lesser than a grain of sand—just so, love knows that there is nothing heavier than the sand of the sea, when multiplied.

Eleventhly, That love which accompanies salvation, will show itself by **keeping the doors of the heart shut against those treacherous lovers that would draw the heart from Christ**. Love is a *golden key*

to let in Christ—and a *strong lock* to keep out others. Though many may knock at love's door, yet love will open to none but Christ: Song 5:6, "I opened to my beloved;" and Song 8:7, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be despised." When the world would buy his love, he cries out with Peter, "May your money perish with you!" Acts 8:20. Love makes a man look with a holy scorn and disdain upon all persons and things, which attempt either to force or flatter her out of her love and loyalty to her beloved. It is neither force nor fraud, it is neither promises nor threatenings, it is neither the cross nor the crown, the palace nor the prison, the rod nor the robe, the halter nor the golden chain—which will make love embrace a stranger in the room of Christ. 'Go,' says divine love, 'offer your gold and empty glories to others; your pleasures and your treasures to others; put on your lion's skin and frighten others; as for my part, I scorn and despise your golden offers, and I disdain and deride your rage and threats!' Love makes a man too noble, too high, too gallant, and too faithful, to open to any lover but Christ, to let any lie between the breasts but Christ: Song 1:13, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts."

When Basil was tempted with money and preferment, he answers, 'Give money which will last forever, and glory that may eternally flourish!' Love makes a man cry out when tempted, as that worthy convert did, 'I am not the man that I was; when my heart was void of divine love, I was as easily conquered as I was tempted. Oh but now he has shed abroad his love in my soul, I am not the man that I was, I had rather die than fall before a temptation.'

Twelfthly, That love which accompanies salvation, **shows itself by secret visits, by secret expressions of love.** A soul who truly loves Christ, loves to meet him in private, to meet him behind the door, Song 2:14, to meet him in the clefts of the rock, where no eye sees, nor any ear hears, nor any heart observes, Matt 6:6. Feigned love is much in commending and kissing Christ upon the stage; but sincere love is much in embracing and weeping over Christ in a closet. The Pharisee loved to stand praying in the marketplace and in the temple, Matt 6:2; but the

spouse was at it in the villages, Song 7:11. Souls who truly love Christ, are much in secret visits, in secret prayer, in secret sighing, in secret groaning, in secret mourning, etc. True love is good at bolting of the door, and is always best when it is most with Christ in private. The secret discoveries which Christ makes to souls, do much oblige them to closet services. Christ shows secret kindnesses upon his people, and that draws them out to be much in secret, in closet services.

Thirteenthly, That love which accompanies salvation, shows itself by **breathing after more clear evidence and full assurance of Christ's love to the soul**. Divine love would gladly have her *drop* turned into an *ocean*; her *spark* into a *flame*; her *penny* into a *pound*; her *mite* into a *million*. A soul who truly loves Christ, can never see enough, nor ever taste enough, nor ever feel enough, nor ever enjoy enough of the love of Christ; when once they have found his love to be better than wine, then nothing will satisfy them but the kisses of his mouth: Song 1:2, "Let him kiss me with the *kisses* of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine." Not with a kiss—but with the *kisses* of his mouth. A soul once kissed by Christ, can never have enough of the kisses of Christ; his lips drop myrrh and mercy; no kisses, compared to the kisses of Christ. The more any soul loves Christ, the more serious, studious, and industrious will that soul be to have the love of Christ discovered, confirmed, witnessed, and sealed to it. The more a virgin's love is drawn out to another, the more she desires to be confirmed and assured of his love to her.

That is a sweet word of the spouse: Song 8:6, "Set me as a **seal** upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death." Set me as a seal upon your heart; that is, let me be deeply engraved as a seal into your heart and affections; let the love and remembrance of me make a deep impression in you, and set me as a seal or signet on your arm.

[1.] The seal, you know, is for ratifying, confirming, and making sure of things. Oh! says the spouse, establish and confirm me in your love, and in the outward expressions and manifestations of it.

[2.] Signets, among the Jews were used not as ornaments only—but as monuments of love that were continually in sight and remembrance. Oh!

says the church, let me be still in your sight and remembrance as a monument of your love. In the old law, you know, the high priest bore the name of Israel engraved on stones upon his heart and shoulder for a memorial, Exod 28:11-12,21,29. Ah! says the church, let my name be deeply engraved upon your heart, let me be always in your eye, let me be always a memorial upon your shoulder.

[3.] Great men have their signet rings upon their hands in precious esteem: Jer 22:24, "And as surely as I live," says the Lord—I will abandon you, Jehoiachin, king of Judah. Even if you were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pull you off." Ah! says the spouse, 'Oh highly prize me, Lord Jesus! highly esteem of me; oh let me be as dear and precious unto you as the signet ring on yur right hand!'

Lastly, That love which accompanies salvation, shows itself by **working a true lover of Christ to commit his richest treasures, his choicest jewels, to the care and custody of Christ.** [Psalm 31:15, so Job, so Paul; 2 Tim 1:12, and 2 Tim 4:7-8; Mic 7:8-9; Deut 6:22.] *Where we love—we will trust, and as we love—we will trust.* Little trust speaks out little love, great trust speaks out great love. The lovers of Christ commend to Christ's care their pearls of greatest price—their names, their lives, their souls, their crowns, their innocency, their all. It was a notable saying of Luther, "Let him who died for my soul, see to the salvation of it." Caesar received not his wounds from the swords of enemies—but from the hands of friends, that is, from trusting in them. Oh—but the lovers of Christ shall never receive any wounds by trusting in Christ, by committing their choicest jewels to his care; for he has a powerful *hand*, and a wise and loving *heart!* Christ will hold fast whatever the Father, or the saints—put into his hand.

And thus I have showed you what that love is, which accompanies salvation.

**VI.** I come now, in the sixth place, to show you what **PRAYER** that is, which accompanies salvation. But I see that I must contract what remains into a narrow space, lest I should tire out both the reader and myself, which, that I may not, I shall endeavor by divine assistance to mind

brevity in what remains.

Now, that prayer does accompany salvation, I have formerly showed. Now I am briefly to show you what prayer that is, which accompanies salvation, and that I shall do in these following particulars.

(1.) The first property. First, **Prayer is a divine worship whereon, we speak to God in faith, humility, sincerity, and fervency of spirit, through the mediation of Christ**, begging those good things that we and others lack, and giving thanks for that we and others have received. Prayer is a speaking to God face to face; it is Jacob's ladder by which the soul climbs up to heaven; it is Noah's dove that goes and returns not until it brings assurance of peace.

The matter of prayer may be reduced to these heads:

- (1.) petition;
- (2.) deprecation;
- (3.) intercession;
- (4.) expostulation.

There are other distinctions in regard of the manner; as, first, mental prayer, which is the inward lifting up of the heart to God; secondly, vocal, which is uttered by words, as the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" thirdly, there is spontaneous prayer, and written prayer; fourthly, there is public or private prayer. These hints may suffice as to this.

But not to please you with notions, you must remember that that prayer which accompanies salvation is such prayer as has in it all the requisites of prayer. Now there are **four REQUISITES in prayer**.

[1.] The first requisite. First, **The person must be righteous**: James 5:16, "The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much;" John 9:31, "God hears not sinners." The Jews urge it as a proverb, 'An unclean person pollutes his own prayers.' Good motions from a bad heart make

no music in heaven.

I have read of a jewel, that, being put in a dead man's mouth, loses all its virtue. Prayer in the mouth of a wicked man, which is dead God-wards, Christ-wards, heaven-wards, and holiness-wards, is a jewel that loses all its virtue: Psalm 50:16-17, "But unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare my statutes, or that you should take my covenant into your mouth? seeing that you hate instruction, and casts my words behind you." Bias, a heathen, being at sea in a great storm, and perceiving many wicked wretches with him in the ship, calling upon the gods, "Oh," says he, "refrain your prayers, hold your tongues; I would not have the gods take notice that you are here; they will sure drown us all, if they would." You are wise, and know how to apply it. Jerome said, "What does it avail to invoke God with your voice, whom you deny in your works?"

[2.] The second requisite. The second requisite in prayer is this, namely, **The matter of your prayer must be according to God's will:** 1 John 5:14, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, That if we ask anything *according to his will*, he hears us." The favorites of heaven have no further the ear of the King of kings in prayer, than the matter of their prayer is sound, and "agreeable to his will," Rom 8:27. The matter of your prayer must fall under some particular or general Scriptural precept or promise, or else God will never own it nor honor it with acceptance. You must not pray as Augustine prayed before his conversion; he prayed for patience, with a proviso: "Lord, give me patience," says he, "but not yet." Such hypocrisy is double iniquity, and God will deal with such sinners accordingly.

It was both a profane and blasphemous speech of that atheistical wretch, that told God he was no common beggar, he never troubled him before with prayer, and if he would hear him that one time, he would never trouble him again.

[3.] The third requisite. Thirdly, As the **matter** of your prayer must be Scriptural, so **the MANNER of your prayer must be right**. God regards not so much the matter as the manner of our prayer. God loves adverbs better than nouns; not to pray only—but to pray *well*.

Now for the better and further clearing of this truth, I shall show you, by divine assistance, what it is to pray in the right manner, and that I shall do in the following particulars:

First, To pray in a right manner, is to pray **UNDERSTANDINGLY**, to pray knowingly: 1 Cor 14:15, "I will pray with understanding." He who does not pray understandingly, does not pray but prate; as that parrot in Rome which could distinctly say over the whole creed: John 4:22, "You worship you know not what," says Christ. So many pray they know not what. "Without knowledge the mind cannot be good," Prov 19:2. And can the prayer be good when the mind is bad? A blind mind, a blind sacrifice, a blind priest, are abominable to God. Ignorance is the source of all sin, the very wellspring from which all wickedness does issue. It was a good saying of one, "God hears not the words of one that prays," says he, "unless he who prays hears them first himself." And, truly, God will never understand that prayer which we do not understand ourselves.

Secondly, To pray in a right manner, is to pray **BELIEVINGLY**: Heb 11:6, "He who comes unto God, must believe that he is;" that is, that he is really as good, as gracious, as glorious, as excellent, as constant, etc., as his word reports him to be; and that he is "a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." Mark 11:24, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." In the Greek it is in the present tense, "you do receive them," to show the certainty of receiving them. You shall as certainly receive the good things that believingly you ask in prayer, as if you had them already in your hand. **God will never let the hand of faith, go empty away in prayer.** Faith is God's darling, and he never fails to give it a worthy portion, a Benjamin's portion, a Hannah's portion, a double portion: James 1:5-7, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." He who prays doubtingly, shuts the gates of heaven against his own prayers. Unbelief is virtually all ill; therefore fight especially against it. One of the ancients describes prayer thus: "prayer is a climbing up of the heart to God, which cannot be done

but by the power of faith."

It is reported in the life of Luther, that when he prayed it was with so much **reverence**, as if he were praying to God; and with so much **boldness**, as if he had been speaking to his friend. Faith in prayer makes a man divinely familiar and bold with God in prayer. That prayer which has not the image and stamp of faith upon it, is no prayer in divine account. **The sweetest flowers of paradise are only acceptable to God, as they are offered to him by the hand of faith.**

Augustus, when a poor man came to present a petition to him with his hand shaking and trembling out of fear, the emperor was much displeased, and said, "It is not fit that any should come with a petition to a king as if a man were giving meat to an elephant; that is, afraid to be destroyed by him.

Truly Jehovah loves to see everyone of his petitioners to come to him with a steadfast faith, and not with a trembling hand. Christ gets most glory, and the soul gets most good, by those prayers which are accompanied with the actings of faith.

Thirdly, To pray in a right manner, is to pray **INTENSELY, FERVENTLY, EARNESTLY**. So James 5:16, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much;" or, as the Greek has it, "the working prayer," that is, such prayer as sets the whole man a-work. The word signifies such a working with the liveliest activity that can be. It works wonders in heaven, in the heart, and in the earth. Such working prayer as sets all the faculties of the soul, and all the graces in the soul, at work, always speeds; it fails not of winning the day, of carrying the crown. As medicine harms the body if it works not, so does prayer the soul, if it be not working-prayer. **As a painted fire is no fire, a dead man no man—so a cold prayer is no prayer.** In a painted fire there is no heat; in a dead man there is no life. Just so, in a cold prayer there is no omnipotency, no devotion, no blessing.

It is not cold, but working prayer, which can lock up heaven three years, and open heaven's gate at pleasure, and bring down the sweetest blessings upon our heads, and the choicest favors into our hearts. Cold

prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings: they pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers always freeze before they reach to heaven. So Jacob was earnest in his wrestling with God: "Let me alone," says God. "I will not let you go except you bless me," says Jacob, Gen 32:24-27. Jacob, though lamed and exhausted, will not let the Lord go without a blessing. Jacob holds with his hands when his joints were out of joint, and so, as a prince, prevails with God. Jacob prays and weeps, and weeps and prays, and so prevails with God: Hos 12:4, "Yes, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him," etc. The Jews have a saying, that 'since the destruction of Jerusalem, the door of prayers has been shut.' 'But the door of tears was never shut,' says one.

It is not the labor of the lips—but the travail of the heart; it is not the pouring forth a flood of words—but the pouring out of the soul, which makes a man a prince, a prevailer with God. A man who would gain victory over God in prayer, must strain every string of his heart; he must, in beseeching God, besiege him, and so get the better of him; he must strive in prayer even to an agony; he must be like importunate beggars, who will not be put off with frowns, or silence, or sad answers. Those who would be masters of their requests, must with the importunate widow press God so far as to put him to the blush; they must with a *holy impudence*, as Basil speaks, make God ashamed to look them in the face, if he should deny the importunity of their souls. The word signifies to strive to the shedding of blood—buffet me, or beat me down with her blows, as wrestlers beat down their adversaries with their fists or clubs. An importunate soul will never cease until he obtains; he will devour all discouragements; yes, he will turn discouragements into encouragements, as the woman of Canaan did, until Christ says, "Be unto you, O soul, as you will." As a body without a soul, much wood without fire, a bullet in a gun without powder—so are words in prayer without fervency of spirit. The hottest springs send forth their waters by ebullitions.

I have read of one who, being sensible of his own dullness and coldness in prayer, reprov'd himself thus: "What! do you think that Jonah prayed thus when he was in the belly of hell? or Daniel, when he was in the lions'

den? or the thief, when he was upon the cross?" and I may add, or the three children, when they were in the fiery furnace? or the apostles, when they were in bonds and prisons. Oh! that Christians would reprove themselves out of their cold prayers, and chide themselves into a better and a warmer frame of spirit when they make their supplications before the Lord.

An importunate soul in prayer is like the poor beggar who prays and knocks, who prays and waits, who prays and works, who knocks and begs—and will not stir from the door until he has an alms. And truly he who is good at this will not be long a beggar in grace. God will make his heart and his cup to overflow. The Jews write upon the walls of their synagogues this sentence—that prayer, without the intention of the mind, is but as a body without a soul. You know how to apply it. Jerome speaks of certain holy women in his time, that they seemed in their fervent affections to join with the holy company of heaven.

Fourthly, To pray in a right manner, is, to pray **ASSIDUOUSLY, CONSTANTLY**, as well as fervently. Luke 18:1, "And he spoke a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint;" or as it is in the Greek, not to "shrink back," as sluggards in work, or cowards in war—to pray in every opportunity. Now men pray always, first, when their hearts are always prepared to pray, or in a praying frame; secondly, when they do not omit the duty, when it is to be performed, or when they take hold on every opportunity, to pour out their souls before the Lord.

1 Thess 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." A man must always pray habitually, though not actually; he must have his heart in a praying disposition in all estates and conditions, in prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in strength and weakness, in wealth and wants, in life and death. So in Eph 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints." **Our daily weaknesses, our daily wants, our daily fears, our daily dangers, our daily temptations, etc., call for our daily prayers.** Rom 12:12, "Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be *persistent in prayer*." It is a metaphor taken from dogs that hunt, which will not give over the game until they have got it. A dog, of all

creatures, is best able to endure hunger; he will run from place to place, and never leave it until he has got his prey. So a child of God in his hunting after God, Christ, grace, peace, mercy, glory, never gives over until he has found his heavenly prey. Song 3:4, "At length I found him whom my soul loved; I held him, and would not let him go." The spouse never left hunting after her beloved, until she had found him. Augustine's usual wish was, that when Christ came, he might find him either praying or preaching.

Gracious souls reckon that they have nothing until they speed in the things they plead for—as a hungry man eats as if he had never ate before. They pray as if they had never prayed, and think that they have done nothing until they have done the deed. If we will continue constant in our wrestling with God for blessings, though God should appear unto us in the form or shape of a judge, an enemy, a stranger, etc., yet still to press him hard for mercy, truly mercy will come in the long run, and we shall say, that it is not in vain for men to hold on praying, though God for a time delays giving the particular favors they plead for. As that emperor said, 'it behooves an emperor to die standing,' so may I say, 'it behooves a Christian to die praying.' Hypocrites are inconstant in their prayers; they are only at it by fits and starts, they are only constant in inconstancy.

Fifthly, To pray in a right manner, is to pray **SINCERELY**: Psalm 17:1, "listen to my prayer—from lips free of deceit." Psalm 145:18, "The Lord is near unto all those who call upon him: to all that call upon him in truth." Your heart and tongue must go together; word and work, lip and life, prayer and practice must echo one to another—or all will be lost, heaven lost, and the soul lost forever. It is not the greatness of the voice, nor the multitude of words, nor the sweetness of the tone, nor studied notions, nor eloquent expressions, which Jehovah heeds—but truth in the inward parts, Psalm 51:6. When the Athenians would know of the oracle, the cause of their often unprosperous successes in battle against the Lacedemonian, seeing they offered the choicest things they could get, in sacrifice to the gods, which their enemies did not; the oracle gave them this answer, That the gods were better pleased with their inward supplication, than with all their outward pomp in costly sacrifices. Ah, souls! the reason why you are so unsuccessful in your pious duties and

services is, because you are no more sincere and upright in them. Were there more singleness and sincerity of heart in your duties, you would have surer and sweeter returns from heaven.

Ah, Christians! the more sincere you are, the more will prayer be your food and drink; and the more prayer is a delight and pleasure to you, the more will you be the pleasure and delight of God, who delights in those who delight in his service, and who count his work better than wages. Christ says to upright souls; "Hitherto have you asked nothing; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full," John 16:24. **Christ has a full purse, a noble heart, and a liberal hand.**

[4.] The fourth requisite in prayer is this, namely, your **prayer must be to a good END**; it must be to the glory of God, and to the internal and eternal advantage of your own and others' souls. The chief end, the bulls-eye, the mark, at which the soul must aim in prayer, is God's glory: "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor 10:31. When God crowns us, he does but crown his own gifts in us; and when we give God the glory of all we do, we do but give him the glory that is due unto his name; for he works all our works in us and for us. God measures all men's actions by their ends: if their end is good, all is good; if the end be bad, all is bad. The end determines the action. All actions of worship are good or bad—as the mark is at which the soul aims. He who makes God the object of prayer—but not the end of prayer, does but lose his prayer, and take pains to undo himself. God will be all in all, or he will be nothing at all; he will be both the object and the end of prayer—or else he will abhor your prayer. Those prayers never reach his ear, they are never lodged in his bosom, which are not directed to his glory. The end must always be as noble as the means, or else a Christian acts below himself, yes, below his very reason.

Ah, Christians! it is not a flood of words, nor high strains of wit, nor vehemency of affections in prayer—but holy and gracious ends, which will render prayer acceptable and honorable to God, comfortable and profitable to yourselves and others; yes, the directing of one prayer to divine glory does more torture and torment Satan than all the prayers in the world that are directed to ends below divine glory. It is not simply prayer—but the soul's aiming at divine glory in prayer, that adds to

Christ's crown, and Satan's hell. 'Lord,' says Austin, 'take all away; only give me yourself!' Isa 1:11; Zech 7:6; Amos 5:22; Hos 7:14. Many heathens, as Aristides, Cato, Themistocles, with divers others, did sincerely many great services for the common good, and not for their own gain; but yet they could not hit the mark—the glory of God; and so **their most glorious actions were but glorious sins.**

And thus I have showed you all the REQUISITES of prayer, even of such prayer as accompanies salvation. I shall now proceed to some other particulars for the further and fuller opening of this truth.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, that prayer which accompanies salvation, **bettors the whole man.** By it, faith is increased, hope strengthened, the spirit exhilarated, the heart pacified, the conscience purified, temptations vanquished, corruptions weakened, the affections inflamed, the will more renewed, and the whole man more advantaged. Prayer is a spiritual chair, wherein the soul sits down at the feet of the Lord, to receive the influences of his grace. Prayer is the regal gate by which the Lord enters into the heart, comforting, quieting, strengthening, quickening, and raising of it. The Scripture affords us a cloud of witnesses to prove this truth—but I appeal to praying saints. Ah, tell me, tell me, praying souls, have not you, do not you find it so? I know you have and do, and that is it that makes prayer a pleasure, a paradise unto you. It was a sweet saying of Ambrose, "O Lord! I never go from you without you."

(3.) The third property. Thirdly, You may judge what prayer that is, which accompanies salvation by considering **the difference that is between the prayers of the godly and the wicked.** Now the difference between the prayers of the one and the other I shall show you in the following particulars,

The first difference. First, **Gracious souls do trade and deal with God in prayer, only upon the account and credit of Christ.** They beg mercy to pardon them, and grace to purify them, and balm to heal them, and divine favor to comfort them, and power to support them, and wisdom to counsel them, and goodness to satisfy them—but all upon the account of Christ's blood, of Christ's righteousness; of Christ's satisfaction, and of Christ's intercession at the right hand of the Father;

Rev 4:10-11. They seek the Father in the Son, they present their suits always in Christ's name, for so is the will of Christ: John 14:13-14, "And whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." John 15:16, "Whatever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give you." John 16:23, "Truly I say unto you, whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you." The Greek is pregnant, and may be read not only "Whatever," but also "How many things soever you shall ask or beg of the Father in my name, he will give them to you."

There is no admission into heaven, except we bring Christ in our arms: Eph 2:18, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Greek word signifies "a leading by the hand." It is an allusion to the custom of princes, to whom there is no admission, unless we be brought in by one of the favorites. As no access, so no acceptance without Christ, Eph 1:6, "wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved."

Plutarch reports, "That it used to be the practice of some of the heathens, the Molossians, when they would seek the favor of their prince, they took up the king's son in their arms, and so went and kneeled before the king."

Ah, Christians Christ is near and dear unto the Father; the Father has determined to give out all his loves and favors through his Son; if you bring Christ in the arms of your faith, you gain the Father's heart, and in gaining his heart you gain all. The father's mercies melt, his affections move, his heart turns; his compassions are kindled upon the sight of his Son's merits and mediation. As Joseph said to his brethren, "You shall not see my face unless you bring your brother Benjamin," so says God, "you shall not see my face unless you bring the Lord Jesus with you."

Now gracious souls; in all their prayers, they present Jesus Christ before the Father, and upon his account they desire those things that make for their external, internal, and eternal good.

Ah! but vain unbelievers treat and trade with God in prayer upon the account of their *own* worth, righteousness, worthiness, and services: Isa 58:2-3, "Why have we fasted and you have not seen it? Why have we

humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?" Here you see they stand upon their own practices and services, and expostulate the case with God in an angry manner, because God did not answer their hypocritical performances. So the proud pharisee stands in prayer upon his own worthiness and righteousness: Luke 18:11-12, "The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank you, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." This pharisee was like the Egyptian temple—painted without—and vile within; varnished without—and vermin within. So did those hypocrites in Matt 6:23 stand very much upon their outward services and performances, though they were but *shining sins*—but filthy rags.

The second difference. Secondly, **Souls truly gracious pray more to get off their sins, than they do to get off their chains.** Though bonds did await Paul in every place, Acts 20:23, as himself speaks, yet he never cries out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from my bonds; but, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from my sins, from this body of death?" Rom 7:23. David cries not, 'I am undone' but 'I have done foolishly,' Psalm 51:4. But wicked men strive in prayer more to get off their chains than to get off their sins; more to be delivered from enemies without than lusts within; more to get out of the furnace than to be delivered from their spiritual bondage, as these scriptures evidence. [Psalm 78:34; Zech 7:5-7; Isa 26:16-17]

The third difference. Thirdly, **The stream and cream of a gracious man's spirit runs most out in prayer after spiritual and heavenly things,** as is abundantly evident by those prayers of the saints that are upon record throughout the Scripture, Psalm 4:6-7, and Psalm 27:4; but the stream and cream of vain men's spirits in prayer runs most out after poor, low, carnal things, as you may see in comparing the following scriptures together, Hos 7:14; Zech 7:5-7; James 4:3, etc.

The fourth difference. Fourthly, **A gracious soul looks and lives more upon God in prayer, than upon his prayer.** He knows, though prayer be his chariot, yet Christ is his food. Prayer may be a staff to support him—but Christ is that manna that must nourish him, and upon him he looks, and lives: Psalm 5:3, "In the morning will I direct my

prayer unto you" (or marshal and set in order my prayer, as it is in the Hebrew), "and will look up" (or "look out," as it is in the Hebrew) "as a watchman looks out to discover the approaches of an enemy." But vain men, they live and look more upon their prayers than they do upon God.

More—usually they never observe what returns they have from heaven. They are like those who shoot arrows—but do not mind where they fall. Wicked men think it is religion enough for them to pray; and to look after their prayers, to see how their prayers speed, is no part of their faith; but a gracious soul is of a more noble spirit; when he has prayed he will stand upon his watchtower, and observe what God will speak: Psalm 85:8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; [I will listen, and lay my obedient ear to what the Lord shall speak,] for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not return to folly;" or, as the Hebrew may be read, "And they shall not return to folly." Wicked men would have God to be all ear to hear what they desire, when themselves have never an ear to hear what he speaks. But deaf ears shall always be attended with dumb answers. God's justice always makes mercy dumb, when sin has made the sinner deaf.

The fifth difference. Fifthly, **No discouragements can take gracious souls off from prayer**—but the least discouragements will take off carnal hearts from prayer, as you may see in the following scriptures compared together: Psalm 40:1-2, and Psalm 44:10-23; Matt 15:21-29; Mal 3:14; Isa 58:1-3; Amos 8:3-5, etc.

When one of the ancient martyrs was severely threatened by his persecutors, he replied, "There is nothing," says he, "of things visible, nothing of things invisible, which I fear; I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, come on it what will." It is neither the hope of life, nor the fear of death, that can take a real Christian off from prayer. He is rather raised than dejected, he is rather quickened than discouraged by delays or denials; he will hold up and hold on in a way and course of prayer, though men should rage and lions roar, and the furnace be heat seven times hotter, etc. But it is not so with carnal hearts, Job 27:9-10.

The sixth difference. Sixthly, When a gracious man prays, **he has his**

**heart in his prayer;** when he falls upon the work, he makes heart work of it. In his course his heart is in his prayer; he finds by experience that the heart is *the great wheel that moves all other wheels*. It is the chief monarch in the life of man. So David, Psalm 42:4, "When I remember these things, I pour out my heart." So Hannah, 1 Sam 1:15, "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit," said she, "and have poured out my soul before the Lord." So the Israelites in 1 Sam 7:6, "pour out their souls like water before the Lord." So the church in Isa 26:8-9, "The desire of our soul is to your name, and to the remembrance of you. With my soul have I desired you in the night; yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early." The heart, as a prince, gives laws to all other members. The heart is Christ's bed of spices; it is his presence-chamber; it is his royal throne; it is one of those four keys which God keeps under his own belt.

Gracious souls know that no prayer is acknowledged, accepted, and rewarded by God—but that wherein the heart is sincerely and wholly. It is not a piece, it is not a corner of the heart, which will satisfy the maker of the heart. The true mother would not have the child divided. As God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so he loathes a divided heart. God neither loves halting nor halving, he will be served truly and totally. The royal law is, "You shall love and serve the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul," Deut 10:12. Among the heathens, when the beasts were cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart, and if the heart was bad the sacrifice was rejected. Truly, God rejects all those sacrifices wherein the heart is bad.

Now wicked men are heartless in all their services, in all their prayers, as you may see in comparing the following scriptures together; I shall not transcribe the words, because I must cut short the work: Isa 29:13; Matt 15:7-9; Ezek 33:30-32; Zech 7:4-6; 2 Chron 25:1-2. As the body without the soul is dead, so prayer, without the heart in it, is but dead prayer in the eye and account of God. Prayer without the heart is but an empty ring, a tinkling cymbal. Prayer is only lovely and weighty, as the heart is in it—and not otherwise. It is not the lifting up of the voice, nor the wringing of the hands, nor the beating of the breasts—but the stirrings of the heart, which God looks at in prayer. God hears no more than the heart speaks; if the heart is dumb, God will certainly be deaf. No prayer is

accepted by God, but that which is the travail of the heart.

The seventh difference. Seventhly, **Gracious souls usually come off from prayer, with hearts more disengaged from sin, and more vehemently set against it.** The precious communion that they have with God in prayer, the sweet breathings of God into their hearts, while they are a-breathing out their requests in his ears, and the secret assistance, stirrings, and movings of the Spirit upon their souls in prayer—arm them more against sin, and makes them stand upon the highest terms of defiance with sin. 'How shall I do this or that wickedness against God?' says the praying soul, 'Oh I cannot, I will not do anything unworthy of him who has caused his glory to pass before me in prayer.'

Ah! but wicked men come off from prayer with hearts more encouraged to sin, and more resolved to walk in ways of sin: Prov 7:14-24, "I have peace-offerings with me," says the harlot; "this day have I paid my vows: therefore came I forth to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love." That is, "let us be drunken with love," which shows her unsatiable lusts. So in Jer 7:9-10, "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"--safe to do all these detestable things?"

Wicked men are like Lewis, king of France, who would swear and then kiss the cross, and then swear more bitterly and then kiss the cross. So they sin and pray, and pray and sin; and the more they pray, the more easily, resolutely, impudently do they sin. They make use of prayer to quiet their consciences, so that they may sin with more pleasure and less regret. Ah! what pains do such sinners take to go to hell, and to arm their consciences against themselves in that day, wherein they shall say, 'There is no help, there is no hope!' This age is full of such monsters, who have no pity upon themselves.

The eighth difference. Eighthly and lastly, **Gracious souls do more eye and observe how their own hearts are wrought upon in prayer,** than how others' hearts are wrought upon. When they pray, they

look with a curious eye upon their own spirits, they look with a narrow eye upon their own hearts, and observe how they are affected, melted, humbled, quickened, raised, spiritualized, and bettered by prayer. But vain men, as they pray to "be seen of men," so they eye most how others like their prayers, and are affected and taken with their prayers. They are most critical in observing what operations their prayers have upon others' hearts—but never mind, to any purpose, how they operate upon their own hearts. A worse plague cannot befall them!

And thus I have endeavored to show you what a wide difference there is between the prayers of the godly and the ungodly; and by this, as by the former particulars laid down, you may see what prayer that is, which accompanies salvation.

**VII.** Now, in the seventh place, I shall show you what that **PERSEVERANCE** is, which accompanies salvation, and that I shall do in these following particulars.

(1.) The first property. First, That perseverance which accompanies salvation, is **perseverance in a holy PROFESSION**. Heb 4:14, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession by a strong hand," or by a hand of holy violence. So in Heb 10:23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (or as it is in the Greek, "without tilting, or tossing to one side or other"), "for he is faithful who has promised." Therefore let no temptation, affliction, opposition, or persecution, take us off from our holy profession—but let us hold our profession with a forcible hand, yes, with both hands, in the face of all difficulties, dangers, and deaths—as Cynaegirus, the Athenian captain, did the ship which was laden with the rich spoil of his country.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, That perseverance which accompanies salvation, is a **perseverance and holy and spiritual GRACES**. It is a persevering in love, John 15:9-10; and a persevering in faith and hope, 1 Cor 13:13, etc. Perseverance is not a particular distinct grace of itself; but such a virtue as crowns all virtue; it is such a grace as casts a general glory and beauty upon every grace, it is a virtue which

leads every grace on to perfection. So Col 1:23; 1 Tim 4:15; Heb 13:1, and Heb 11:13. These all died in faith, or as it is in the Greek, they all died according to faith, that is, persevering in faith.

To persevere in holy and heavenly graces, is to persevere in believing, in repenting, in mourning, in hoping; it is to persevere in love, in fear, in humility, in patience, in self-denial, etc. Now it is this perseverance in holy and gracious graces, which accompanies salvation, which leads to salvation. (Nothing seems to be done—if there remains anything unfinished. Let a man do ever so much, if he does not persevere, he will be found to have done nothing.)

No grace—no, not the most sparkling and shining grace, can bring a man to heaven of itself, without perseverance; not **faith**, which is the champion of grace, if it faints and fails; not **love**, which is the nurse of grace, if it declines and waxes cold; not **humility**, which is the adorning and beautifier of grace, if it continues not to the end; not **obedience**, not **repentance**, nor any other grace—except they persevere until the end. It is perseverance in grace, which crowns every grace, and every gracious soul with a crown of glory at last. Rev 2:10, "Be faithful to the death, and I will give you a crown of life."

Such as only believe *for a time*, and repent for a time, and love for a time, and rejoice for a time, and hope for a time, as all hypocrites only do etc.—but do not persevere and hold out, will be doubly miserable in the day of vengeance. Perseverance is the accomplishment of every grace; without it, he who fights cannot hope to overcome; and he who for the present does overcome, cannot look for the crown, unless he still perseveres and goes on conquering and to conquer, until he finds all his enemies slain before him.

The third property. Thirdly, That perseverance which accompanies salvation is **an abiding or continuing in the word or doctrine of Christ**. You must persevere, and hold fast the faith of the gospel, without wavering in it or departing from it. John 15:7, "If you *abide* in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." 1 John 2:14, "I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you." 1 John 2:24, "Let that

therefore abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." 2 John 9, "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." None shall receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls—but those who hold fast the doctrine of faith, soundly, sincerely, and entirely to the end: John 8:31, "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed."

It is the end that crowns the action, as the evening crowns the day, as the last act commends the whole scene. It is not enough to begin well—unless we end well; the beginning is not so considerable as the end. Manasseh and Paul began badly—but ended well. Judas and Demas began well—but ended badly." Nero's first five years were famous—but afterwards who more cruel? It is not the knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, nor the commending of the word of Christ—but the abiding in Christ's word, the continuing in Christ's doctrine, which accompanies life and glory, and which will render a man happy at last. Such that, with Hymenaeus and Alexander, put away, or make shipwreck of the doctrine of the faith, shall, by the Lord or his people, or by both, be delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, 1 Tim 1:19-20; 1 Cor 5:5. Usually the end of such is worse than the beginning. Double damnation attends those who begin in the spirit and end in the flesh, 2 Pet 2:20-22; 2 Tim 3:13.

The fourth property. Fourthly, and lastly, That perseverance which accompanies salvation is a **perseverance in holy and gracious actions and motions**; it is a continuing in pious duties and religious services, Phil 3:10-14; Isa 40:31. The life of a Christian consists in motion, not in sitting. A Christian should be ever moving towards heaven; he must never stand still, he must always be a-going on from faith to faith, and from strength to strength. Not to go forwards, is to go backwards. When saints have done their work in this life, they shall sit upon thrones in everlasting life. Perseverance is a going on, a holding out in ways of piety and sanctity. Acts 13:43, and Acts 14:22 signify a continuance in prayer and supplication, with an invincible and strong constancy.

Acts 1:14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and

supplication." Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer." Acts 2:46, "And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart." 1 Tim 5:5, "Now she who is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusts in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day." Rom 12:12, "Persistent in prayer."

Christians must work hard in a *wilderness*, before they sit down in *paradise*. They must make a constant progress in *holiness* before they enter into *happiness*. It is the excellency of perseverance, that it keeps a Christian still in motion God-wards, heaven-wards, holiness-wards. It is a grace which quickens a man to motion, to action; it keeps a man still going, still doing. And motion is the excellency of the creature; and the more excellent any creature is, the more excellent is that creature in its motions, as you may see in the motions of the celestial bodies, the sun, moon, and stars. Perseverance is a perpetual motion in ways of grace and holiness, Psalm 44:16-20. Perseverance will make a man hold up and hold on in the work and ways of the Lord, in the face of all impediments, discouragements, temptations, tribulations, and persecutions. As the moon holds on her motion though the dogs bark, so perseverance will make a Christian hold on in his holy and heavenly motions though vain men bark and bite, etc.

And thus I have showed you what perseverance that is, which accompanies salvation.

**VIII.** The eighth and last thing which accompanies salvation is **HOPE**. I shall gather up what I have to say concerning hope into as narrow a compass as I can, being unwilling to tire the reader's patience, and my own spirits. The philosophers excluded hope out of their catalogs of virtues, but God by his word has taught us better. I shall show very briefly,

(1.) That hope does accompany salvation.

(2.) What that hope is, which accompanies salvation.

**1. That hope does accompany salvation**, these scriptures speak it out: Rom 8:24, "For we are saved by hope;" Gal 5:5, "For we though the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith;" Eph 1:18, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;" 1 Thess 5:8, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet—the hope of salvation;" Titus 3:7, "That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;" Titus 1:2 "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." By all these scriptures it does fully appear, that hope does accompany salvation.

2. The second thing that I am to show you is, **what hope that is, which accompanies salvation**; and that I shall do with as much brevity and perspicuity as I can, in the following particulars:

First, That hope which accompanies salvation, **is a grace of God whereby we expect good to come, waiting patiently until it comes**. This very title, "the God of hope," may serve as a sovereign antidote against the blackest and horriddest temptations; for why should any despair of his mercy—who has proclaimed himself to be the God of hope?

(1.) I call it a **grace of God**, because he is the **giver** of it; and therefore he is called the God of hope. Rom 15:13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Now God is called the God of hope, because he is the only **object** of our hope, and he is effective, the only **author** and **worker** of hope in the soul. A saving hope is no natural affection in men. Men are not born with true hope in their hearts, as they are born with tongues in their mouths. Hope is nobly descended, it is from above, it is a heavenly babe which is formed in the soul of man by the power of the Holy Spirit. And as hope is no natural affection, so hope is no moral virtue, which men may attain by their frequent notions; but hope is the gracious virtue which none can give but God.

(2.) I say it is a grace of God, **whereby we expect good to come**; I say good, not evil, for evil is rather feared than hoped for by any. The

**OBJECT** of this hope has four qualities:

1. It must be bonum—good.
2. It must be Futurum—future.
3. It must be Possibile—possible.
4. It must be Arduum—hard or difficult to obtain.

(3.) I say hope is a grace of God, whereby we expect good to come, **patiently waiting until it comes**. Hope makes the soul quiet and patient until it comes to possess the good desired and hoped for: Rom 8:25, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." The Hebrew word, which is often translated hope, signifies a very vehement intention, both of body and mind, a stretching forth of the spirit or mind, in waiting for a desired good.

2. Secondly, **That hope which accompanies salvation is always conversant about holy and heavenly objects, as about God and Christ**. 2 Cor 4:18, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Hope fares well; it is nourished at a prince's table; it lives upon honey and milk, oil and wine; it lives upon the sweetmeats, the delicacies of heaven—as God, Christ, and glory, Psalm 31:24; Psalm 33:22; Psalm 38:15; Psalm 42:5; Psalm 43:5; Psalm 39:7; Psalm 71:5, and Psalm 15:5.

1 Tim 1:1, "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope." In these words, **Christ** is set forth as the chief object of our hope, because by his merits and mercy, we hope to obtain the remission of our sins, and the eternal salvation of our souls. Sometimes hope is exercised about the righteousness of Christ: Gal 5:5, "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

Sometimes hope is exercised about God the **Father**: 1 Pet 1:21, "Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God." Jer 14:8, "Oh the hope of Israel,

the Savior thereof in the time of trouble." Jer 17:13, "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be ashamed." Jer 17:17, "You are my hope in the day of evil."

Sometimes hope is exercised and busied about the **word** and **promises**: Psalm 119:49, "Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope." Psalm 119:81, "My soul faints for your salvation; but I hope in your word." Psalm 119:114, "You are my hiding-place, and my shield. I hope in your word." Psalm 130:5, "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in his word do I hope." Psalm 119:74, "I have hoped in your word." Psalm 119:147, "I hoped in your word."

Hope in the promises will keep the head from aching, and the heart from breaking; it will keep both head and heart from sinking and drowning. Hope exercised upon the promises, brings heaven down to the heart. Ah! what abundance of comfort and sweetness may hope find, yes, does hope find in the promises. The promises are the ladder by which hope gets up to heaven. Hope in the promise will not only keep life and soul together—but will also keep the soul and glory together; hope in the promise will support distressed souls; hope in the promise will settle perplexed souls; hope in the promise will comfort dejected souls; hope in the promise will recover wandering souls; hope in the promise will confirm staggering souls; hope in the promise will save undone souls.

Psalm 42:5, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and in God." Psalm 119:49-50, "Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life."

The promise is the same to hope, that hope is to the soul; the promise is the anchor of hope, as hope is the anchor of the soul. Look! what the breasts are to the child, and oil is to the lamp—that are the promises to hope. "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Romans 8:24-25 The promises are hope's rich storehouse. Hope lives and thrives, as it feeds upon the promises, as it embraces the promises. The promises are the sweetmeats

of heaven, upon which hope lives. Every degree of hope brings a degree of joy into the soul, which makes it cry out, 'Heaven, heaven!' Heb 11:13; Psalm 16:11; Titus 3:7.

Again, hope is exercised about the glory and felicity, the happiness and blessedness that is at God's right hand. Titus 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ." Hope makes a man stretch out his neck and put forth his hand, and look as earnestly for the glorious appearing of Christ, as Sisera's mother did for the happy return of her son. The hoping soul is often a-sighing it out, 'Why are his chariot wheels so long a-coming?'

Col 1:5, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Hope in this place, is put for the things hoped for, namely, all that glory and felicity, that blessedness and happiness, which is laid up for us in heaven. [So in Rom 8:24-25; Col 1:27; Rom 5:2, etc.] So in Heb 6:18, "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Hope here is put for the object of hope, namely, heaven and happiness. Hope lays such fast hold, as the Greek word here signifies, upon heaven and happiness, that none shall ever be able to take those precious things out of hope's hand. So hope is put for the glorious things hoped for, Eph 1:18. And thus you see those precious and glorious objects, about which that hope which accompanies salvation is exercised.

3. Thirdly, That hope which accompanies salvation, **is grounded upon the firmest foundations**, namely: the **promises** of God, Prov 10:28, as has been fully showed before; and it is built upon the **free grace** of God, 1 Pet 1:13. It is built upon the **infinite and glorious power** of God, Rom 4:21. It is built upon the **truth and faithfulness** of God, 2 Tim 2:13. These four precious and glorious foundations bear up the hopes of the saints, as the pillars bore up the curtains in the tabernacle. A believer's hope is founded upon the love of Christ, the blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the satisfaction of Christ, and the intercession of Christ, etc.

But the hopes of hypocrites and wicked men, are always built upon weak, slender, and sandy foundations. Sometimes they build their hopes upon their **outward profession**, upon their lamps, though they have no *oil*,

Matt 25:3; and sometimes upon their **duties and services**, as the Jews, scribes, and Pharisees did, Isa 58:1-3; Matt 6:1-2, etc; and sometimes upon their **outward privileges**, crying out, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord;" and sometimes they build their hopes upon **others' good opinion of them**, and sometimes upon flashes of joy, and sometimes upon enlargements in duties, and sometimes upon the heat and vigor of their spirits in religious services, etc. Every false principle in religion is "a reed of Egypt," which will certainly deceive souls at last; therefore take heed of leaning upon any of those reeds! All these are but sandy foundations, and those who build their hope upon them will certainly fall—and great will be their fall.

The hopes of the saints are built upon the surest and the strongest foundations. It was a good saying of one of the ancients, "I consider," said he, "three things in which all my hope consists, namely: 1. God's love in my adoption; 2. the truth of his promise; 3. his power of performance. Therefore, I can say with sure confidence, I know on whom I have believed, 2 Tim 1:12. And I am certain, first, that in his love he adopted me; secondly, that he is true in his promise; and thirdly, that he is able to perform it. This is the threefold cord which is not easily broken."

4. Fourthly, That hope which accompanies salvation, **may be distinguished from all false hopes, by the excellent properties of it**, and they are these that follow.

[1.] The first property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this: **it elevates and raises the heart to live above, where its treasure is**. True hope is from above, and it makes the heart to live above: it is a spark of glory, and it leads the heart to live in glory. Divine hope carries a man to heaven, for life to quicken him, and for wisdom to direct him, and for power to uphold him, and for righteousness to justify him, and for holiness to sanctify him, and for mercy to forgive him, and for assurance to rejoice him, and for happiness to crown him. Divine hope takes in the pleasures of heaven beforehand; it lives in the joyful expectation of them; it fancies to itself, the pleasures and joys of eternity; and lives in a sweet anticipation of what it possesses by faith. Hope's richest treasures, and choicest friends, and chief delights, and sweetest contents, are in the country above; and therefore hope loves best to live there most. Matt

6:20-21; Phil 3:20; Col 3:1.

Mark, wicked men's hopes never raise them as high as heaven; under all their hopes they are great enemies, and as great strangers to God, Christ, and heaven, as ever.

[2.] The second property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this: **it will strengthen the soul against all afflictions, oppositions, and temptations:** 1 Thess 5:8, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." Look! as the helmet defends and secures the head, so does hope defend and secure the heart. Hope is a helmet which keeps off all darts that Satan or the world casts at the soul. The hope of heavenly riches made those worthies in Heb 11 to despise the riches of this world. The hope they had of a heavenly country made them willing to leave their own country, and to live in the land of promise as in a strange country. The hope they had of possessing at last a house not made with hands—but eternal in the heavens, made them willingly and cheerfully to live in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth. The hope they had of a glorious resurrection made them courageously to withstand the strongest temptations, etc., Rom 5:2-5; Dan 3:37; Psalm 4:6-7; Heb 10:34; 2 Cor 4:16-18. It was a wicked and hopeless cardinal who said, 'He would not leave his part in Paris for a part in paradise.'

A saint's hope will outlive all fears and cares, all trials and troubles, all afflictions and temptations. Saints have much in hope, though little in hand; they have much in expectation, though but little in possession; they have much in promise, though but little in the purse. A saint can truly say, 'my hopes are better than my possessions.' Hope can see heaven through the thickest clouds; hope can see *light* through darkness, *life* through death, *smiles* through frowns, and *glory* through misery. Hope holds life and soul together; it holds Christ and the soul together; it holds the soul and the promises together; it holds the soul and heaven together; and so it makes a Christian to stand and triumph over all afflictions, oppositions, and temptations. Some are truly persuaded that the lack of this divine hope has been the reason that many among the heathen has laid violent hands upon themselves. See Heb 11:10,14,16,25,32,

compared.

[3.] The third property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this: **it makes the soul lively and active:** Psalm 119:166, "Lord, I have hoped for your salvation, and done your commandments." Hope puts the soul upon doing, upon obeying: 1 Pet 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a *living* hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is called a living hope, because it brings life and comfort into the soul; and it is called a living hope in opposition to the withering and dying hopes of hypocrites and wicked men; and it is called a living hope, because it flows from living causes, namely, the Spirit of Christ, and the soul's union and communion with Christ; but mainly it is called a lively hope because it puts the soul upon living endeavors. Hope will make a man pray as for life, hear as for life, and mourn as for life, and obey as for life, and work and walk as for life. Hope will not say—'this work is too hard, and that work is too hot; this work is too high, and the other work is too low.' A man's duties and services usually are as his hopes are: if his hopes are weak and low—so will his services be; but if his hopes are spiritual, noble, and high—so will his motions and actions be. Divine hope makes saints as far excel all other men in their actings, as the angels do excel them. Some say hope and fasting are the two wings of prayer. Fasting is but as the wing of a bird—but hope is as the wing of an angel, bearing our prayers to the throne of grace.

Hope will make a man put his hand to every work. Hope makes a man more motion than notion; it makes a man better at *doing* than at *saying*, etc. Hope gives life and strength to all pious duties and services: 1 Cor 9:10, "He who ploughs should plough in hope; and he who thrashes in hope shall be partaker of "his hope." Hope will put a Christian upon ploughing and thrashing, that is, upon the hardest and most difficult services for God and his glory. If fleshly hopes of gaining the honors, riches, and favors of this world made Absalom, Ahithophel, Jehu, Haman, and many heathen—full of life and activity, full of motion and action; truly holy and heavenly hopes will make men much more lively and active, by how much heavenly hopes are more excellent than earthly. A man full of hope will be full of action. A living hope and a diligent hand

are inseparable companions. Hope will make a man do—though he dies for doing. Fleshly hopes put the Romans upon doing very strange and amazing exploits, as you may see in Plutarch, and other historians.

[4.] The fourth property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this: **It will make a man sit, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all storms and tempests, in the midst of all disturbances and changes.** When others are at their wits' end, then hope will house the soul, and lodge it composed and quiet in the bosom of God: Job 11:18, "You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety." The Hebrew word that is here rendered rest, is from a root that signifies to rest and sleep quietly, as as men rest in their beds, or as the body rests in the grave.

Hope will bring the soul to bed safely and sweetly, in the darkest night, in the longest storm, and in the greatest tempest: Heb 6:19, 20, "We have this **hope as an anchor for the soul**, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf." Hope is that anchor for the soul, which keeps it quiet and still in all storms and tempests; it keeps the soul from dashing upon the rocks, and from being swallowed up in the sands. Hope is an anchor which is fastened above, not below; in heaven, not in earth; therefore the ship, the soul of a believer, must needs be safe and secure. That ship will never be split upon the rocks, whose anchor is in heaven. Hope enters within the curtain, and takes fast anchor-hold on God himself; and therefore blow high, blow low, rain or shine, the soul of a saint is safe. Hypocrites in stormy times are like ships without anchors, tossed up and down with every wave, and in danger of being split upon every rock, Job 27:9-10.

Divine hope settles the heart. Our best and greatest estate lies in invisibles. Our perfect and complete estate here lies not in what we have in possession—but in what we have in expectation.

[5.] The fifth property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this: **It will work the soul to a quiet and patient waiting upon God for mercy, though God should delay the giving in of mercy.** Rom 8:25, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait

for it." Psalm 130:5-6, "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning; I say, more than those who watch for the morning." Hope will make a man wait, yes, wait long for a mercy, as it did Abraham, Rom 4:18-21. Though the vision tarries, yet hope will wait for it, Hab 2:1-3. 'Yet a little, little while,' says hope, 'and he who shall come will come, and will not tarry,' Heb 10:36-37. 'The longer I wait for a mercy, the greater, better, and sweeter, at last, the mercy will prove,' says hope. 'It is not mercy, if it be not worth a-waiting for,' says hope. 'And if it is a mercy, you can not wait too long for it,' says hope. Patience is nothing else but hope spun out. If you would lengthen patience, be sure to strengthen hope.

Says hope, 'though deliverance tarries, though this and that mercy tarries, yet it will come at last, therefore wait.' Hope is not hasty in prefixing the time when God shall show mercy, neither will it limit God to the way or manner of showing mercy—but leave both the time and the manner to him who is wise and faithful. Says hope, 'Christ knows his own time, and his own time is best; though he stays long, yet he will certainly come, and he will not stay a moment beyond the time he has prefixed; and therefore, says hope, be not weary, O soul—but still wait patiently upon the Lord.' The Lord shows much mercy in timing our mercies for us.

1 Thess 1:3, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope." Hope is the mother of patience and the nurse of patience; hope breeds patience, and hope feeds patience. If it were not for hope, the heart would die; and if it were not for hope, patience would die. Look! as faith gives life and strength to hope, so does hope give life and strength to patience, therefore patience is called patience of hope. Hope maintains patience, as the fuel maintains the fire.

[6.] The sixth property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this: **It is soul-purifying hope**; it puts a Christian upon purifying himself, as Christ is pure: 1 John 3:3, "And every man who has this hope in him *purifies* himself, even as Christ is pure." Divine hope runs out into holiness. He who has the purest and strongest hopes of being saved, is most studious and laborious to be sanctified. The Greek word which is rendered *purifies*, is a metaphor taken either from the ceremonial

purifications in time of the Law, or else from goldsmiths purifying metals from their dross; and it notes thus much to us, that those who have hopes to reign with Christ in glory, who have set their hearts upon that pure and blissful state, that paradise, that holy and spiritual state of bliss which is made up of singleness and purity, they will purify both their body and soul, that they may answer to that excellent copy that Christ has set before them, knowing that none shall enjoy everlasting glory, but those who labor after perfect purity.

Now hope purifies the heart and life thus, by keeping the purest objects, as God, Christ, the word, and the soul together, and by making the soul serious and conscientious in the use of all soul-purifying ordinances, and by being a fire in the soul to burn up all those corruptions and principles of darkness which are contrary to that purity and glory, which hope has in her eye; and by working the soul to lean upon Christ, to live in Christ, and to draw purifying virtue from Christ, who is the spring and fountain of all purity and sanctity. And thus hope purifies those who expect to be like Christ in glory.

[7.] The seventh property of that hope which accompanies salvation, is this: **It is permanent and lasting**; it will never leave the soul until it has lodged it in the bosom of Christ. Prov 14:32, "The righteous has hope in his death." The righteous man's hope will bed and board with him; it will lie down with him, and rise up with him; it will to the grave, to heaven with him: his motto is, 'my hope lasts beyond life.' "The hope of the righteous is joy, but the expectation of the wicked comes to nothing." Proverbs 10:28. Austin's hope made him long to die, that he might see that head which was once crowned with thorns. Hope made the ancient Christians to call the days of their death, not dying but birthdays, Heb 3:6, and Heb 6:11; 1 Pet 1:13; Psalm 131:3.

That hope which accompanies salvation is a long-lived hope; it is a living hope. 1 Pet 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope," or a living hope: a hope that will not die, a hope that will not leave a man in life nor death. In prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in life and death, I will hope. It is neither the smiles nor the frowns of the world, which shall bury a Christian's hope. A Christian's

hope will live in all weathers, and it will make a Christian bear up bravely in all storms and under all changes.

Psalm 71:14, "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise you more and more." No trials, no troubles, no afflictions, no oppositions, shall keep down my hope, says David. I am peremptorily resolved, in the face of all dangers, difficulties, and deaths, to keep up my hopes; come what will come on it, I will rather let my life go than my hope go: I will hope continually. A hopeless condition is a very sad condition; it is the worst condition in the world; it makes a man's life a very hell. If "hope deferred makes the heart sick," as the wise man speaks, Prov 13:12, then the loss of hope will make the soul languish, it will make it choose strangling rather than life; it will make a man's life a continual death. A soul without hope is like a ship without anchors. Lord, where will a soul anchor, which anchors not upon you by hope? A man were better part with anything than his hope.

When Alexander went upon a hopeful expedition, he gave away his gold; and when he was asked what he kept for himself, he answered, 'the hope of greater and better things.' A believer's hope is not like that of Pandora, which may fly out of the box, and bid the soul an everlasting farewell. No! it is like the morning light; the least beam of it shall commence into a complete sunshine. It shall shine forth brighter and brighter until it has fully possessed the believer of his Christ and crown.

This will be the hypocrite's hell and horror when he comes to die—that his hope will be like the morning dew, like the spider's web, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, and like the giving up of the Spirit, Job 8:13-14, and Job 11:20, and Job 27:8; Prov 14:32, and Prov 11:7. And this is now the upright man's joy, that whatever leaves him, yet his hope will not leave him, until he has put on his crown and is set down in paradise. And thus you see what hope that is, which accompanies salvation. Before I close up this chapter, take these two **CAUTIONS** with you; they make for your comfort and settlement.

[1.] The first caution is this: that **all saints have not these things which accompany salvation, in the same degree**. If you have but the least measure or degree of that knowledge which accompanies

salvation, or of that faith which accompanies salvation, or of that repentance, or of that obedience, or of that love, etc., which accompanies salvation, you may be as assuredly confident of your salvation, as if you were already in heaven. The least degree, O Christian, of those things which accompany salvation, will certainly yield you a heaven hereafter, and why then should it not yield you a heaven here? It will undoubtedly yield you a crown at last; and why should it not yield you comfort and assurance now? I judge it may, if you are not an enemy to your own soul, and to your own peace and comfort. The Scripture tells you of *saints of several sizes*: some are babes, some are children, some are young men, some are old men. Now, all these do not attain to the same degree; but happy is he who has the least degree.

[2.] The second caution is this: Though you do not find everyone of those things in you who do accompany salvation, yet if you do find some of those things, ay, though but a few of those things, yes, **though but one of those things which accompanies salvation, your estate is safe, and happiness will be your portion at last.** Your sense and feeling of one of those precious things which accompanies salvation, should be of more power to work you to conclude that your estate is good, than any other thing should work you to conclude that all is naught, and that you shall miscarry at last. Do not always side with sin and Satan against your own precious soul. No saints are at all times sensible that all those precious things which accompany salvation are in them. It is not always *day* with the saints.

Having thus discovered to you the **way** and **means** of attaining to a well-grounded assurance—I shall now hasten to a close.

**Showing the difference between a true and a counterfeit assurance; between sound assurance and presumption.**

(1.) The first difference. **A sound and well-grounded assurance is attended with a deep admiration of God's transcendent love**

**and favor to the soul, in the Lord Jesus.** The assured soul is often a-breathing it out thus: "Ah, Lord! who am I, what am I, that you should give into my bosom, *the white stone of forgiveness*; when the world has given into their bosoms only *the black stone of condemnation*? Rev 2:17. Lord! what mercy is this, that you should give me assurance, give me water out of the rock, and feed me with manna from heaven; when, many of your dearest ones spend their days in sighing, mourning and complaining for lack of assurance. Lord! what manner of love is this, that you should set me upon your knee, embrace me in your arms, lodge me in your bosom, and kiss me with the sweet kisses of your blessed mouth, with those kisses which are better than wine, yes, better than life; when many are even weary of their lives because they lack what I enjoy? Psalm 63:3. Ah, Lord! by what name shall I call this mercy, this assurance that you have given me? It being a mercy which fits me to do duties, to bear crosses, and to improve mercies; which fits me to speak sweetly, to judge righteously, to give liberally, to act seriously, to suffer cheerfully, and to walk humbly. I cannot," says the assured soul, "but sing it out with Moses—Who is like unto you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Exod 15:2. And with the apostle, Oh, the height, the depth, the length and breadth of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge!" Eph 3:18-19.

"If the queen of Sheba," says the assured soul, "was so swallowed up in a deep admiration of Solomon's wisdom, greatness, goodness, excellency and glory, that she could not but admiringly breathe it thus out—Happy are your men, happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you, and that hear your wisdom," 1 Kings 10:8, Oh then, how should that blessed assurance that I have of the love of God, of my saving interest in God, of my union and communion with God, of my blessedness here and my eternal happiness hereafter, work me to a deep and serious, to a real and perpetual, admiration of God!"

Assurance of Christ's love made Jerome admiringly to say, "O my Savior, did you die for love of me alone, a death more dolorous than death—but to me a death more lovely than life itself! I cannot live, love you, and be longer from you!"

[2.] The second difference. Secondly, **A well-grounded assurance**

**always begets in the soul an earnest and an impatient longing after a further, a clearer, and fuller enjoyment of God and Christ.** Psalm 63:1, "O God, you are *my* God"—here is assurance; well, what follows?—"early will I *seek* you. My soul *thirsts* for you; my flesh *longs* for you in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water." David, though in a wilderness, seeks not for bread or water or protection—but for more of God.

Holy and heavenly privileges are the food by which assurance is cherished and maintained. The assured soul cries out, "I desire to be depart, and to be with Christ!" Phil 1:23; and, "Make haste, my beloved!" Song 8:14; and, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Rev 22:17. "O Lord Jesus," says the assured soul, "you are my light, you are my life, you are my love, you are my joy, you are my crown, you are my heaven, you are my all. I cannot but long to see that beautiful face which was spit upon for my sins, and that glorious head which was crowned with thorns for my transgressions. I long to be with you in paradise, to see the glory of your Jerusalem above, to drink of those rivers of pleasures that are at your right hand, to taste of all the delicacies of your kingdom, and to be acquainted with those secrets and mysteries which have been hidden from all ages, and to be swallowed up in the full enjoyment of your blessed self!" Eph 3:5; Col 1:26. The assured soul's motto is, "O my God! when shall I be with you, when shall I be with you?"

[3.] The third difference. Thirdly, **A well-grounded assurance is usually strongly assaulted by Satan on all sides.** "The devil marches well armed, and in mighty array," says Luther. Satan is such a mighty enemy to joy and peace, to the salvation and consolation, of the saints, that he cannot but make use of all his devices and stratagems to baffle and amuse, to disturb and disquiet, the peace and rest of their souls. No sooner had Jesus Christ heard that lovely voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt 3:17 and Matt 4:1-2, etc.—but he is desperately assaulted by Satan in the wilderness. No sooner was Paul dropped out of heaven, after he had seen such visions of glory that was unutterable—but he was presently assaulted and buffeted by Satan, 2 Cor 2:12.

Stand up, stand up, assured Christians, and tell me whether you have not

found the blast of the terrible one to be as a mighty storm. Since the Lord said unto you, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven," have not you found Satan to play the part both of the lion and the wolf, of the serpent and the fox? And all to weaken your assurance, and to work you to question the truth of your assurance, and to cast water upon your assurance, and to take off the freshness and sweetness, the beauty and glory, of your assurance; I know you have. I truly think that they have very much cause to question the truth of their assurance, who know not what it is to have their assurance assaulted strongly by Satan.

Satan's malice, envy, and enmity is such against God's honor and glory, and your comfort and felicity, that he cannot but be very studious and industrious to make use of all traps, snares, methods, and ways, whereby he may shake the pillars of your faith, and weaken and overthrow your assurance. Pirates, you know, do most fiercely assault those ships and vessels that are most richly laden; so does Satan assault those precious souls who have attained to the riches of full assurance. Satan is that old serpent, as John speaks, Rev 12:9. He is as old as the world, and is grown very cunning by experience, he being a spirit of greater than five thousand years' existence.

Assurance makes a paradise in believers' souls—and this makes Satan to roar and rage. Assurance fits a man to do God the greatest service and Satan the greatest disservice—and this makes him angry against the soul. Assurance makes a saint to be too hard for Satan with all weapons. Assurance makes a saint to lead that "strong man" captive, to spoil him of all his hurting power, to bind him in chains, and to triumph over him; and this makes his hell a great deal hotter, Rom 8:32-39. And therefore never wonder at Satan's assaulting your assurance—but expect it and look for it. Luther cries out, "I am attacked by all the world without, and within by the devil and all his demons."

The jailor is quiet when his prisoner is in bolts—but if he escapes then he pursues him with haste and fury. So long as the soul is in bolts and bondage under Satan, Satan is quiet and is not so apt to molest and vex it; but when once a soul is made free, and assured of his freedom by Christ, John 8:36, then says Satan, as once Pharaoh did, "I will chase them, catch up with them, and destroy them. I will divide the plunder, avenging

myself against them. I will unsheath my sword; my power will destroy them," Exod 15:9. The experience of all assured saints does abundantly confirm this. Israel going into *Egypt* had no enemies, no opposition—but traveling into *Canaan* they were never free.

[4.] The fourth difference. Fourthly, **A well grounded-assurance makes a man as bold as a lion; it makes him valiant and gallant for Christ and his cause, in the face of all dangers and deaths.**

The number of opposers makes the Christian's conquest the more illustrious. After the Holy Spirit had fallen upon the **apostles**, and had assured them of their internal and eternal happiness, oh! how bold, how undaunted, how resolute were they in the face of all oppositions, afflictions, and persecutions! as you may see from the book of Acts. So assurance had this operation upon **David's** heart: Psalm 23:4,6 compared, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Well, David—but how does this assurance of yours operate? Why, says he "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." So **Moses**, having an assurance of the "recompense of reward," he fears not the wrath of the king, "for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible," Heb 11:26-27. So in Heb 10:34, "You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." Oh, that knowledge, that assurance that they had in their own hearts of enjoying in heaven a better and a more enduring substance, made them bear cheerfully and gallantly the confiscation of their worldly goods. The archers—the world, the flesh, and the devil—shoot mightily at a soul under assurance, yet assurance will make a man to break a bow of steel, to trample down strength, and to triumph over all oppositions and afflictions.

Colonus the Dutch martyr called to the judge who had sentenced him to death, and asked him to lay his hand upon his heart, and asked him whose heart did most fastest—his or the judge's. Assurance will make a man do this, and much more for Christ and his cause.

[5.] The fifth difference. Fifthly, **A well-grounded assurance of a man's own eternal happiness and blessedness, will make him very studious and laborious to make others happy.** Psalm 66:16, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has

done for my soul." I will acquaint you with the soul blessings, with the soul favors, which God has crowned me with. I was darkness—but he has made me light; I was unrighteousness—but he has made me righteous; I was deformed—but he has made me complete; I was full of sores, and spots, and blemishes—but he has washed me, and made me all fair, without spot or wrinkle. I have found the lack of assurance, I now see the worth of assurance; I have long sought assurance, and now I find the sweetness of assurance. Ah! it is such a pearl of price, it is such a beam of God, it is such a spark of glory, which makes my soul a rich amends for all its waiting, weeping, and wrestling. [Eph 5:8; 1 Cor 1:30; Col 2:10; Isa 1:6; Eph 5:26-27; Song 4:7]

So, when it pleased God to call **Paul** by his grace, and to reveal Christ in him and to him, ah! how does he labor, as for life, to bring others to an acquaintance with Christ, and to an acceptance of Christ, and to an assurance of everlasting happiness and blessedness by Christ! After Paul had been in paradise, he makes it his all, to bring others to paradise, 2 Cor 12. So the **spouse** in the Canticles, having assurance of her interest in Christ, how does she labor, by all holy and heavenly rhetoric and logic, by all the strains of love and sweetness, to draw the daughters of Jerusalem to a sight of Christ! Song 5:10-16, and Song 6:1, etc. When a beam of divine light and love had shined upon **Andrew**, he labors to draw his brother Simon to the fountain of all light and love, John 1:40-42. And when **Philip** had but a cast of Christ's countenance, his pulse beats, and his heart calls upon Nathanael to come and share with him in that loving-kindness which was better than life, John 1:43-47.

The constant cry of souls under the power of assurance is, "Come, taste and see how good the Lord is," Psalm 34:8. Ah, sinners, sinners! "his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace," Prov 3:17; his "commands are not grievous," 1 John 5:3—but joyous; "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light," Matt 11:30; not only for keeping—but also "in keeping of his commands there is great reward," Psalm 19:11. Assurance will strongly put men upon winning of others by counsel, by example, by prayer, and by communicating their spiritual experiences to them. Assurance will furnish a man with will, skill, and experience to confute all those false reports that vain men frequently cast upon the Lord and his

ways. It will make a man proclaim to the world "that one day in the Lord's courts is better than a thousand years elsewhere," Psalm 84:10; that there are more glorious joys, more pure comforts, more abiding peace, more royal contents, more celestial delights, in one day's walking with God, in one hour's communion with God, etc., than is to be found in all things below God.

And by these and such like ways, souls under the power of a well-grounded assurance do endeavor to make others happy with themselves. A soul under assurance is unwilling to go to heaven without company. He is often a-crying out, "Father, bless this soul too, and crown that soul too: let us to heaven together, let us be made happy together."

[6.] The sixth difference. Sixthly, **A well-grounded assurance of God's love, and of a man's everlasting happiness and blessedness, will exceedingly arm and strengthen him against all wickedness and sin.** Ezek 16:60-63. No man loathes sin, and himself for sin, as such a man; no man wars and watches against sin more than such a man; no man sighs and mourns, bleeds and complains, under the sense of sinful motions and sinful operations more than such a man, Luke 7:44,50. Every stirring of sin makes a man who is under the power of assurance to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom 7:22-25. Psalm 85:8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: and let them not turn again to folly," or, as the Hebrew will bear, "And they shall not return to folly." God's speaking peace to his people fences and fortifies them against folly and vanity.

The assurance that Joseph had of his master's love armed him against the lascivious assaults of his lustful mistress; and will not divine love, which is stronger than death, do this and more? Song 8:6-7. Assurance makes a man say to his sins, as he to his idols, "Get you hence, for what have I any more to do with idols!" So says the assured soul, "Away pride, away passion, away worldly-mindedness, away uncleanness, away uncharitableness, etc., for what have I any more to do with you!" Assurance makes the soul speak to sin as David speaks to sinners: Psalm 119:115, "Depart from me, you workers of iniquity; for I will keep the commandments of my God:" so says the assured soul, "Depart from me,

O my lusts, for I have tasted of the love of God, and I have given up myself wholly and only to God, and I cannot but keep the commandments of my God!"

The Jewish Rabbis report, that the same night that Israel departed out of Egypt towards Canaan, all the idols and idolatrous temples in Egypt, by lightning and earthquakes, were broken down. So when Christ and assurance comes to be set up in the soul, all the idols of Satan and a man's own heart are cast down, and cast out as an abomination. Sound assurance puts a man upon "purifying himself, even as Christ is pure," 1 John 3:2-3. The assured Christian knows, that it is dangerous to sin against light, that it is more dangerous to sin against love, that it is most dangerous to sin against love revealed and manifested to the soul. To sin under assurance, is to sin against the great mercies of God, it is to sin against the highest hopes of glory; and this will certainly provoke God to be angry. God may well say to such a Christian, "Is this your kindness to your best friend?"

1 Kings 11:9, "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice." To sin under assurance, is to sin in paradise; it is to sin under the flaming sword, it is to sin in the suburbs of heaven, it is to run the hazard of losing that favor "which is better than life," of that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory," and of that "peace which passes understanding." To sin under assurance, is to cast reproach upon Christ, to grieve the Spirit, to wound conscience, to weaken your graces, to blur your evidences, to usher in calamities, to embitter your mercies, and to provoke the tempter to tempt you.

Truly, that assurance is but presumption, which allows men to play with sin, to be bold with sin, to make light of sin, to walk on in ways of sin. Such assurance will never bring a man to heaven, it will never keep him from dropping into hell, yes, it will double his damnation, and make him the most miserable among all damned, wretched, forlorn spirits. Ah, Lord! from such false hopes deliver my soul; and give me more and more of that divine hope which makes sin to be more hateful than hell; and which makes the soul to be more careful to avoid the one, than it is fearful of falling into the other. This made Anselm say that he had rather be

thrust into hell without sin, than go into heaven with sin.

[7.] The seventh difference. Seventhly, **A well-grounded assurance is always attended with three fair handmaids, or with three sweet companions.**

(1.) The first handmaid. The first is **LOVE**. Oh! the assurance of divine favor does mightily inflame a man's love to Christ. Mary Magdalene loved much; Christ's love to her drew out her love very much to himself, Luke 7. Assurance makes the soul sing it out with that sweet singer of Israel, "I will dearly love you, O Lord, my strength," the Hebrew signifies—to love intimately and dearly, as a tender mother loves the fruit of her womb. Psalm 18:2.

Lovers know not how to keep silence; lovers of Christ are full of gracious expressions. Love is the attractive loadstone of love. It is impossible for a soul not to love Christ—who knows he is beloved of Christ. Christ's love constrains the soul to love, not by force—but *loving necessity*. A believer cannot find the heart of Christ to be beating towards him—but his heart will strongly beat towards Christ. Divine love is like a rod of myrtle, which, as Pliny reports, makes the traveler who carries it in his hand, that he shall never be faint, weary of walking, or loving. Love overpowers all else. Love is the diadem; none but the queen must wear it. Love is the wedding garment; none but the spouse can fit it. Love is a loadstone to draw, as well as a fire to warm. He who does not love Christ, was never assured of the love of Christ.

(2.) The second handmaid, or companion which attends a well-grounded assurance, is **HUMILITY**. **David**, under assurance, cries out, "I am a worm and no man!" The Hebrew word which is here rendered *worm*, signifies *a very little worm*, which a man can hardly see or perceive. Psalm 22:6. **Abraham**, under assurance, cries out, that he is but "dust and ashes!" Jacob, under assurance, cries out, "I am not worthy of all the faithfulness and unfailing love you have shown to me!" **Job**, under assurance, "abhors himself in dust and ashes!" **Moses** had the honor and the happiness to speak with God "face to face;" he was very much in God's favor; and yet a more humble soul, the earth did never bear. "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the

earth." Numbers 12:3. The great apostle **Paul**, under all the revelations and glorious manifestations of God to him, counts himself "less than the least of all saints," Eph 3:8. That is mere presumption, that is a delusion of the devil, and no sound assurance, which puffs and swells the souls of men with pride; which makes men prize themselves above others, above the value which God has put upon them.

(3.) The third handmaid or companion which attends assurance, is holy **JOY**. Ah! this assurance causes the strong waters of consolation to overflow the soul. Assurance raises the strongest joy in the soul: Luke 1:46-47, and Mary said, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." When a man comes to be assured that God is his Savior, presently his spirit rejoices in God. This truth is held forth by three parables in that of Luke 15, and also in 1 Pet 1:8-9, "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy (to dance and leap for joy), for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." They have heaven's happiness beforehand. Oh the joy, the joy, the inexpressible joy which attends a well-grounded assurance! Assurance raises a paradise of delight in the soul. A Christian, under the power of assurance, works all his works in Christ. In Christ, therefore, and in him alone, he rejoices.

[8.] The eighth difference. Eighthly, and lastly, **A well-grounded assurance sometimes springs from the testimony and witness of the Spirit of God.** The Spirit sometimes witnesses to a believer's spirit, that he is born of God, that he is beloved of God, that he has union and communion with God, and that he shall reign forever with God: Rom 8:26, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." The Spirit himself witnesses not only the gifts and graces of the Spirit—but the Spirit itself witnesses together with our own spirit, that we are the children of God. Sometimes the saints have two witnesses joining their testimonies together to confirm and establish them in these blessed and glorious truths, that they are the sons of God and heirs of glory; and this is their honor as well as their comfort, that the blessed Spirit should bear witness at the bar of their consciences that they are the sons of God: 1 Cor 2:12, "We have not received the spirit of the

world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us;" that is, that we may know our election, effectual calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification. A man may receive many things that are freely given of God—and yet not know them until the Spirit comes and makes them known to the soul.

QUESTION. But you may say to me, **How shall we know the whispering of the Holy Spirit—from the hissing of the old serpent?** How shall we know the report, the witness, and testimony of the Spirit of Christ—from that report, witness, and testimony that the old serpent deludes and deceives many by, in these days wherein he mostly appears in his angelic robes? "For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:14.

ANSWER. I answer, you may know the whispering of the Spirit from the hissing of the old serpent, etc., by these following things, which I desire that you would seriously consider, as you prize the peace and settlement, the satisfaction, consolation, and salvation of your own souls.

(1.) The first difference. First, **The Spirit of Christ does not witness by any outward voice**, as God did from heaven of Christ, Matt 3:17; nor by an angel, as to the Virgin Mary, Luke 1:30-34; **but by an inward, secret, glorious, and unspeakable way**, he bids believers be of good cheer, their sins are forgiven, as Christ said to the palsied man in the Gospel, Matt 9:2. And this truth is to be solemnly minded against those poor deceived and deluded souls in these days, who would make others believe that they have had such and such glorious things made known by an outward, audible voice from heaven. It is much to be feared that they never found the inward, the sweet, the secret, the powerful testimony and report of the Spirit of Christ—who boast, and brag, and rest so much upon such fanatical testimony.

In 1 Kings 19:11-13, you read of "a great and powerful **wind** tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an **earthquake**, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a **fire**, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a **gentle whisper**," and the Lord spoke to Elijah in that gentle whisper. Ah, Christians! the Spirit

of the Lord makes not a great noise—but he comes in a gentle whisper, and makes a soft and secret report to the soul, that it is beloved, that it is pardoned, and that it shall be forever glorified.

(2.) The second difference. Secondly, **The testimony and witness of the Spirit of Christ, is only gained and enjoyed in holy and heavenly ways**, as you may clearly see by comparing these Scriptures together. [Acts 10:4; Dan 9:20-22; Isa 64:5; Acts 10:44, etc.] The Spirit of the Lord is a **Holy Spirit**, and he cannot, he will not make any report of the love of the Father to the soul, outside of a way of holiness. Truly, all those glorious reports that many boast they have met with in sinful ways, in wretched and ungodly ways, are from the hissing of the old serpent, and not from the whisperings of the Spirit of grace. I think it is little less than blasphemy for any to affirm, that the blessed Spirit of Christ makes reports of the love and favor of God to people walking in ways of wickedness and sin. Yet this age has many such monsters.

(3.) The third difference. Thirdly, **The testimony and witness of the Spirit of Christ, is a clear, a full, a satisfying testimony and witness**, John 14:17; 1 John 3:24. The soul sits down under the home-reports of the Spirit, and says, 'Lord, it is enough!' The soul being full, sits down and sweetly sings it out: "My beloved is mine, and I am his. I am my well-beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 2:16, and Song 7:10. "The Lord is my portion and the lot of my inheritance," Psalm 16:5. "I have none in heaven but you, neither are there any on earth which I desire in comparison of you," Psalm 73:25. "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim 4:8. "Make haste, my beloved," etc., Song 8:14.

Such power, majesty, and glory, attends the glorious testimony of the Spirit of Christ—as scatters all clouds, as resolves all doubts, as answers all objections, as silences the wrangling soul, etc. If the testimony of the Spirit of Christ were not a full, satisfying testimony, it could never fill the soul with such joy as is "unspeakable and full of glory," and with "such peace as passes understanding." If the testimony were not satisfactory, the soul would still be under fears and doubts, the heart would still be a-wrangling and quarreling, "I may perish, and I may be undone, I may have the door of mercy shut against me!" etc.

If you bring news to a condemned person that the king has pardoned him, and that he will receive him to favor, and confer such and such dignity upon him—yet this does not quiet him nor satisfy him, until he knows for sure, that it is the king's act. Until he is satisfied in that, he cannot say it is enough, he cannot be cheerful, he cannot be delightful, etc. But when he is satisfied that it is the king's act, that the king has certainly done this and that for him, then he is satisfied, and then sighing and mourning flies away, and then he rejoices with joy unspeakable. So it is with a believing soul under the testimony and witness of the spirit of Christ.

(4.) The fourth difference. Fourthly, Though the Spirit is a witnessing Spirit, yet **he does not *always* witness to believers their adoption, their interest in Christ**, etc. There is a mighty difference between the *working* of the Spirit—and the *witness* of the Spirit. There are oftentimes many glorious and efficacious *works* of the Spirit, as faith, love, repentance, holiness, etc., where there is not the *witness* of the Spirit, Isa 50:10. David at that very time had the Spirit, and many sweet workings of the Spirit in him and upon him—when he had by sin lost the witness and testimony of the Spirit, Psalm 51:10-12.

Though the Spirit of the Lord is a witnessing and a sealing Spirit, yet he does not **always** witness and seal up the love and favor of the Father to believers' souls, as you may see by these scriptures, [Job 23:8-9; 1 John 5:13; Psalm 88; Psalm 77; Mic 7:8-9; Isa 8:17] and as the experience of many precious Christians can abundantly evidence. All believers do not see alike *need* of this testimony, they do not all alike *prize* this testimony, they do not all alike *observe* it and *improve* it; and therefore, it is no wonder if the Spirit be a witnessing Spirit to some and not to others.

You do but gratify Satan and wrong your own souls, when you argue that certainly you have not the Spirit, because he is not *always* a witnessing and a sealing Spirit to your souls. Though it be the office of the Spirit to witness, yet it is not his office *always* to witness to believers their happiness and blessedness. The Spirit may act one way and at one time of the soul—yet he does not act similarly at other ways and times. Sometimes the Spirit works upon the understanding, sometimes upon the

will, sometimes upon the affections, sometimes upon faith, sometimes upon fear, sometimes upon love, sometimes upon humility, etc. Our hearts are the Spirit's harps. If a man should always plucking one string in an instrument, he would never play various tunes, he would never make pleasant music; no more would the Spirit, if he should be always a-doing one thing in the soul. Therefore he acts variously. Sometimes he will show himself a quickening Spirit, sometimes an enlightening Spirit, sometimes a rejoicing Spirit, sometimes a sealing Spirit, and always a supporting Spirit, etc.

(5.) The fifth difference. Fifthly, **The testimony and witness of the Spirit is a sure testimony, a sure witness.** The Spirit is truth itself; he is the great searcher of the deep things of God. The Spirit of the Lord is the discoverer, the confuter, and destroyer of all false spirits. [Titus 1:2; John 14:17; 1 Cor 2:10; 1 John 4:1-5] The Spirit is above all possibility of being deceived. He is omnipotent, he is omniscient, he is omnipresent, he is one of the cabinet-council of heaven; he lies and lives in the bosom of the Father—and can call them all by name upon whom the Father has set his heart—and therefore his testimony must needs be true. It is a surer testimony than if a man should hear a voice from heaven pronouncing him to be happy and blessed. You may safely and securely lay the weight of your souls upon this testimony; it never has, it never will deceive any that has leaned upon it. This testimony will be a rock that will bear up a soul, when other false testimonies will be but "a reed of Egypt," which will deceive the soul, which will undo the soul; as I am afraid many in this deluding age have found by sad experience.

(6.) The sixth difference. Sixthly, **The testimony of God's Spirit is always accompanied with the testimony of our own.** These may be distinguished—but they can never be separated. I do not say that the testimony of our spirits is *always* accompanied with the testimony of the Spirit. No; for a believer has often the single testimony of his own spirit, when he lacks the testimony of the Spirit of Christ, and the single testimony of his own conscience will afford him much courage and comfort, 2 Cor 1:12: Yes, it will make a paradise of delight in his soul, etc.

When the Spirit of God gives his witness to a man, his own spirit also gives witness. Look! as face answers to face, so does the witness of a

believer's spirit answer to the witness of the Spirit of Christ. Rom 8:16, "The Spirit witnesses together with our spirits, that we be the sons of God." Now, if our own consciences do not testify first, that we are sons and heirs, the Spirit does not testify; for the Spirit bears witness together with our spirits. John is very express in 1 John 3:21, "but if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. But if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." 1 John 5:8-12, and "There are three who bear witness in earth—the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." By the *Spirit* we may understand the Holy Spirit, by whose strength we lay hold on Christ and all his benefits. By *water* we may understand our regeneration, our sanctification; and by *blood* we may understand the blood and righteousness of Christ, which is imputed and applied by faith to us. "And these three agree in one," that is, they do all three of one accord testify the same thing.

(7.) The seventh difference. Seventhly, **The witness of the Spirit is ever according to the word.** There is a sweet harmony between God's inward and the outward testimony—between the Spirit of God and the word of God. The scriptures were all inspired by the Spirit, 2 Pet 1:20-21; and therefore the Spirit cannot contradict himself—which he would do, if he would give to the conscience any testimony contrary to the testimony of the word. It is blasphemy to make the inner testimony of the Spirit, to contradict the testimony of his written word. The Spirit has revealed his whole mind in the word, and he will not give a contrary testimony to what he has given in the word.

The word says that those who are born again; that those who are new creatures, that those who believe and repent—shall be saved. "If you are born again, if you are a new creature, if you believe and repent—you shall be saved," says the Spirit. The Spirit never justifies where the word condemns, the Spirit never approves where the word disapproves, the Spirit never blesses where the word curses. In the Old Testament all revelations were to be examined by the word, Deut 13:1-4. Isa 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We are not only blind—but lame too; therefore **the Spirit shall lead us to the knowledge and practice**

## **of all necessary saving truths.**

So in John 16:13, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears." Here the Holy Spirit is brought in as some messenger or ambassador who only relates things faithfully according to what he has been commissioned to speak. Such people as look and lean upon the hissing of the old serpent, may have a testimony that they are happy, against the testimony of the word; but wherever the Spirit of Christ gives in his testimony, it is still according to the word. Look! the testimony of the Spirit answers exactly to the testimony of the word.

(8.) The eighth difference. Eighthly, **The witness of the Spirit is a holy witness, a holy testimony.** Nothing can come from the Holy Spirit but that which is holy—that which is *effectually* holy. Nothing makes the heart more in the love, study, practice, and growth of holiness, than the glorious testimony of the Holy Spirit. And the more clear and full the Spirit's testimony is, the more holy and gracious it will make the soul. Nothing puts such golden engagements upon the soul to holiness—as the Spirit sealing a man up to the day of redemption—as the Spirit speaking and sealing peace, love, and pardon to the soul, Psalm 85:8; 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 5:14. Nothing makes a man more careful to please Christ, more fearful to offend Christ, more studious to exalt Christ, and more circumspect to walk with Christ, than this testimony of the Spirit of Christ.

Truly, that is not the blessed whispering of Christ's Spirit—but the hissing of the old serpent—which makes men bold with sin, which makes men dally with sin, which makes man a servant to sin, which breeds a contempt or neglect of holy duties, or a carelessness in walking with God. And from those hissings of the old serpent, O Lord, deliver my soul, and the souls of all those who put their trust in you!

(9.) The ninth difference. Ninthly and lastly, **Assurance is a jewel, a pearl of that price, that God only bestows it upon renewed hearts.** The Spirit never sets his *seal* upon any—but upon those who Christ has first printed his *image* upon. God gives to none the white stone of forgiveness, Rev 2:17—but to those from whom he has taken the heart

of stone; Ezek 36:25-27. Christ never tells a man that his name is written in the book of life, until he has breathed into him spiritual life, Luke 10:20. Christ never says, 'Son, be of good cheer, your sin is pardoned,' until he has first said, 'Be healed, be cleansed!' Luke 5:18-20. Christ never gives a man a new name—until he has made them new creatures, Isa 56:5; 2 Cor 5:17. Christ makes the slaves of Satan into his sons—before we cry 'Abba, Father!' Rom 8:15. Christ makes enemies into his friends—before he will make us of his court or counsel, Eph 2:13-20.

Christ will never hang a pearl in a swine's snout; nor put new wine into old bottles; nor his royal robes upon a leprous back; nor his golden chain around a dead man's neck; nor his glistening crown upon traitor's head! The Spirit never sets his seal upon any—but upon those who Christ has first set as a seal upon his heart, Eph 1:13; Song 8:6. The Spirit only bears witness to such as hate sin as Christ hates it, and who love righteousness as Christ loves it, who hate sin more than hell, and who love truth more than life, Psalm 45:7. A soul sealed by the Spirit will pull out right eyes, and cut off right hands, for Christ; such souls will part with a *Benjamin*, and offer up an *Isaac*, for Christ. This is a serious warning against those deceived and deluded souls, who remain yet in their blood, and who wallow in their sins—and yet boast and brag of the seal and of the witness and testimony of the Spirit.

And thus I have showed you the difference between the whisperings of the Spirit and the hissing of the old serpent; between a true assurance and a false one.

### **Several special questions about assurance**

[1.] The first question. But methinks I hear some precious souls saying, "We have, after much praying, weeping, and waiting, gained this pearl of price, assurance; but oh, how shall we do to **strengthen** it, how shall we do to **keep** it? Satan will labor to weaken our assurance, and to rob us of this jewel which is worth more than a world! What **means** must we use

to strengthen our assurance and to secure it?" Now to this question I shall give these following answers:

First, If you would have your assurance strengthened and maintained, then **keep close to soul-strengthening ways, be serious and sincere, be diligent and constant in the use of those means and ways wherein you first gained assurance**, as prayer; the word, breaking of bread, communion of saints, etc. A serious and cordial use of holy and heavenly means is blessed, not only with a *preservation* of assurance—but likewise with an *addition* and *increase* of it. The ways of God, and his goings in the sanctuary, have wrought wonders upon you, when you were dead; how much more will they work upon you and for you, now that you are by grace made alive? He who will not apply himself to God's strengthening methods, will quickly find his assurance weakened, if not wholly gone. He who thinks himself too good for ordinances, will quickly grow weak in his assurance. The choicest prophets, and highest apostles, who had attained to the fullest assurance, kept close to the ways and precious institutions of Christ. Truly, those who pretend to live above ordinances, and yet live below them, never knew by experience what a mercy it was to have a well-grounded assurance, or else they have lost that blessed assurance that once they had. The doing heart, the diligent heart, turns the spark into a flame, the mite into a million, the penny into a pound, etc.

Secondly, If you would strengthen and maintain your assurance, then  **dwell much upon your spiritual and eternal privileges**, namely, your adoption, justification, reconciliation, glorification, etc., 1 Pet 2:9. This you shall find by experience will mightily tend to the strengthening and maintaining of your assurance. He who neglects this rule will quickly find his *sun* to set in a *cloud*; and say, "My harp is tuned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of wailing!" Job 30:31. Holy and heavenly privileges are the food by which assurance is, cherished and maintained.

Thirdly, If you would strengthen and maintain your assurance, then **look that your hearts run more out to Christ—than to assurance**; more to the *sun* than to the *beams*; more to the *fountain* than to the *stream*; more to the *root* than to the *branch*; more to the *cause* than to the *effect*, Song 1:13. Assurance is sweet—but Christ is more sweet!

Assurance is lovely—but Christ is altogether lovely! Song 5:16. Assurance is precious—but Christ is most precious! Prov 3:15. Though assurance is a flower which yields much comfort and delight—yet it is but a flower. Though assurance be a precious box—yet it is but a box. Though assurance be a ring of gold—yet it is but a ring of gold. And what is the flower compared to the root? What is the box compared to the precious perfume? What is the ring compared to the diamond? All these are no more than assurance is, compared to Christ. Therefore let your eye and heart, first, most, and last—be fixed upon Christ; then will assurance bed and board with you; otherwise you will quickly find your summer to be turned into winter.

Fourthly, If you would strengthen and maintain your assurance, then **look that your hearts are more taken up with Christ—than with your GRACES.** Though grace is a glorious creature, yet it is but a creature; therefore let grace have your eye—but be sure that Christ has your heart! Christ must have your heart. Christ will not allow your very graces to be rivals with him. He who minds his graces more than Christ, or that sets his graces upon the throne with Christ—will quickly find what it is to lose the face and favor of Christ. Your graces are but Christ's servants and handmaids; you may look upon them—but you must not love them. It is a reproach to Christ, that those who have married the *master*, should at the same time love the *servants!*

Christ is the pot of manna, the cruse of oil, the bottomless ocean, the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory, etc.

The queen may look upon her glistening courtiers—but she must love upon the king! The wife may take pleasure in her lovely babes—but she must live upon her husband, and be most observant of her husband. So gracious souls may look upon their graces—but they must live upon king Jesus; they may take pleasure in their graces—but they must live upon Christ, and be most observant of Christ. This is the way to keep Christ and assurance; and he who walks contrary to this rule will soon find the loss of both. Christ will be all in all—or he will be nothing at all. Though his coat was once divided, yet he will never allow his crown to be divided, John 19:23; Isa 42:8.

Fifthly, If you would have your assurance strengthened and maintained, then **labor to improve it to the strengthening of you against temptations, to the fencing of you against corruptions, to the raising of your resolutions, to the inflaming of your affections, to the bettering of your lives.** 'We have,' says Cyprian, 'no such *notions* as many philosophers have—but we are philosophers in our *deeds*. We do not *speak* great things—but we *do* great things in our lives.' Assurance is a pearl of great price; he who will keep it must improve it. The ready way to maintain our natural strength, and to increase it, is to exercise it. Assurance is one of the choicest and chief talents which God ever entrusted man with, and he who does not improve it, and employ it, will quickly lose it, etc. God will not allow so golden a talent to gather rust, Matt 25:28. Win gold and wear gold, improve gold and keep gold; win assurance and wear assurance, improve assurance and keep assurance.

Dionysius, being advised that one of his subjects had *hidden* a great amount of money, commands him upon pain of death to bring it to him, which he did—but not all. He then went and dwelt in another country, where he took up some useful employment and profitably used the remainder of his money. When Dionysius heard of this, he sent back the money which he had taken from him, saying, 'Now you know how to *use* riches, take back what I took from you.' I shall leave you to make the application.

Sixthly, If you would have your assurance strengthened and maintained, then **walk humbly with your God.** Mic 6:8. God makes the humble man's heart his house to dwell in: Isa 57:15, "For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy—I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The highest heavens and the lowest hearts are the habitations wherein the Holy One delights to dwell. Now this phrase, "I will dwell with the humble," includes several things:

1. It includes God's superintending the humble.
2. It includes God's assisting and strengthening of the humble.

3. It includes God's protection; I will dwell with the humble, that is, I will protect him and secure him, Job 22:29.
4. It includes God's sympathizing with the humble.
5. It includes God's applying all suitable good to the humble, Isa 57:18, and Isa 63:9.
6. It includes God's ruling and overruling the heart and the affections of the humble.
7. It includes God's teaching and instructing of the humble.
8. Lastly, it includes and takes in a clearer, a fuller, and a larger manifestation and communication of God to humble souls, Psalm 10:17, and Psalm 25:9.

'Ah!' says God, 'I will dwell with the humble; that is, I will more richly, more abundantly, and more gloriously manifest and make known my grace and glory, my goodness and sweetness, my loving-kindness and tenderness—to humble souls!'

Now tell me, humble souls, will not God's dwelling thus with you contribute very much to the strengthening and maintaining of your assurance? James 4:6, "But he gives more grace: therefore he says, God resists the proud" (or as the Greek word emphatically signifies—he sets himself in battle array against the proud), "but gives grace to the humble." Humility is both a grace, and a *vessel* to receive grace. God pours in grace into the humble souls, as men pour liquor into an empty vessel. And truly, the more grace you have, the more will your assurance be strengthened and maintained. Well! remember this, the humble man's mercies are the *sweetest* mercies, the *greatest* mercies, the most *growing* and *thriving* mercies, the most *blessed* and *sanctified* mercies, and the most *lasting* and *abiding* mercies. Therefore, as you would have your assurance strengthened and maintained, walk humbly with your God! I say again, walk humbly, walk humbly with your God, and you shall wear the crown of assurance to your grave!

Seventhly, If you would keep and maintain your assurance, then **take heed and watch against those very particular sins by which other saints have lost their assurance.** Take heed of carnal confidence and security. David lost his assurance by not guarding his heart against those evils, Psalm 30:6-7. Again, take heed of a light, slight, careless, and negligent spirit in holy and spiritual things. The spouse in the Canticles lost her assurance, and her sweet communion with Christ, by her lightness of spirit, Song 5:2-3,6. Again, take heed of a stout and unyielding spirit under the afflicting hand of God; this made God hide his face from them, Isa 57:17. In a word, take heed of tasting of forbidden fruit, remembering what Adam lost by a taste!

Eighthly, If you would maintain and keep your assurance, then **frequently and seriously consider of the great difficulty of recovering assurance when it is lost.** Oh! the sighs, the groans, the complaints, the prayers, the tears, the heart-renting, the soul-bleeding—which the recovery of your lost assurance will cost! The *gaining* of assurance at first cost you dear—but the *regaining* of it, if you should be so unhappy as to lose it, will put you to more pains and effort. Of the two, it is easier to *keep* assurance now you have it—than to *recover* it when you have lost it. It is easier to keep the house in reparations, than to build it up when it is fallen.

A man may easier make a seeing eye blind—than a blind to see; a man may soon put an instrument out of tune—but not soon put it in again; a man is easily borne down the stream—but cannot swim so easily up the stream, etc.

Ninthly, and lastly, **Consider solemnly the sad and woeful evils and hindrances which will certainly follow upon the loss of your assurance.** How can the bird fly without wings, and the wheels go without oil, and the workman work without hands, and the painter paint without eyes? etc. I will only touch upon a few of these hindrances.

(1.) None of the precious things of Christ will be so sweet to you—as formerly they have been.

(2.) You will neither be so fervent in duty, nor so frequent in duty, nor so

abundant in duty, nor so spiritual in duty, nor so lively in duty, nor so cheerful in duty—as formerly you have been.

(3.) Afflictions will sooner sink you, temptations will sooner overcome you, oppositions will sooner discourage you.

(4.) Your mercies will be bitter, your life a burden, and death a terror to you; you will be weary of living, and yet afraid of dying, etc.

[2.] Now, the second question is this: Suppose some have not been so careful to keep and maintain their assurance as they should have been—but upon one account or another have left that blessed assurance which once they had; **how may such sad souls be supported and kept from fainting, sinking, and languishing under the loss of assurance?** To this question I shall give these following answers:

First, Souls who have lost that sweet assurance which once they had, may be supported and kept from fainting and sinking, **by considering, that though they have lost their assurance, yet they have not lost their sonship; for once sons and always sons.** You are sons, though dejected sons; you are sons, though comfortless sons; you are sons, though mourning sons, Rom 8:15-17. Once children of God—always children; once heirs of God—always heirs; once beloved of God—always beloved; once happy in Christ—always happy: [Psalm 89:30-32,34; John 13:5; Jer 31:3]

2 Sam 23:5, "Although my house be not so with God. For He has established an everlasting covenant with me, ordered and secured in every detail . Will He not bring about my whole salvation and my every desire?" 'Well,' says David, 'though neither myself, nor my house, have been so exact and perfect in our walkings before God as we should—and we have broken our covenants with him, and dealt unworthily with him, and turned our backs upon him, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, he has engaged himself to an everlasting covenant, that he will be my Father, and that I shall be his son. And this is my salvation and everlasting ground of consolation and supportation to my soul.'

The second support is this, **Consider, that though your comfort, joy, and peace, does depend much upon your assurance; yet your eternal happiness and blessedness does not depend upon your assurance.** If it did, you might be both happy and miserable in a day, yes, in an hour! Your happiness lies in your union with God, in your communion with God, in your interest in God; and not in your seeing and knowing your interest. Your joy and comfort lies in your seeing and knowing your interest in God—but your everlasting happiness lies in your being savingly interested in God. The welfare and happiness of the child lies in the kinship which he has in his father—but the joy and comfort of the child lies in his seeing, in his knowing of his interest in his father. It is so between the Lord and believers: Psalm 144:15, "Happy are the people who are in such a case; yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Among the philosophers there were two hundred and eighty opinions concerning happiness, some affirming happiness to lie in one thing, some in another. Ah! but by the Spirit and word we are taught that happiness lies in our oneness with God, in our nearness and dearness to God, and in our conformity to God, etc. Mark, the Scripture pronounces him happy, whose **hope** is in God, though he lacks assurance: Psalm 146:5, "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Again, he is happy who **trusts** in the Lord, though for the present he lacks assurance. Prov 16:20, "And whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he." Again, he is happy who **fears** the Lord, who has set up God as the object of his fear, though he lacks assurance of the love of God: Prov 28:14, "Happy is the man who always fears the Lord;" who fears to offend, who fears to disobey, who fears to rebel, etc. Again, he is happy that **believes** in Christ, that **rests** and **stays** upon Christ—as the Scriptures everywhere testify, though he may lack assurance.

Happiness lies not in any transient act of the Spirit, as assurance is—but in the more permanent and lasting acts of the Spirit. The philosopher could say, "That he was never a happy man—who might afterwards become miserable." If a man's *eternal* happiness did lie in the *assurance* of his happiness, then might a man be crowned with Xerxes's favorite in the morning, and beheaded with him in the evening of the same day.

But this is the believer's blessedness—that his condition is always good—

though he does not always see it to be good; that his state is always safe—though it is not always comfortable.

To make up happiness, these things must concur:

1, it must be a **suitable** good to our natures;

2, it must be an **excellent** good—a good which has worth and excellency in it;

3, it must be a **sufficient** good; a few shavings of gold will not make a man rich, etc.;

4, it must be a **permanent** good. It is permanency which sets the greatest price, and has the greatest influence, into our happiness and felicity.

The third support to keep those precious souls from fainting and sinking who have lost that sweet assurance that once they had, is to **consider that though their loss be the greatest and saddest loss that could befall them, yet it is a recoverable loss, it is a loss that may be recovered**, as these scriptures clearly evidence. [Psalm 71:20-21, and Psalm 42:5,7-8; Isa 54:7-8; Mic 7:18-19; Song 3:4; Psalm 84:11, etc.] And does not this age furnish us with many instances of this kind? Doubtless many there are among the precious sons and daughters of Zion, who have lost this pearl of price, and after waiting, weeping, and wrestling, have found it again! Therefore be not discouraged, O sighing, losing souls! In the loss of temporals, it is a great support to men's spirits that their loss may be made up, and why should it not be so in spirituals also?

The fourth support to keep their hearts from sinking and breaking who have lost that sweet assurance that once they had, is, seriously to **consider that your loss is no greater, nor no sadder, than what the noblest and the choicest saints have sustained**, as you may see by comparing these scriptures. [Psalm 30:6-7, and Psalm 51:12; Job 23:8-9; Isa 8:17] Many of those who were once the worthies of this world, and are now triumphing in that eternal world among the princes of glory, had lost that sweet assurance and sense of divine love and favor which they once enjoyed. Therefore let not your spirits faint and fail. In temporal losses it is a comfort and a support to have companions with us; and why should it not much more be so in spirituals?

The fifth support to bear up their spirits who have lost that sweet assurance that once they had, is for them to remember, and seriously mind, that **though they have lost assurance, yet they have not lost the blessed breathings and sweet influences of the Spirit upon them**. Witness their love to Christ, their longing after Christ, their fear of offending Christ, their care to please Christ, their high esteem of Christ, and their mourning for the dishonors that by themselves or others are done to Christ, etc. [Song 3:5; Mic 7:7-9, compared, Isa 8:17; Isa 50:10] A man may enjoy the warmth, heat, and influence of the sun, when he has lost the *sight* of the sun. David had lost his assurance, he had lost the sight of the sun; and yet he enjoyed the warmth and

influences of it upon his heart, as is evident in Psalm 51.

Though your sun, O Christian, is set in a cloud—yet it will rise again, and in the interim you have and do enjoy the warmth and influences of the sun! Therefore sorrow not, mourn not, as one without hope. Those warm influences which the Sun of righteousness has now upon your heart, are infallible evidences that he will shine forth and smile upon you as in the days of old; therefore let your bow still abide in strength, Psalm 42:5,7-8,11.

The sixth support to keep their hearts from fainting and sinking who have lost that sweet assurance that once they had, is seriously to **consider, that it will be but as a day—but as a short day, before the loss of your assurance shall be made up with a more clear, full, perfect, and complete enjoyment of God.** Before long, O mourning soul, your sun shall rise and never set, your joy and comfort shall be always fresh and green. God shall soon comfort you on every side, it shall be night with you no more, you shall be always in the bosom of God, Isa 57:18-20. Psalm 71:20-21, "Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again." The time is at hand, O perplexed soul, when you shall have smiles without frowns, light without darkness, day without night, wine without water, sweet without bitter, and joy without sorrow!

The year of jubilee is at hand. You now sow in tears, you shall shortly reap in joy! Yes, "everlasting joy shall be upon your head," and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away," therefore faint not. [Lev 25; Psalm 129:5; Isa 35:2]

[3.] The third question is this, namely, **What MEANS must souls use to recover assurance when it is lost?** I shall give a few short answers to this question, and so draw to a close.

First, If you would recover assurance, then **you must labor diligently to find out that sin, that Achan, which has robbed you of your wedge of gold, of your assurance.** Surely it is not for mere infirmities—but enormities, that God has put out your candle, and caused your sun

to set at noon. Surely you have been *feeding*, not *tasting*, of forbidden fruit. So God has stripped you of your robes, and taken the crown from off your head, and turned you out of paradise. But this is not all.

Therefore, in the second place, **weep much, mourn much, over the Achan, over those wicked messes which have turned your day into night, your rejoicing into sighing**, etc. David does thus in Psalm 51, and God takes him up from his knees, and restores to him "the joy of his salvation." Though God is displeased with your sins, yet he is well-pleased with your tears. Rev 2:4-5. When ancient Rome was heathenish, if the malefactor brought to be whipped fell upon his knees before the one whom he had wronged, it was held a greater offence if the offended one allowed the offender to be whipped. The promise is, that he will "revive the spirit of the contrite," Isa 57:15.

It is said of Adam that he turned his face towards the garden of Eden, and from his heart lamented his fall. Ah! losing souls, turn your face towards heaven, and from your hearts lament your fall, lament your loss. Nothing touches God's heart, like penitent tears. No sooner does Ephraim weep over his sins—but the affections of God are stirring towards him, and God cannot hold, but he must proclaim to the world that mourning Ephraim, bemoaning Ephraim, is his dear son, his pleasant child, and that he will "surely have mercy on him;" or, as the Hebrew has it, "I will abundantly have mercy on him," Jer 31:18-20.

It is an excellent expression of Basil, "It grieves, it irks, it is tedious to our most munificent, great, glorious God—that we ask anything little of him. He would have us ask great things of him." When our hearts are set to weep over our sins, God will so act in ways of love towards us, that it shall not long be night with our souls. God will never allow them to be drowned in sorrow—who are set upon drowning their sins in penitential tears. The Jews have a saying, that since the destruction of Jerusalem, 'the *door of prayers* has been shut.' 'But the *door of tears* was never shut,' says one. God has by promise engaged himself that those who "sow in tears shall reap in joy," Psalm 126:5. The tears of God's people have such a kind of omnipotency in them, that God himself cannot withstand them. 2 Kings 20:5, "I have seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord."

[Psalm 39:12; Job 16:20; Mark 9:24-25, etc.]

Thirdly, If you would recover assurance, then **do not sit down discouraged—but be up and doing!** Remember what a pearl of great price you have lost, and "repent and do your first works," Rev 2:4-5. Resume the good old work of believing, meditating, examining, praying, hearing, mourning, etc. A man who has been recovered formerly out of such or such a disease, if he relapses, he will use the same means again, he will apply the same remedies again—"this remedy once healed me—I will try it again."

Begin again, and resume those very ways by which at first you got assurance. Resume family duties, apply yourself to public ordinances, be much in closet services; stir up every gift which is in you, stir up every grace which is in you, stir up all the life which is in you, and never leave off blowing, until you have blown your little spark into a flame! Never leave off using your penny, until you have turned your penny into a pound. Never leave off improving your mite, until your mite is turned into a million. God will be found in the use of means, and he will restore our lost mercies in the use of means, Psalm 22:26. But this is not all.

Therefore, in the fourth place, **wait patiently upon the Lord.** David did so, and at length the Lord brought him out of the horrible pit—out of the pit of confusion, and set his feet upon a rock, and established his goings, and put a new song of praise into his mouth, Psalm 40:1-3. God never has, nor never will fail, the waiting soul. Though God loves to try the patience of his children, yet he does not love to tire out the patience of his children; therefore he will not contend forever, neither will he be always angry, lest the spirits of his people should fail, Isa 57:16-19.

Assurance is a jewel worth waiting for. It is a pearl which God gives to none but such as have waited long at mercy's door. It is a crown that everyone must win by patient waiting, before he can wear it. God does not think the greatest mercies too good for waiting souls, though he knows the least mercy is too good for impatient souls. The *breasts of the promises* lie full and open to waiting souls, Isa 30:18, and Isa 64:4, and Isa 49:23. The waiting soul shall have anything from God—but the froward and impatient soul gets nothing from God but frowns, and blows,

and wounds, and broken bones. Sad souls would do well to make that text their bosom companion, John 14:18, "I will not leave you comfortless," or orphans, "I will come to you." And that Heb 10:36-37, "For you have need of patience, so that after you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised. For in yet a very little while, the Coming One will come and not delay."

Fifthly and lastly, If you would recover assurance, then **take heed of refusing comforts when God brings them to your door**; take heed of throwing gospel cordials away. This was Asaph's sin: "My soul refused to be comforted." God comes and offers love to the soul—and the soul refuses it; God comes and spreads the promises of consolation before the soul—and the soul refuses to look upon them; God comes and offers the riches of grace—and the soul refuses to accept of them. Ambrose says, "If I would offer you gold today, you would not say, 'I will come and get it tomorrow.' And will you lightly put God off when he offers peace and comfort to your soul?"

Sometimes the *hand*—the *man* who brings the cordial—is not liked, and therefore men refuse it. Well! remember this: when gold is offered, men care not how great or how base he is, who offers it. Neither should we care by whom the cordials and consolations of the gospel are offered to us, whether they are offered by the hand of Isaiah, a prophet of the blood-royal; or by Amos, from among the herdsmen of Tekoa. If the *sweets of heaven* are set before you, it is your wisdom and your duty to taste of them, and to feed upon them, without stumbling at the hand which presents them.

Now for a close I shall make a few short **USES** of what has been said, and so conclude.

[1.] The first use. **You who have assurance, be thankful for it.** It is a jewel more worth than heaven and earth; therefore be thankful. Assurance is a mercy nobly-descended; it is from above. Man is not born with it in his heart, as he is with a tongue in his mouth, James 1:17. Assurance is a peculiar mercy; it is a flower of paradise which God sticks only in his children's bosoms. Assurance is a mercy-sweetening mercy; it is a mercy which puts the garland upon all our mercies. Assurance makes

every bitter sweet, and every sweet more sweet. Assurance has amazing transforming powers. It changes iron to gold, ignominies to crowns, and all sufferings to delights! He enjoys little, who lacks assurance; he lacks nothing who enjoys it. Therefore be thankful if you have experienced the sweetness of it.

How much cause have you to rejoice, upon whose heads the Lord has put the crown of assurance, a crown of more worth and weight than all princes' crowns in the world. Oh, what cause have you to be thankful for assurance!

[2.] The second use. If God has given you assurance, then **do not envy the outward felicity and happiness of the men of the world**, Psalm 37:17-18; Prov 23:17. Alas! what are mountains of dust, compared to mountains of gold? what are the stones of the street, compared to rocks of pearl? what are crowns of thorns, compared to crowns of gold, etc.? No more are all the treasures, honors, pleasures, and favors of this world, compared to assurance. The great men of the world are objects of pity—but not of envy. Who envies the prisoner at the bar? Who envies the malefactor who is going to execution? Who envies the dead man that is going to his grave? God has done more for you by giving you assurance than if he had given you all the world, yes, ten thousand worlds!

When the Spanish ambassador boasted that his master was king of such a place, and of such a place, and of such a place, etc., the French ambassador answered, 'My master is king of France, king of France, king of France;' signifying thereby, that France was of more worth, than all the kingdoms under the power of the king of Spain. Ah, Christians! when the men of the world shall cry out, 'Oh, my riches! oh, my honors! oh, my preferments!' You may well cry out, 'Oh, assurance, assurance, assurance!' there being more real worth and glory in that than is to be found in all the wealth and glory of the world. Therefore do not envy the outward prosperity and felicity of worldly men, etc.

[3.] The third use. If God has given you assurance, then **give no way to slavish fears**. Fear not the scorn and reproaches of men, fear not any necessities. God will not deny him a crust—to whom he has given a Christ; he will not deny him a crumb—upon whom he has bestowed a

crown; he will not deny him a less mercy—upon whom he has bestowed assurance, which is the prince of mercies. Fear not death, for why should you fear death, who have assurance of eternal life?

[4.] The fourth use. If God has given you a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness, then **question his love no more**. God does not love to have his love always called into question, by those who he has once assured of his love. No sins of God's children, makes any alteration in His love to them. Just so--none, no, not even God's sharpest dispensations, should make any alteration in our thoughts and affections towards Him. Psalm 89:30-35; Jer 31:3; Eccles 9:8.

[5.] The fifth use. If God has given you assurance, **then live holily, live angelically, keep your garments pure and white, walk with an even foot, be shining lights**, Rev 3:4; Matt 5:16. Your happiness here is your holiness, and in heaven your highest happiness will be your perfect holiness. Holiness differs nothing from happiness—but in name. Holiness is happiness in the bud, and happiness is holiness at the full. Happiness is nothing but the *quintessence of holiness*. The more holy any man is, the more the Lord loves him, John 14:21-23.

Augustine does excellently observe, in his tract on John 1:14, "that God loved the humanity of Christ more than any man, because he was fuller of grace and truth than any man." The philosopher could say, "that God was but an empty name without virtue." So are all our professions without holiness. Holiness is the very marrow and quintessence of all religion. Holiness is 'God' stamped and printed upon the soul; it is Christ formed in the heart; it is our light, our life, our beauty, our glory, our joy, our crown, our heaven, our all. The holy soul is happy in life, and blessed in death, and shall be transcendently glorious in the morning of the resurrection, when Christ shall say, "Lo, here am I, and my holy ones, who are my joy! Lo, here am I, and my holy ones, who are my crown! Upon the heads of these holy ones will I set an immortal crown!" Even so, Amen! Lord Jesus.

# The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

Thomas Brooks, 1655

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ!**" Ephesians 3:8

[Epistle Dedicatory](#)

[The verse opened and explained.http://icont.ac/34ev5](http://icont.ac/34ev5)

**The first doctrine.**

[Those who are lowest in their own esteem, are highest in God's esteem.](#)

[Eighteen properties of a humble soul.](#)

[Five reasons of the point.](#)

[Uses of it.](#)

[Eight motives to provoke believers to be humble.](#)

[Nine directions and helps to keep us humble and low in our own eyes.](#)

[The dangerous nature of pride held forth in nine propositions.](#)

**The second doctrine.**

[All saints are not of an equal size and growth in grace and holiness.](#)

[Twelve things by which souls weak in grace are discovered and deciphered.](#)

[Twelve supports and comforts to uphold weak Christians.](#)

[Six duties which lie upon weak saints.](#)

The duties of strong saints to the weak shown in eleven particulars.

**The third doctrine.**

That the Lord gives the best gifts to his best beloved ones.

What those best gifts are, which Christ bestows upon his dearest ones, shown in ten particulars.

The difference between Christ's giving and the world's giving, shown in six things.

The excellency of those gifts which Christ gives, above all other gifts that the world gives, shown in five things.

Six reasons why God gives the best gifts to his dearest ones.

Eight sweet inferences or uses made of this point.

A word to unsaved sinners.

**The fourth doctrine.**

That the gifts and graces which God bestows upon his people should be improved, employed, and exercised by his people.

Twelve reasons why gracious souls should exercise and improve their gifts and graces.

Three special ends that the gifts and graces which God has bestowed upon believers should be exercised and improved to.

Seven considerations or motives to stir saints up to improve their gifts and graces.

Question: When may a soul be said to be excellent in grace, or to have highly improved grace? This question receives ten answers.

**The fifth doctrine.**

That the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich.

This point is opened and proved by eight arguments.

Four grounds and reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ is held forth in the word to be so very rich.

The excellency of the riches of Christ above all other riches in the world, held forth in seven particulars.

1st Use. To exhort Christians to labor to be spiritually rich.

Question: What means must Christians use that they may grow rich in grace? Answered in eight things.

Seven propositions concerning spiritual riches. The serious minding of them may give to many much satisfaction, and prevent many objections.

Five marks of a person who is spiritually rich.

**The sixth doctrine.**

That it is the great duty of preachers or ministers to preach Jesus Christ to the people.

Five reasons why ministers must preach Christ to the people.

How Christ is to be preached, shown in eleven things. He must be preached:

**The last doctrine.**

That the office of a faithful minister is an honorable office.

A short use.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ!**" Ephesians 3:8

"It pleased the father, that in him should **all fullness** dwell." Col. 1:19.

"In whom are hidden **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**" Col. 2:3.

### **Epistle Dedicatory**

To all true Israelites, in whom there is no guile—Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

Dear hearts,

My design in appearing once more in print is not to please the captious critic, or the sullen cynic—but to heighten your "fellowship with the Father and the Son," 1 John 1:3-4, and to further you in a closer walking with God, and to ripen you more and more for reigning with God when you shall be here no more.

"Beloved in our Lord," there are two sad and great evils—oh that there were no more!—among the saints this day. The *strong* are very apt, yes, they make little of offending the weak; and the *weak* are as apt, and make as little of judging and condemning the strong, Romans 14:1-10. The serious and conscientious perusal of this treatise may, by the blessing of the Lord, contribute much to the preventing of those sad evils.

You who are **weak** may, in this treatise, as in a mirror, see your weakness, your mercies, your graces, your duties, your privileges, and your comforts. You who are weak in grace, may here find many questions answered and doubts resolved, that tend to the satisfying, quieting, settling, and establishing of your precious souls in peace, joy, and assurance. You who are weak in grace, may here find a staff to support you, a light to direct you, a sword to defend you, and a cordial to strengthen you, etc. And you who are **strong** in grace, may here see what is your way, what is your work, and what at last shall be your reward. Here you will find that which tends to the discovery of spirits, the sweetening of spirits, the uniting of spirits, the healing of spirits, and the making up of breaches, etc.

Here you will find "meat for strong men," and "milk for babes." Here you will find who is more *motion* than *notion*; more *heart* than *head*; more spirit than flesh; more inside than outside, etc.

Here you will find "the unsearchable riches of Christ"—which of all boxes of precious ointment is the most precious—opened; and oh how sweet must he be, who is the sweetest of sweets! In Christ are riches of *justification*; in Christ are riches of *sanctification*, riches of *consolation*, and riches of *glorification*. And this following treatise may serve as a golden key, to open the door, that you may come where these treasures lie. Christ's riches are like the eternal springs of the earth, which cannot dry up—but are and shall be diffused by his Spirit and gospel, until his whole house be filled with them.

The excellency and usefulness of the riches of Christ, and answers to many weighty queries about his unsearchable riches, is more than hinted at in this tract. In this tract much is spoken concerning the nature, properties, and excellencies of **humility**, which is both the beautifier and preserver of all other graces.

Here you may see that those who are lowest in their own esteem, are highest in God's esteem. Here you may see that humble souls are not so low and contemptible in the eyes of the world, as they are honorable in the eyes of God. [Humility is that which keeps all graces together. Bernard.]

And if ever there were an age since Christ was on earth, wherein it was needful to preach, press, and print this great doctrine of humility, of self-abasement, of soul-abasement, this is the age wherein we live. Oh the pride, the loftiness of the professors of this age! But because this point is largely spoken to in this tract, I shall satisfy myself with this touch.

There are many other weighty things treated on, which for brevity's sake I shall omit, only give me permission to acquaint you with a few things about this ensuing tract, and then I shall draw to a close.

*First*, That it is the substance of twenty-two sermons, preached by me about three years ago, on the lecture nights at this place where now I

preach.

*Secondly*, That there are in it several other things of no small concernment to your souls, that I did not then deliver—but have been given in since, from that fountain that fills all in all.

*Thirdly*, That though I have been much pressed to print these sermons—yet I would never have yielded, had I not been thoroughly convinced and persuaded in my judgment and conscience, that they may, by the blessing of the Lord upon them prove many ways useful and serviceable to all those honest Nathanaels into whose hands they may fall, else they had been buried in the dark, and never come to public light. [A sermon preached serves but one audience; a sermon printed may serve many audiences.]

I have only a few requests to make to you, and then I shall take my leave of you.

And my *first* request is this, that you would **meditate and dwell upon what you read**; otherwise your pains and mine will be lost.

It is a law among the Parsees in India, to use premeditation in what they are to do, that if it be bad, to reject it; if good, to act upon it. The application is easy. The more any man is in the contemplation of truth, the more deep and firm impression is made upon his heart by truth.

Christians must be like the clean beasts, which parted the hoof and chewed the cud; they must by heavenly meditation chew truths, or else they will never taste the sweetness that is in divine truths.

Mary "pondered the sayings of the shepherds in her heart," Luke 2:19. Not those who eat most—but those who digest most, are the most healthful. Not those who get most—but those who keep most, are richest. So not those who hear most, or read most—but those who meditate most, are most edified and enriched.

My *second* request to you is this, that you will **make conscience of living out those truths you read**. [Your actions, in passing, pass not

away; for every good work is a grain of seed for eternal life.]

To read much and practice nothing, is to hunt much and catch nothing.

Suetonius reports of Julius Caesar, "That seeing Alexander's statue, he fetched a deep sigh, because he at that age had done so little."

Ah! what cause have most to sigh, that they have heard so much, and read so much, and yet done so little! Surely it is more honorable to do great things, than to speak or read great things! It is the doer that will be most happy at last, John 13:17. "They are written in the book of life—who do what good they can, though they cannot do as they would." (Bernard.)

I have read of a good man coming from a public lecture, and being asked by one whether the sermon was finished, answered, with a sad sigh, "Ah! it is *preached*—but not *finished*."

My *third* request is this, that you will **pray over what you read**. Many read much, and pray little, and therefore get little by all they read.

Galen writes of a fish called *Uranoscopos*, that has but one eye, which looks continually up to heaven. When a Christian has one eye upon his book, the other should be looking up to heaven for a blessing upon what he reads.

When one heard what admirable victories Scanderbeg's sword had wrought, he would needs see it; and when he saw it, says he, *This is but an ordinary sword; alas! what can this do?* Scanderbeg sent him word, *I have sent you my sword—but I have the arm that did all by it.*

Alas! what can Christ's sword, Christ's word, do without his arm? Therefore look up to Christ's arm in prayer, that so his sword, his word, may do great things in your souls.

Luther professes "that he profited more by prayer in a short space than by study in a longer;" as John, by weeping, got the sealed book open.

My *fourth* request to you is this, That if, by the blessing of the Lord upon my weak endeavors, any leaf or line should drop myrrh or mercy, marrow

or fatness, upon your spirits, that you will **give all the glory to the God of heaven, for to him alone it does belong.**

Through grace I know I am a poor worm; I am nothing, I have nothing but what I have received. The crown befits no head but Christ's. Let him who is our all in all have the honor and the glory of all, and I have my end. [Ingratitude, say some, is a monster in nature, a blunder in manners, and a paradox in grace—damming up the course of donations, divine and human.]

Pliny tells of some in the remote parts of India, who have no mouths, and yet live on the smell of herbs and sweet flowers; but I hope better things of you, even such as accompany salvation.

My *fifth* request to you is this, That you would **let me lie near your hearts, when you are in the mount especially.**

Oh pray, pray hard for me, that the Spirit of the Lord may be redoubled upon me; that his word may prosper in my mouth; that it may "run, and be glorified;" and that I may be high in my communion with God, and holy and unblamably in my walkings with God; and that it may be still *day* with my soul; that I may live and die in the joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit; and that when my sun is set, my hour-glass runs out, my work done, my race run—I may rest in the everlasting arms of divine love, etc.

My *last* and least request to you is this, That you will please **cast a mantle of love over the mistakes** of the press, and do me that right, and yourselves the courtesy, as, before you read, to correct any material faults that you shall find pointed at in the errata. [In every pomegranate there is at least one rotten kernel to be found, said Crates the philosopher.]

God's easy passing over the many and daily erratas of your lives, cannot but make you so ingenuous as readily to pass over the erratas in this book.

You are choice jewels in my eye; you lie near unto my heart; I am willing

to spend and be spent for your sakes. My earnest and humble desire is, that my service and labor of love may be accepted by you, Romans 15:31, and that it may work much for your internal and eternal welfare; and that "an abundant entrance may be administered to you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. 1:11, and 1:8; and that you may be filled "with joy unspeakable and full of glory," and with that "peace which passes understanding." This is, and by grace shall be, the prayer of him who desires to approve himself faithful to Christ, his truths, his interests, and his people, and who is your souls' servant in all gospel engagements.

Thomas Brooks.

### **The verse opened and explained**

**"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!"** Ephesians 3:8

"Unto me, who am *less than the least* of all saints."

"Less than the least of all saints," is a double diminutive, and signifies lesser than the least, if lesser might be. Here you have the greatest apostle descending down to the lowest step of **humility**. Great Paul is least of saints, last of the apostles, and greatest of sinners. [He who is little in his own account is great in God's esteem.] The choicest buildings have the lowest foundations, the best balsam sinks to the bottom; those ears of corn and boughs of trees which are most filled and best laden—bow lowest. So do those souls who are most laden with the fruits of paradise. "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints."

"Is this *grace* given."

In the Greek, or "was this grace given." The word that is here rendered *grace*, is taken in Scripture not only for the favor of God—but also for his gracious gifts; and so you are to understand it in this place. Grace is taken

for the *gifts of grace*; and they are twofold, common or special. Some are common to believers and hypocrites, as knowledge, tongues, a gift of prayer, etc.; some are special and peculiar to the saints, as fear, love, faith, etc. Now Paul had all these, the better to fit him for that high and noble service to which he was called.

"That I should *preach*."

That is, *declare good news or glad tidings*. The Greek word answers to the Hebrew word, which signifies good news, glad tidings, and a joyful message.

"That I should preach *among the Gentiles*."

Sometimes this Greek word is generally used for all men, or for all nations. Sometimes the word is used more especially for the Gentiles—as distinguished from the Jews. So it is used Mat. 6:32, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek." And so it is used here. Those who are "without God in the world," who stand in arms against God, who are ignorant of those riches of grace which are in Christ; this grace is given to me, that I should preach among the poor heathens, "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

"That I might preach among the Gentiles." What, preach *myself*? No! but "the *unsearchable riches of Christ*." [One Christ will be to you instead of all other things, because in him are all good things to be found. Augustine.]

The Greek word signifies, not to be traced out. Here is rhetoric indeed! Here are riches, unsearchable riches, unsearchable riches of Christ. Riches always imply two things: 1, abundance; 2, abundance of such things as are of worth. Now in the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest riches, the best riches, the choicest riches; in Christ are riches of justification, Titus 2:14; in Christ are riches of sanctification, Philip. 4:12, 13; in Christ are riches of consolation, 2 Cor. 12:9; and in Christ are riches of glorification, 1 Pet. 1:2-3. But of these glorious unsearchable riches of Christ, we shall speak hereafter.

I shall begin at this time with the first words, "**Unto me who am less than the least of all saints.**" There are these two observations which naturally flow from these words.

Observation 1. ***That the most holy men are always the most humble men.***

None so humble on earth, as those who live highest in heaven.

Or if you will, take the observation thus: ***That those who are the most highly valued and esteemed of by God, are lowest and least in their own esteem.***

"Unto me, who am *less than the least* of all saints," etc.

Observation 2. The second observation is, ***That there are weak saints as well as strong; little saints as well as great.*** Or thus, ***All saints are not of an equal growth or stature.***

**"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints,** is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

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Observation 2. The second observation is, ***That there are weak saints as well as strong; little saints as well as great.*** Or thus, ***All saints are not of an equal growth or stature.***

**Doctrine I.** I shall begin with the first observation, That **the most holy men are always the most humble men.** Souls that are the most highly esteemed and valued by God, do set the least and lowest esteem upon themselves. "Unto *me* who am *less than the least* of all saints," etc.

In the handling of this point, I shall do these three things:

I. I shall prove that the most holy souls are always the most humble souls.

II. I shall show you the properties of truly humble souls.

III. I shall show you the reasons why those who are the most highly prized and esteemed of God, do set so low a price upon themselves.

IV. And then the use.

**I. I shall PROVE that the most holy men are always the most humble men.** That this is so, I shall give you most clear proofs, and open them to you.

See it in **JOB.** Job was humble in regard of those perfections and degrees of grace, which he had attained to beyond any other saints on earth. No man ever received a fairer or a more valuable certificate under the hand of God, or the broad seal of heaven, for his being a soul famous in grace and holiness, than Job, as you may see, Job 1:8, "And the Lord said unto Satan—Have you considered My servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil." And yet no man could speak more undervaluingly of himself than Job did. Job 42:5-6, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear—but now my eye sees you, *I abhor myself* in dust and ashes." [Job was high in worth and humble in heart.] This expression is the deepest act of **abhorrency.** Abhorrency strictly taken, is hatred wound up to the

height. "I *abhor* myself." The word that is rendered *abhor* signifies to reject, to disdain, to despise, and to cast off. Ah! says Job, I abhor myself, I reject myself, I disdain myself, I cast off myself, I have a vile esteem of myself. [Deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man—myself! Augustine.]

So our blessed apostle **PAUL**, who had been caught up into the third heavens, and had such glorious revelations as could not be uttered—yet he accounted himself less than the least of all saints. [Wordless words, such as words are too weak to utter.] Not that anything can be less than the least; the apostle's holy rhetoric does not cross Aristotle's philosophy; but the original word being a double diminutive, his meaning is that he was as little as could be; therefore he put himself down so little as could not be, less than the least.

Another proof you have in the prophet **ISAIAH** 6:1, 5-6. As Paul among the apostles was the greatest, so Isaiah among the prophets was the clearest and choicest gospel preacher, and holds out more of Christ and of his kingdom and glory, than all the other prophets do. Isaiah 6:1, He sees the glory of the Lord in a vision, and this makes him cry out, verse 5, "Woe is me, for *I am undone*, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!" "I am undone." The Hebrew is, "I am cut off," I am a forlorn man! Why? "For I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!" [The clearest sight and vision of God does always give a man the fullest sight of his own emptiness, sinfulness, and nothingness.] Here you have the highest and choicest among the prophets, as you had Paul before among the apostles, abasing and laying low himself.

So **PETER**. Luke 5:8, "Depart from me, for I am *a sinful man*, O Lord!" That is—*a man, a sinner*—a compound of dirt and sin! When he saw that glorious miracle wrought by the Lord Jesus, he cries out as one very sensible of his own weakness and sinfulness. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Ah! I am not worthy to be near such majesty and glory, who am a mere bundle of vice and vanity, of folly and iniquity!

Take another clear instance: Gen. 18:27, "And **ABRAHAM** answered and said, Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but *dust and ashes*." Here you have the father of the faithful, the greatest

believer in the world, accounting himself dust and ashes. [Solemnly think that you are dust and ashes, and be proud if you can, Isaiah 6:1-2.] Dust notes the baseness of his original, and ashes notes his deserving to be burnt to ashes, if God should deal with him in justice rather than in mercy. The nearer any soul draws to God, the more humble will that soul lie before God. None so near God as the angels, nor any so humble before God as the angels.

So **JACOB**, Gen. 32:10, "*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth which you have showed unto your servant,*" etc. Jacob, a man eminent in his prevailing with God, a prince that had the honor and the happiness to overcome the God of mercy—yet judges himself unworthy of the least mercy. Ah! how low is that soul in his own eyes—who is most honorable in God's eyes!

**DAVID**, you know, was a man after God's own heart, 1 Kings 15:5; a man highly honored, much beloved, and dearly prized by the Lord. Yet in 1 Sam. 26:20, he counts himself a *flea*; and what is more contemptible than a flea?

In Psalm 22:6, he says, "I am a *worm*—and no man." The word that is there rendered *worm*, is a word that signifies a very little worm—a worm that is so little that a man can hardly see or perceive it. A worm is the most despicable creature in the world, trampled under foot by everyone. Says David—*I am a despicable worm in my own eyes.* [A humble soul is a little, little nothing in his own eyes.]

And thus you see the point proved, that the most holy men have been always the most humble men.

**II.** The second thing that I am to do is, to show you **the properties of humble souls.** I confess, when I look abroad in the world, and observe the demeanor of all sorts of men, my heart is stirred to speak as fully and as home to this point, as Christ shall help me. It is very very sad to consider, how few humble souls there are in these days. **Ah! the damnable pride which reigns and rules in the hearts and lives of most men!** I think it is far greater than has been known in the generations before us. Ah, England! England! what folly, what damnable

wickedness is this, that you should be a-lifting yourself up in pride, when God is a-staining the pride of all glory, and bringing into contempt the honorable of the earth, and a-setting his feet upon the neck of pride. [God loves to hear this as a parcel of his praise—to spare the lowly and strike down the proud.]

[1.] Now the first property that I shall lay down of a humble soul is this: **A humble soul under the highest spiritual discoveries, and under the greatest outward mercies, forgets not his former sinfulness and his former outward baseness.**

**PAUL** had been taken up into the third heavens, and had glorious revelations and manifestations of God, 2 Cor. 12:1-4; he cries out, "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious," 1 Tim. 1:13. Under the choicest discoveries, he remembers his former blasphemies. So Romans 7:23, "I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." He had been at this time about fourteen years converted, as some judge. He was a man who lived at as high a rate in God, as any we read of; a man who was filled with glorious spiritual discoveries and revelations, and yet under all discoveries and revelations, he remembers that body of sin and death that made him cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Who shall ease me of my burden, who shall knock off these chains that make my life a hell? [Chrysostom observes it of Paul, as his greatest honor, that although he had obtained pardon of God for his sins—yet he is not ashamed to admit his personal wretchedness to the world. The spouse of Christ, under all the kisses and embraces of Christ, acknowledges herself to be **black!** Song. 1:2, 5, compared.]

I will by a few instances prove the other branch: Gen. 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies," says **JACOB**, "When I left home, I owned nothing except a walking stick, and now my household fills two camps!" I remember, says he, when I went over Jordan, I was as a footman that carried all his wealth with him. Under his outward greatness he forgets not his former baseness. A humble soul is good at looking back upon his former low estate, upon his threadbare coat, which was his best and only robe.

So **DAVID**, 1 Chron. 17:16-17, "Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and prayed—Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And now, O God, in addition to everything else, you speak of giving me a lasting dynasty! You speak as though I were someone very great, O Lord God!" David remembered the baseness of his birth; he remembered his shepherd's crook, as Jacob did his traveling staff. [Iphicrates, that noble captain, cried out, From how small to how great an estate am I raised! So does the humble soul, when God turns his brass into silver, his iron into gold, his pence into pounds. Agathocles, who, of a potter's son, was made king of Sicily, would always be served in earthen vessels.]

**God's mercies make a humble soul glad—but not proud.** A humble soul is lowest when his mercies are highest; he is least when he is greatest; he is lowest when he is highest; he is most poor when he is most rich. Nothing *melts* like mercy, nothing *draws* like mercy, nothing *humbles* like mercy. Mercy gives the humble soul such excellent counsel, as Plasilla the empress gave her husband Theodosius, "Remember, O husband," says she, "what lately you were—and what now you are; so shall you govern well the empire, and give God his due praise for so great an advancement." The voice of mercy is, "Remember what you once were, and what now you are—and be humble."

Now **proud men** who are lifted up from the ash-heap, who abound in worldly wealth, ah how does their blood rise with their outward good! The more mercies they have, the more proud they are; mercies do but puff and swell such souls. In a crowd of mercies, they cry out in the pride of their hearts: "Depart from us, O God, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?" Psalm 73:3-13; Job 21:7-16, 14:15.

[2.] A second property of a humble soul is this, **He overlooks his own righteousness, and lives upon the righteousness of another, to wit, the Lord Jesus.** So the apostle Paul, in Philippians 3:8-10, overlooks his own righteousness, and lives wholly upon the righteousness of Christ: "I desire to be found in him," says he, "not having my own righteousness." Away with it! It is dross, it is dung, it is dog's meat! It is a

rotten righteousness, an imperfect righteousness, a weak righteousness, which is of the law. But that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith—that is a spotless righteousness, a pure righteousness, a complete righteousness, an incomparable righteousness! And, therefore, a humble soul overlooks his own righteousness, and lives upon Christ's righteousness.

Remember this—all the sighing, mourning, sobbing, and complaining in the world, does not so undeniably evidence a man to be humble, as his overlooking his own righteousness, and living really and purely upon the righteousness of Christ. Men may *do* much, *hear* much, *pray* much, *fast* much, and *give* much, etc., and yet be as proud as Lucifer, as you may see in the Scribes and Pharisees, Mat. 23, and those in Isaiah 58:3, who in the pride of their hearts made an idol of their own righteousness: "Why have we fasted," say they, "and you see it not? Why have we afflicted our souls, and you take no knowledge?" Oh! but for a man now to trample upon his own righteousness, and to live wholly upon the righteousness of another, this speaks out a man to be humble indeed. There is nothing that the heart of man stands more averse to than this—of discarding his own righteousness. Man is a creature apt to warm himself with the sparks of his own fire, though he does lie down for it in eternal sorrow, Isaiah 50:11. Man is naturally prone to go about to establish his own righteousness, that he might not subject to the righteousness of Christ; he will labor as for life, to lift up his own righteousness, and to make a Savior of it, Romans 10:4.

Ay—but a humble soul disclaims his own righteousness: "All our righteousness is as filthy rags." "Enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight shall no man living be justified," Psalm 143:2. So Job, "Though I were righteous—yet I would not answer—but I would make supplication to my judge," Job 9:15. Proud Pharisees bless themselves in their own righteousness: "I thank God I am not as this publican; I fast twice in the week," etc., Luke 18:11-12. Ay—but now a soul truly humbled blushes to see his own righteousness, and glories in this, that he has the righteousness of Christ to live upon. [A proud heart eyes more his seeming worth than his real needs.] Rev. 4:10-11, the twenty-four elders throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ. By their crowns

you may understand their gifts, their excellencies, their righteousness; they throw down these before Christ's throne, to note to us, that they did not put confidence in them, and that Christ was the crown of crowns and the top of all their royalty and glory. A humble soul looks upon Christ's righteousness as his only crown.

[3 ] Thirdly, ***The lowest and the most despicable good work, is not below a humble soul.*** A humble **DAVID** will dance before the ark: he enjoyed so much of God in it, that it caused him to leap and dance before it; but Michal his wife despised him for a fool, and counted him as a simple vain fellow, looking upon his behavior as vain and light, and not becoming the might, majesty, and glory of so glorious a prince. Well! says this humble soul, *if this be to be vile, I will be more vile!*

Great **PAUL**—yet being humble and low in his own eyes, he can stoop to do service to the least and lowest saint. 1 Cor. 9:19-22, "Though I am free and belong to no man, *I make myself a slave* to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Ah, says Paul, it is my greatest joy, my greatest delight, to gain souls to Christ. The word *win* signifies craft, or guile Ah! humble Paul will use a holy craft, a holy guile, to win souls. Here you have a humble soul bowing and stooping to the lowest saint, and the lowest services—that he might win souls.

*(To convert one soul is greater than to pour out ten thousand talents into the baskets of the poor. Chrysostom)*

So the Lord **JESUS** himself was famous in this, John 13:4. Though he was the Lord of glory, and one who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, one who had all perfection and fullness in himself—yet the lowest work is not below this King of kings. Witness his washing his disciples' feet and wiping them with a towel, 1 Cor. 2:8; Philip. 2:6; Col. 1:19.

Bonaventure, though he was born of great parentage, and a great scholar—yet to keep his mind from swelling, he would often sweep rooms, wash dishes, and make beds.

So that famous Italian marquee, when God was pleased by the ministry of his word to convert him, the lowest work was not below him. Though he might have lived like a king in his own country—yet having tasted of that life and sweetness which are in Jesus, he was so humble that he would go to market, and carry home the cheapest and the poorest things the market yielded. There was nothing below him, when God had changed him, and humbled him. [Proud hearts cannot stoop to low services; they say this work and that is below their abilities, station, parentage, and employments.]

It was recorded to the glory of some ancient generals, that they were able to call every common soldier by his own name, and were careful to provide money, not only for their captains and soldiers—but litter also for the basest animal. [These heathens will rise in judgment against many proud professors in these days, who scorn to stoop to low services, etc. So it is with all that are high in worth and humble in heart. Lev. 10:2-3, God will be sanctified either actively or passively; either *in us* or *upon us*.] There is not the lowest good work, which is below the humble soul. If the work is good, though ever so low, humility will put a hand to it; but pride will not so much as touch it.

[4.] A fourth property of a humble heart is this, ***A humble heart will submit to every TRUTH of God which is made known to it; even to those divine truths which are most contrary to flesh and blood.*** 1 Sam. 3:17, **Eli** would sincerely know what God had revealed to Samuel concerning him; Samuel tells him that he must break his neck, that the priesthood must be taken away from him, and his sons must be slain in the war. "It is the Lord," says he, "let him do what seems him good."

So in Lev. 10:3, the Lord by fire from heaven destroys **Aaron's** two sons. "But Aaron remained silent." If God misses of his honor one way, he will rain hell out of heaven—but he will have it another way. This Aaron knew, and therefore he remained silent, when God showed himself to be "a

consuming fire." The Hebrew word that is here rendered *silent*, signifies the quietness and silence of his mind. [The word often signifies a modest quietness of mind, the troubled affections being allayed; so here. In Lam. 3:27-29 it signifies to submit unto God, and to be patient in affliction; and so it may be taken here.]

He did not hold his tongue only, for many a man may hold his tongue, and yet his mind and heart may kick and swell against God—but his very mind was quiet and still; there was a heavenly calm in his spirit; he was quiet and silent, because the Lord had done it. So in Acts 10:33, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God." We are not here to hear what may tickle our ears, or please our fancies, or satisfy our lusts. No; but we are here to hear what God will say. Our hearts stand ready pressed to subject themselves to whatever God shall declare to be his will. We are willing to hear what we may do, that we may obey sincerely and universally the good pleasure of our God, knowing that it is as well our dignity as our duty so to do.

There are three things in a humble soul, which do strongly incline it to duty.

The *first* is divine love.

The *second* is divine presence.

The *third* is divine glory.

The dove made use of her wings to fly to the ark; so does a humble soul of his duties to fly to Christ. Though the dove did use her wings—yet she did not trust in her wings—but in the ark. So though a humble soul does use duties—yet he does not trust in his duties—but in his Jesus. But now proud hearts they hate the truth, they cry out, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" And what are his commandments, that we should submit to them? Ay—but a humble soul falls under the power of truth, and counts it his greatest glory to be obedient to all truth.

[5.] A fifth property of a humble soul is this: ***A humble soul lives not upon himself, nor upon his own doings—but upon the Lord***

**Jesus, and his doings.** Poor men, you know, they do not live upon themselves, they live upon others; they live upon the care of others, the love of others, the provision of others. Why thus a humble soul lives upon the care of Christ, the love of Christ, the promise of Christ, the faithfulness of Christ, the discoveries of Christ. He lives upon Christ for his *justification*, Philip. 3:7-10; he lives upon Christ for his *sanctification*. Cant. 4:16, "Awake, O north wind, and come O south wind—blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." And he also lives upon Christ for his consolation: Cant. 2:3, "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." And he lives upon Christ for the performance of all holy actions: Philip. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me;" Gal. 2:20, "I live—yet not I—but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." A humble soul sees in Christ a fullness of abundance, and a fullness of redundancy, and here his soul lives and feeds. A humble soul sees that all his stock of blessings are in the hands of Christ. His stock of graces, his stock of comforts, his stock of experiences are in the hands of Jesus Christ, who is the great Lord and keeper of all a believer's graces, and of all his comforts. And therefore, as children live upon the hand of their parents; so a humble soul sees its stock of blessings are in the hand of the Lord Jesus, and therefore he lives upon Christ—upon his love, and his provision, and his undertakings, etc.

But now proud hearts live not upon the Lord Jesus Christ; they live upon themselves, and upon their own duties, their own righteousness, their own actings, as the Scripture evidences. Christ dwells in that heart most eminently, that has emptied itself of itself. Christ is the humble man's manna, upon which he lives, and by which he thrives, Isaiah 58:2, 7; Luke 7:47.

[6.] A sixth property of a humble soul is this, ***He judges himself to be deserving of the judgments of God.*** [A proud heart resists, and is resisted: flint to flint, fire to fire. A humble soul blesses God as well for crosses as mercies, as well for adversity as for prosperity, as well for frowns as for smiles, etc., because he judges himself unworthy of the least rebukes from God.] A humble soul looks upon himself as one not worthy

that God should spend a rod upon him, in order to his reformation, edification, or salvation. *As I am unworthy, says a humble soul, that God should smile upon me, so I am unworthy that he should spend a frown upon me.* Job 13:25, "Will you break a leaf driven to and fro? And will you pursue the dry stubble?" Why, I am but a leaf, I am but a little dry stubble, I am below your wrath; I am so very, very bad, that I wonder that you should so much as spend a rod upon me. What more weak, worthless, slight, and contemptible than a leaf, than dry stubble? *Why, Lord, says Job, I am a poor, weak, and worthless creature, I wonder that you should take any pains to do me good, I can't but count and call everything a mercy—which is less than I deserve—which is less than hell.*

So David, in 1 Sam. 24:14, "After whom has the King of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea." The language of a humble soul, when God begins to be angry, is this: *Lord, I can bless you who you will take any pains with me; but I humbly acknowledge that I am below the least rod, I am not worthy that you should frown upon me, threaten me, strike me, or whip me, for my internal and eternal good.* But proud hearts think themselves wronged when they are afflicted, they cry out with Cain, "Our punishment is greater than we can bear," Gen. 4:13.

[7.] A seventh property of a humble soul is this, ***A humble soul does highly prize the least of Christ.*** The least smile, the least good word, the least good look, the least truth, the least mercy—is highly valued by a humble soul.

The Canaanite woman in the fifteenth chapter of Matthew sets a high price upon a *crumb* of mercy. [Faith will pick an argument out of a repulse, and turn discouragements into encouragements. Luther would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible; such a price he set upon it, from the sweet that he found in it.] Ah, Lord, says the humble soul, if I may not have a *loaf* of mercy, give me a *piece* of mercy; if not a piece of mercy, give me a *crumb* of mercy. If I may not have sun-light, let me have moon-light; if not moon-light, let me have star-light; if not star-light, let me have candle-light; and for that I will bless you.

In the time of the law, the lowest things that were consecrated for use in the tabernacle were very highly prized—such as leather or wood. A humble soul looks upon all the things of God as consecrated things. Every *truth* of God is a consecrated truth; it is consecrated to holy use, and this causes the soul highly to prize it; and so every *smile* of God, and every *discovery* of God, and every *drop of mercy* from God—is very highly prized by a soul that walks humbly with God. The name of Christ, the voice of Christ, the footsteps of Christ, the least touch of the garment of Christ, the least-regarded truth of Christ, the lowest and least-regarded among the flock of Christ, is highly prized by humble souls that are savingly interested in Christ, Song 1:3; John 10:4-5; Psalm 27:4; Mat. 9:20-21; Acts 24:14; 1 Cor. 9:22. A humble soul cannot, a humble soul dares not, call anything little—which has Christ in it; neither can a humble soul call or count anything great wherein he sees not Christ, wherein he enjoys not Christ. A humble soul highly prizes the least nod, the least love-token, the least courtesy from Christ; but proud hearts count great mercies small mercies, and small mercies no mercies; yes, pride does so unman them, that they often call mercy misery, etc.

[8.] The eighth property of a humble soul is this, ***It can never be good enough, it can never pray enough, nor hear enough, nor mourn enough, nor believe enough, nor love enough, nor fear enough, nor joy enough, nor repent enough, nor loathe sin enough, nor be humble enough, etc.***

Humble Paul looks upon his greatness—all as nothing at all; he forgets those things which are behind, and reaches forth to those things which are before, "that if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," Philip. 3:11-14; that is, that perfection of holiness which the dead shall attain unto in the morning of the resurrection. [It signifies the straining of the whole body, a stretching out head and hands, as runners in a race do to lay hold on the prize, Psalm 10:17. It signifies so to desire and long after a thing as to have one's teeth water at it; so in Micah 7:1. But proud hearts sit down and pride themselves, and bless themselves, as if they had attained to much, when they have attained to nothing which can raise them above the lowest step of misery.]

No holiness below that matchless, peerless, spotless, perfect holiness that

saints shall have in the glorious day of Christ's appearing, will satisfy the humble soul. A humble heart is an aspiring heart; he cannot be contented to get up some rounds in Jacob's ladder—but he must get to the very top of the ladder, to the very top of holiness. A humble heart cannot be satisfied with so much grace as will bring him to glory, with so much of heaven as will keep him from dropping into hell; he is still crying out, *Give, Lord, give; give me more of yourself, more of your Son, more of your Spirit; give me more light, more life, more love, etc.* Caesar in warlike matters minded more what was to conquer than what was already conquered; what was to gain than what was already gained. So does a humble soul mind more what he should be—than what he is; what is to be done—than what has been done. Truly heaven is for that man, and that man is for heaven, that sets up for his mark the perfection of holiness.

Poor men are full of desires; they are often a-sighing it out, *Oh that we had bread to strengthen us, drink to refresh us, clothes to cover us, friends to visit us, and houses to shelter us, etc.* So souls that are spiritually poor they are often a-sighing it out, *Oh that we had more of Christ to strengthen us, more of Christ to refresh us, more of Christ to be a covering and shelter to us, etc.*

*I had rather, says the humble soul, be a poor man and a rich Christian, than a rich man and a poor Christian. Lord, says the humble soul, I had rather do anything, I had rather bear anything, I had rather be anything, than to be a dwarf in grace, Rev. 3:17, Isaiah 65:5, Luke 18:11-12.*

The light and glory of humble Christians rises by degrees: Cant. 6:1, (1.) Looking forth as the morning, with a little light; (2.) Fair as the moon, more light; (3.) Clear as the sun—*that is* come up to a higher degree of spiritual light, life, and glory. Lord, says the humble soul, give me much grace, and then a little gold will serve my turn; give me much of heaven, and little of earth will content me; give me much of the springs above, and a little of the springs below will satisfy me, etc.

[9.] The ninth property of a humble soul is this, ***It will smite and strike at small sins as well as for great; for those things which the world counts no sin, as well as for those who they count***

## ***gross sins.***

When David had but cut off the hem of Saul's garment, his heart smote him as if he had cut off his head. The Hebrew word signifies to smite, wound, or chastise. [1 Sam. 24:5, A good man's heart, when kindly awakened, may smite him for those actions which at first he judged very prudent and correct. How great a pain, not to be borne, comes from the prick of this small thorn! Little sins have put several to their wits' ends, when they have been set home upon their consciences.] Ah! his heart struck him, his heart chastised him, his heart wounded him for cutting off Saul's skirt, though he did it upon noble grounds, namely, to convince Saul of his false jealousies, and to evidence his own innocency and integrity. And so, at another time, his heart smote him for numbering the people—as if he had murdered the people: 2 Sam. 24:10, "And David's heart smote him, after that he had numbered the people; and David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done: and now I beseech you, O Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

A humble soul knows that little sins, if I may so call any, cost Christ his blood; and that they make way for greater sins; and that little sins multiplied become great, as a little sum multiplied is great. He knows that little sins—cloud the face of God, wound conscience, grieve the Spirit, rejoice Satan, and make work for repentance, etc. A humble soul knows that little sins are very dangerous. A little leaven leavens the whole lump; a little blow may kill one; a little poison may poison another; a little leak in a ship sinks it; a little fly in the box of ointment spoils it; a little flaw in a good project mars it—so a little sin may at once bar the door of heaven and open the gates of hell; and therefore a humble soul smites and upbraids itself for the least as well as the greatest sins. Though a head of garlic be little—yet it will poison the leopard, though he be great. Though a mouse is but little—yet it will kill an elephant, if he gets up into his trunk. Though the scorpion be little—yet it will sting a lion to death; and so will the least sin, if not pardoned by the death of Christ.

A proud heart counts great sins small, and small sins no sins—and so disarms conscience for a time of its whipping and wounding power; but at death, or in hell, conscience will take up an iron rod, with which it will

lash the sinner forever; and then, though too late, the sinner shall acknowledge his little sins to be very great, and his great sins to be exceeding grievous and odious, etc.

[10.] The tenth property of a humble soul is this, ***It will quietly bear burdens, and patiently take blows and knocks, and make no noise.*** A humble soul sees God through man; he sees God through all the actions and behaviors of men: "I was silent," says the prophet, I opened not my mouth, because You are the one who has done this." A humble soul looks through secondary causes, and sees the hand of God—and then lays his own hand upon his mouth. A humble soul is a mute soul, a tongue-tied soul—when he looks through secondary causes to the supreme cause. So **Aaron**, when he saw his sons suddenly surprised by a dreadful and doleful death, he remained silent, he bridled his passions; he sits silent under a terrible stroke of divine justice, because the fire that devoured them went out from the Lord. So when Samuel had told **Eli** that God would judge his house forever, and that he had sworn that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever, "It is the Lord," says Eli, "let him do what seems good unto him." Eli humbly and patiently lays his neck upon the block—*it is the Lord; let him strike, let him kill*, etc., says Eli, 1 Sam. 3:11, 13.

So **David**, when Shimei manifested his desperate fury and folly, malice and madness, in raving and raging at him, in cursing and reproaching of him, says he, "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him," 2 Sam. 16:5, 10. *God, says he, will, by his wise providence, turn his cursing into blessing. I see the justice of God in his cursing, therefore let him alone, let him curse*, says David.

Cassianus reports, that when a certain Christian was held captive by the infidels, and tormented by many pains and ignominious taunts, being demanded, by way of scorn and reproach, *Tell us what Christ has done for you*, answered—*He has done what you see, that I am not moved at all the cruelties and contumelies you cast upon me.*

So that blessed martyr, Gyles of Brussels, whenever the friars abused him—he ever remained silent, insomuch that those wretches would say abroad that he had a dumb devil in him. Full vessels will bear many a

knock, many a stroke, and yet make no noise. So Christians who are full of Christ, who are full of the Spirit—will bear many a knock, many a stroke—and yet make no noise.

A humble soul may *groan* under afflictions—but he will not *grumble* in calms. Proud hearts *discourse* about patience—but in storms humble hearts *exercise* patience. Philosophers have much *commended* patience—but in the hour of darkness it is the humble soul who *acts* patient. I am *afflicted*, says the humble soul—but it is mercy I am not *destroyed*. I am fallen into the pit—but it is free grace that I have not fallen into hell. God is too just to wrong me, and too gracious to harm me; and therefore I will be still and quiet, let him do what he will with me, says the humble soul.

But proud souls resist when they are resisted, they strike when they are stricken, Isaiah 58:1-3: "Who is the Lord," says lofty Pharaoh, "that I should obey him?" and Cain cries out, "My punishment is greater than I am able to bear." Well! remember this: though it be not easy in afflictions and tribulations to remain quiet and silent—yet it is very advantageous; which the heathens seemed to imitate in placing the image of Angerona [goddess of silence], with the mouth bound upon the altar of Volupia [goddess of pleasure], to show that those who do prudently and humbly conceal their sorrows and anxieties by patience, shall attain comfort and refreshment.

[11.] The eleventh property of a humble soul is this: ***in all religious duties and services, he trades with God upon the credit of Christ.*** [John 14:13, and 15:16, and 16:23, 26. *The name of Jesus has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it, says Chrysostom; and is therefore used by Paul five hundred times, as some have reckoned.*] Lord, says the humble soul, I need *power* against such and such sins: give it to me upon the credit of Christ's blood. I need *strength* to such and such services: give it to me upon the credit of Christ's word. I need such and such *mercies* for my cheering, refreshing, quickening, and strengthening: give them into my bosom upon the credit of Christ's intercession. As a poor man lives and deals upon the credits of others, so does a humble soul live and deal with God for the strengthening of every grace, and for the supply of every mercy—upon the credit of the Lord Jesus. A humble soul knows that since he broke with God in innocency, God will trust him

no more, he will take his word no more; and therefore when he goes to God for mercy, he brings his *Benjamin*, his Jesus, in his arms, and pleads for mercy upon the account of Jesus.

Plutarch reports that it was accustomed to be the way of the Molossians, when they would seek the favor of their prince, they took up the king's son in their arms, and so went and kneeled before the king, and by this means overcame him. So do humble souls make a conquest upon God with Christ in their arms. The Father will not give that soul the repulse, who brings Christ in his arms. The humble soul knows that outside of Christ—God is incommunicable; that outside of Christ—God is incomprehensible; that outside of Christ—God is very dreadful; and that outside of Christ—God is inaccessible; and therefore he still brings Christ with him, and presents all his requests in his name, and so prevails, etc. Oh! but proud souls deal with God upon the credit of their own worthiness, righteousness, services, prayers, tears, fastings, etc., as the proud Pharisees and those wrangling hypocrites in Isaiah 58:1-3.

It was a very proud saying of one, I will not have heaven but at a price; and therefore vain-glory is well called a pleasant thief, and the sweet spoiler of spiritual excellencies.

[12.] The twelfth property of a humble soul is this: ***it endeavors more how to honor and glorify God in afflictions—than how to get out of afflictions.*** So Daniel, the three children, the apostles, and those worthies of whom this world was not worthy. They were not anxious about getting *out* of affliction—but studious how to glorify God *in* their afflictions. They were willing to be anything, and to bear anything—so that in everything God might be glorified. They made it their business to glorify God in the fire, in the prison, in the den, on the rack, and under the sword, etc. *Lord*, says the humble soul, *do but keep down my sins, and keep up my heart in a way of honoring of you under all my troubles—and then my troubles will be no troubles, my afflictions will be no afflictions. Though my burdens be doubled, and my troubles be multiplied—yet do but help me to honor you by believing in you, by waiting on you, and by submitting to you—and I shall sing care away, and shall say—It is enough.*

When Valens the emperor sent messengers to win Eusebius to heresy by fair words and large promises, he answered, *Alas, sir! these speeches are fit to catch little children who are concerned about such things—but we who are taught and nourished by the holy Scriptures are readier to suffer a thousand deaths than to allow one syllable or tittle of the Scripture to be altered.* And when the emperor threatened to confiscate his goods, to torment him, to banish him, or to kill him, he answered, *He need not fear confiscation—who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his only country; nor torments, when his body will be dashed with one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow. [Happy is that soul, and to be equaled with angels, who is willing to suffer, if it were possible, as great things for Christ—as Christ has suffered for it, said Jerome.]*

Oh! but when a proud man is under troubles and afflictions, his head and heart are full of plots and projects how to get off his chains, and to get out of the furnace, etc. A proud heart will say anything, and do anything, and be anything—to free himself from the burdens which press him, as you see in Pharaoh, etc.; but a humble soul is willing to bear the cross as long as he can get strength from heaven to kiss the cross, to bless God for the cross, and to glorify God under the cross, etc., John 1:20-21.

[13.] The thirteenth property of a humble soul is this: ***it seeks not, it looks not, after great things.*** A little will satisfy **nature**, less will satisfy **grace**; but nothing will satisfy a **proud man's lusts**. *Lord, says the humble soul, if you will but give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, you shall be my God, Gen. 28:20-22. Let the men of the world, says the humble soul, take the world in all its greatness and glory, and divide it among themselves. Let me have much of Christ and heaven in my heart, and food convenient to support my life—and it shall be enough.* Job 22:29, "When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person;" or as the Hebrew has it, *him who has low eyes*, noting to us that a humble soul looks not after high things. So in Psalm 131:1-2, "Lord, my heart is not haughty nor my eyes lofty." But how do you know that, David? *Why*, says he, "I do not exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high, or too wonderful for me. Surely I behaved and quieted myself." "My soul is as a child that is

weaned of his mother. My soul is even as a weaned child." As a great shoe fits not a little foot, nor a great sail a little ship, nor a great ring a little finger—so a great estate fits not a humble soul.

It was a prudent speech of that Indian king Taxiles to the invading Alexander: What should we need, said he, to fight and make war one with another, if you come not to take away our water and our necessities by which we must live? As for other goods, if I am richer than you, I am ready to give you what is mine; and if I have less, I will thank you if you will give me some of yours. Oh! but proud Absalom can't be content to be the king's son, unless he may have the crown presently from his father's head. Caesar can abide no superior, nor Pompey an equal. **A proud soul is content with nothing.**

A crown could not content Ahab—but he must have Naboth's vineyard, though he swim to it in blood. Diogenes had more contentment with his hut to shelter him from the weather, and with his wooden dish to eat and drink in—than Alexander had with the conquest of half the world, and the enjoyment of all the treasures, pleasures, and glories of Asia. So a humble soul is more contented and satisfied with Daniel's vegetables and John's clothes made of camel's hair—than proud princes are with their glistening crowns and golden scepters.

[14.] The fourteenth property of a humble soul is this: ***it can rejoice in the graces and gracious actings of others, as well as in its own.*** A humble Moses could say when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them all!" Num. 11:26-30. So humble Paul in Acts 26:29, "And Paul said, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains." I heartily wish and pray for your own sake, that not only in a low but in an eminent, degree, both you and all that are here present, were as far Christians as I am; only I would not wish them imprisoned as I am.

A humble soul is no churl. There is no envy in spiritual things; one may have as much of spirituals as another, and all alike. So in 1 Thes. 1:2-3, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of

love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." So in the 2 Epistle 1:2-4, "Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring."

Ezekiel can commend Daniel, his contemporary, matching him with Noah and Job, for his power in prayer; and Peter highly praises Paul's epistles, though he had been sharply reprov'd in one of them, Ezek. 14:14, 2 Peter 3, etc. Oh! but proud souls will be still a-casting disgrace and contempt upon those excellencies in others, which they lack in themselves.

A proud cardinal, in Luther's time, said, Indeed, a reformation is needful, and to be desired—but that Luther, a rascally friar, should be the man should do it, is intolerable. [Attributed to Cardinal Cajetan.] Pride is like certain flies, called *cantharides*, who especially consume the fairest wheat and the most beautiful roses.

Though Licinius was so ignorant that he could not write his own name—yet he called *education* a public poison.

This age is full of such monsters who envy every light which outshines their own, and who throw dirt upon the graces and excellencies of others—that only themselves may shine. Pride is renowned both at subtraction and at multiplication. A proud heart always prizes himself above the market; he reckons his own pence for pounds, and others' pounds for pence; he looks upon his own counters as gold, and upon others' gold as counters. All pearls are counterfeit but those which he wears.

[15.] The fifteenth property of a humble soul is, ***he will rather bear wrongs—than revenge wrongs offered.*** The humble soul knows that vengeance is the Lord's, and that he will repay, etc., Psalm 94:1. The humble soul loves not to take the sword in his own hand, Romans 12:19; he knows the day is a-coming, wherein the Lord will give his enemies two blows for one, and here he rests. A humble soul, when wrongs are offered,

is like a man with a sword in one hand and a salve in the other—he could wound, but will heal: Psalm 35:11-16, "Malicious witnesses testify against me. They accuse me of things I don't even know about. They repay me with evil for the good I do. I am sick with despair. Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them. I even fasted and prayed for them, but my prayers returned unanswered. I was sad, as though they were my friends or family, as if I were grieving for my own mother. But they are glad now that I am in trouble; they gleefully join together against me. I am attacked by people I don't even know; they hurl slander at me continually." The Scripture abounds in instances of this nature. [I may truly say of the humble soul what Tully said of Caesar, that he forgot nothing but injuries. Julius Caesar, in whose time Christ was born, bid Catullus, the railing poet, to supper, to show that he had forgiven him.

Dionysius having treated Plato poorly at the court, when he was gone, fearing lest he should write against him, he sent after him to bid him not to write against him. Replied Plato, "Tell Dionysius that I have not so much time as to think of him." So humble wronged souls have no time to think of the wrongs and injuries that others do them.

Mr. Foxe, who wrote the Book of Martyrs, would be sure to do him a kindness—who had done him an injury: so that it used to be a proverb, "If a man would have Mr. Foxe do him a kindness, let him do him an injury." A humble soul is often in looking over the wrongs and injuries that he has done to God, and the sweet and tender treatment of God towards him notwithstanding those wrongs and injuries; and this wins him, and works him to be more willing and ready to bear wrongs, and forgive wrongs, than to revenge any offered wrongs.

[16.] The sixteenth property of a humble soul is this, ***A humble soul, though he be of ever so rare abilities—yet he will not disdain to be taught what he knows not, by the lowest people***, Isaiah 11:6. A child shall lead the humble soul in the way that is good; he cares not how low and contemptible the person is, if a guide or an instructor to him.

Apollos, "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scripture," a master in Israel, and yet sits by an Aquila, a tent-maker, and Priscilla his wife, to be

instructed by them, Acts 18:24-26. Sometimes the poorest and the lowest Christian may, for counsel and comfort, be a good to another, as Moses was to Aaron. As a humble soul knows that the stars have their situation in heaven, though sometimes he sees them by their reflection in a puddle, in the bottom of a well, or in a stinking ditch; so he knows that godly souls, though ever so poor, low, and contemptible, as to the things of this world, are fixed in heaven, in the region above; and therefore their poverty and baseness is no bar to hinder him from learning of them, Eph. 2:6.

Though John was poor in the world—yet many humble souls did not disdain—but rejoice in his ministry. Christ lived poor and died poor, Mat. 8:20. As he was born in another man's house, so he was buried in another man's tomb. Austin observes, when Christ died he made no will; he had no crown-lands, only his coat was left, and that the soldiers parted among them; and yet those who were meek and lowly in heart counted it their heaven, their happiness, to be taught and instructed by him.

[17.] The seventeenth property of a humble soul is this: ***a humble soul will bless God, and be thankful to God, as well under misery as under mercy; as well when God frowns as when he smiles; as well when God takes as when he gives; as well under crosses and losses, as under blessings and mercies.*** [Tully calls gratitude the greatest, yes, the mother of all virtues.] Job 1:21, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes—blessed be the name of the Lord." He does not cry out upon the Sabeans and the Chaldeans—but he looks through all secondary causes, and sees the hand of God; and then he lays his hand upon his own heart, and sweetly sings it out, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes—blessed be the name of the Lord."

A humble soul, in every condition, blesses God, as the apostle commands, in the 1 Thes. 5:18, "In *everything* give thanks to God." So 1 Cor. 4:12, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer." The language of a humble soul is, If it be your will that I should be in darkness—I will bless you; and if it be your will that I should be again in light—I will bless you; if you will comfort me—I will bless you; and if you will afflict me—I will bless you; if you will make me poor—I will bless you; if you will make me rich—I will bless you; if you will give me the least mercy—I will bless you;

if you will give me no mercy—I will bless you. A humble soul is quick-sighted; he sees the rod in a *Father's* hand; he sees honey upon the top of every correcting rod—and so can bless God; he sees sugar at the bottom of the bitterest cup which God puts into his hand; he knows that God's house of *correction* is a school of *instruction*; and so he can sit down and bless when the rod is upon his back.

A humble soul knows that the design of God in all is his *instruction*, his *reformation*, and his *salvation*. [The Jews have a proverb, that we must leap up to mount Gerizim, which was a mount of blessings; but creep into mount Ebal, which was a mount of curses: to show that we must be ready to bless—but backward to curse. A humble soul can extract one contrary out of another, honey out of the rock, gold out of iron, etc. Afflictions to humble souls are the Lord's plough, the Lord's harrow, the Lord's flail, the Lord's drawing-plaster, the Lord's pruning knife, the Lord's potion, the Lord's soap; and therefore they can sit down and bless the Lord, and kiss the rod.]

It was a sweet saying of holy Bradford, If the queen will give me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her. Ay, this is the temper of a humble heart. A humble soul knows, that to bless God in *prosperity* is the way to increase it; and to bless God in *adversity* is the way to remove it. A humble soul knows, that if he blesses God under *mercies*—he has paid his debt; but if he blesses God under *crosses*—he has made God a debtor. But oh, the pride of men's hearts, when the rod is upon their backs! You have many professors who are *seemingly* humble while the sun shines, while God gives, and smiles, and strokes; but when his smiles are turned into frowns, when he strikes and disciplines—oh the murmurings! the disputings! the frettings! and wranglings of proud souls! they always kick when God strikes.

[18.] The last property of a humble soul is this: ***a humble soul will wisely and patiently bear reproof.*** Proverbs 25:12, "As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold—so is a wise reprove upon an obedient ear." A seasonable reproof falling upon a humble soul has a redoubled grace with it. It is an earring of gold, and as an ornament of fine gold, or as a diamond in a diadem.

A humble David can say, "Let the righteous smite me—it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me—it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head," Psalm 141:5. David compares the faithful reproof of the righteous, to the excellent oil which they used on their heads. Some translate it, "Let it never cease from my head." That is, let me never lack it, and so the original will bear too, I would never lack reproofs, whatever I lack: "But yet my prayer shall be in their calamities." I will requite their reproofs with my best prayers in the day of their calamity, says David. Whereas a proud heart will neither pray for such as reprove them—but in their calamities will most insult over them. [Oil is here metaphorically taken for words of reproof, which may be said figuratively to break the head.]

Some translate it more emphatically: "The more they do, the more I shall think myself bound unto them." And this was Gerson's disposition, of whom it is recorded, that he rejoiced in nothing more than if he were freely and friendly reprov'd by any: Proverbs 9:8-9, "Rebuke a wise man—and he will love you; give instruction to a wise man—and he will be yet wiser." Proverbs 19:25, "Reprove one who has understanding—and he will understand knowledge." You know how sweetly David carries it towards Abigail, 1 Sam. 25:32-33; she wisely meets him, and puts him in mind of what he was going about, and he falls a-blessing of her presently: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your advice, and blessed be you which have kept me this day from coming to shed blood." I was resolved in my passion, and in the heat of my spirit, that I would not leave a man alive—but blessed be God, and blessed be your counsel!

A humble soul can sit down and bless God under reproofs. A humble soul is like the Scythian king, who went naked in the snow, and when Alexander wondered how he could endure it, he answered, "I am all forehead." A humble soul is all forehead—able to bear reproofs with much wisdom and patience. Oh! but a proud heart cannot bear reproofs, he scorns the reprover and his reproofs too. [Manasseh, king of Judah, at the age of eighteen, being reprov'd by the aged princely prophet Isaiah, caused him to be sawn in half with a wooden saw; for which cruel act, among his other sins, he was sorely punished by God, 2 Chron. 33:11. So

Cambyzes, king of Persia, hated Praxaspes, one of his nobles, for reproving his drunkenness.]

Proverbs 15:12, "A mocker resents correction; he will not consult the wise." Amos 5:10, "How you hate honest judges! How you despise people who tell the truth!" as Ahab hated good Micaiah, and Herod did John Baptist, and the Pharisees hated our Savior, Luke 16:13. Christ, in his dealings with the covetous Scribes and Pharisees, lays the law home, and tells them plainly that they could not serve God and mammon. Here Christ strikes at their right eye; but how do they hear this? Mark in the 14th verse, "The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him." The Pharisees did not simply laugh at Christ—but gave also external signs of scorn in their countenance and gestures. They blew their nose at him, for that is the meaning of the original word. By their gestures they demonstrated their horrid deriding of him; they fleared and jeered, when they should have feared and trembled at the wrath to come: Isaiah 28:10, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." One observes, that that was a scoff put upon the prophet, and is as if they should say, Here is nothing but precept upon precept, line upon line. And, indeed, the very sound of the words in the original carries a taunt, *zau le zau, kau lakau*, as scornful people, by the tone of their voice and rhyming words, scorn at such as they despise. Pride and passion, and other vices, in these days go armed; touch them ever so gently—yet, like the nettle, they will sting you; and if you deal with them openly, roughly, cuttingly, as the apostle speaks, they will swagger with you, as the Hebrew did with Moses: "Who made you a judge over us?" Exod. 2:13-14. And thus much for the properties of a humble soul.

**III.** I come now to the next thing, and that is, to show you **the reasons why the best men are the most humble men.**

[1.] First, ***Because they see themselves the greatest debtors to God for what they do enjoy.***

There is no man on earth who sees himself such a debtor to God—as the humble man. Every *smile* makes him a debtor to God, and every *good word* from heaven makes him a debtor to God. He looks upon all his

*temporal mercies*, as health, wealth, wife, child, friend, etc., and sees himself deeply indebted for all. He looks upon his *spiritual mercies*, and sees himself a great debtor to God for them; he looks upon his *graces*, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon his *experiences*, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon all his *privileges*, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon all his blessings, and sees himself a debtor for them.

A humble soul sees himself so much in debt for mercies in hand, and mercies in hope—that he cannot sleep without blessing and admiring of God. The more mercy he has received, the more he looks upon himself indebted and obliged to pay duty and tribute to God. Says he, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" I see myself, says he, wonderfully indebted; well, what then? why, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the presence of all his people." The same you have in the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the same psalm.

So David, "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Psalms 103:1-5. A humble soul knows, that it is proud of being more in debt than another. It is true, says he, I have this and that mercy in possession, and such and such mercies in reversion; but by all, I am the more a debtor to God. Humble souls cast the pearl of praise into the bosom of God for all his favors towards them.

Caesar wondered at that mindless and careless soldier, who was very much in debt and yet slept so quietly. So does a humble soul wonder to see men that are so much indebted to God for mercies, as many are, and yet sleep so quietly, and be so mindless and careless in blessing and praising of God. *There is nothing, says one, which endures so small a time—as the memory of mercies received; and the more great they are, the more commonly they are recompensed with ingratitude.*

[2.] Secondly, ***It is because in this life they have but a taste of***

## **God.**

In the 1 Pet. 2:2-3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby; if so be you have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious." The best men on this side heaven have but a taste; he is but in a tasting, desiring, hungering, thirsting, and growing condition: Job 26:14, "These are part of his ways—but how little a portion is heard of him!" So in 1 Cor. 13:9-10, 12, "We know but in part, and we prophesy but in part; now we see through a glass darkly—but then face to face." The Lord gives out but little of himself here, we have but a taste of divine sweetness here, we see but the back-parts of God; but the day is not far off when we shall see his face. The best of Christ is reserved until last—as the sweetest honey lies in the bottom. Our greatest knowledge here is to know that we know nothing.

The Rabbis in their comments upon Scripture, when they meet with hard knots that they cannot explain, they solve all with this, "When Elijah comes, he will resolve all things." The best men are in the dark, and will be in the dark—until the Lord comes to shine forth upon them in more grace and glory. The best men on this side heaven are narrow vessels: they are able to receive and take in but little of God. The best men are so full of the world, and the vanities thereof, that they are able to take in but little of God. Here God gives his people *some tastes*, that they may not faint; and he gives them *but a taste*, that they may long to be at their eternal home, that they may keep humble, that they may sit loose from things below, that they may not break and despise bruised reeds, and that heaven may be the more sweet to them at last, etc.

[3.] A third reason why the best men are the most humble, and that is, ***because the best men dwell more upon their worser part, their ignoble part—than they do upon their noble part, their better part.***

In Isaiah 6:5, "I am a man of unclean lips," says that humble soul. So humble Job cries out of the iniquity of his youth, Job 13:26, 40:5. Humble David, Psalm 51:3, sighs it out, "My sin is ever before me." So humble Paul, Romans 7:22-23, complains, that he "has a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and leading him captive to

the law of sin;" and that, "when he would do good, evil was present with him." A humble soul sees that he can stay no more from sin than the lungs can from breathing, and the pulse from beating; he sees his heart and life to be fuller of sin, than the sky is of stars; and this keeps him humble. He sees that sin is so bred in the bone, that until his bones, as Joseph's, be carried out of the Egypt of this world, it will remain. He every day finds that these Jebusites and Canaanites are as thorns in his eyes, and as goads in his sides. He finds sin an ill inhabitant, which he cannot get rid of, until the house is destroyed; as the fretting leprosy, in the walls of the house, would remain until the house itself was demolished. [As Hagar would dwell with Sarah until she beat her out of doors, so will sin dwell with grace until death beats it out of doors.] Though sin and grace were never born together, and though they shall not die together; yet while the believer lives, these two must live together; and this keeps them humble.

As the peacock, looking upon his black feet, lets fall his plumes—so the poor soul, when he looks upon his black feet, the vanity of his mind, the body of sin that is in him—his proud spirit falls low.

Epaminondas, an Athenian captain, being asked why he was so sad the day after a great victory, answered, "Yesterday I was tickled with much vain-glory, therefore I correct myself for it today." That is the temper of a humble soul. It is very observable, that the saints are pressed to take notice of their better part: Cant. 1:15, "Behold you are fair my love, behold you are fair." And so, chapter 4:1, "Behold you are fair, behold you are fair." God has much ado to get a gracious heart to mind his spiritual beauty; to take notice of the inward excellency that he has wrought in it. Though "the king's daughter is all glorious within," yet God has much ado to bring her to see and take notice of her inward beauty and glory. **The humble soul is more set to eye and dwell upon its deformity—than it is upon that beauty and glory that God has stamped upon it. And this makes the man little and low in his own eyes.**

[4.] Fourthly, ***Because they have the clearest sight and vision of God, and have the nearest and highest communion with God.*** None on earth are so near to God, and so high in their communion with God—as humble souls. And as they have the clearest visions of God—so

God gives them the fullest sight and knowledge of their own sinfulness and nothingness. So in **Job** 42:5-6, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear—but now my eye has seen you, *I abhor myself* in dust and ashes." **Isaiah** 6:1, 5, In a vision the Lord discovers his glory to the prophet, then verse 5, "Woe is me!" says he, "for *I am undone*;" or "I am cut off," why? "Because I am a man of unclean lips; and have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Oh, the vision that I have had of the glory of God has given me such a clear and full sight of my own vileness and baseness, that I cannot but loathe and abhor myself. When **Abraham** draws near to God, then he accounts himself but *dust and ashes*, Gen. 18:26-27. The **angels** that are near God, that stand before him, in humility they cover their faces with two wings, as with a double scarf, in the 6th of Isaiah ver. 2.

[5.] The fifth, and last reason why those are most humble that are most holy is, ***because they maintain in themselves a holy fear of sinning.*** [As the sunshine puts out fire, so does the fear of God put out the fire of lusts.]

And the more this holy fear of falling is maintained, the more the soul is humbled. Proverbs 14:16, "A wise man fears—and departs from evil;" and chapter 28:14, "Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble." And this keeps the holy soul humble.

I have known a good old man, says Bernard, who when he had heard of any who had committed some notorious offence, was accustomed to say with himself, *He fell today—so may I tomorrow*. Now, the reason why humble souls do keep up in themselves a holy fear of falling, is because this is the best to keep them from falling. Job fears—and conquers on the ash-heap; Adam presumes—and falls in paradise; Nehemiah fears—and stands, Neh. 5:15; Peter presumes—and falls, Mat. 26:69, *seq.*; Mr. Sanders the martyr, in Queen Mary's days, fears and stands; Dr. Pendleton presumes, and falls from a professor to be a papist.

When Agamemnon said, *What should the conqueror fear?* Casander presently answered, *He should fear this most of all, that he fears not at all.*

And so I have done with the reasons of the point. I shall now come to:

#### IV. The USES of it.

[1.] Is it so, that the most holy souls are the most humble souls? Then this shows you, ***that the number of holy souls is very few***. Oh, how few be there that are low in their own eyes! The number of souls that are high in the esteem of God, and low in their own esteem—are very few. Oh, the pride of England! Oh, the pride of London! Pride in these days has a whore's forehead; yet pride cannot climb so high, but justice will sit above her.

Bernard says, that pride is the *rich* man's cousin. I may add, and the *poor* man's cousin, and the *profane* man's cousin, and the *civil* man's cousin, and the *formal* man's cousin, and the *hypocrite's* cousin; yes, *all men's* cousin; and it will sooner or later cast down and cast out all the Lucifers and Adams in the world.

[2.] Secondly, ***As you would approve yourselves to be high in the account of God, as you would approve yourselves to be not only good—but eminently good, keep humble***. Since England was England, since the gospel shined among us, there was never such reason to press this duty of humility, as in these days of pride wherein we live; and therefore I shall endeavor these two things:

*First*, To lay down some **motives** which may work you to be humble. *Secondly*, To propound some **directions** which may further you in this work of humility.

*First*, For the **MOTIVES** which may work you to be humble, Consider,

(1.) *First*, ***How God singles out humble souls from all others, to pour out most of the oil of grace into their hearts.***

No vessels that God delights to fill—like broken vessels, like contrite spirits: James 4:6, "He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." The Greek word for *resists* signifies, to set himself in battle array. God is in battle array against a proud soul—but he gives grace to the humble. The silver dews flow down from the mountains to the lowest valleys. Abraham was but dust and ashes in his own eyes; ay—but says God,

"Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?" Gen. 18:17. No; I will not. A humble soul shall be both of God's court and his counsel too. Humble Jacob, who was in his own eyes less than the least of all mercies, Gen. 32:10—what a glorious vision he had of God, when the ground was his bed, and the stone his pillow, and the hedges his curtains, and the heavens his canopy; then he saw angels ascend and descend, Gen. 28.

A humble soul who lies low, oh what sights of God has he! What glory does he behold, when the proud soul sees nothing! God pours in grace to the humble, as men pour in liquor into an empty vessel. He does not *drop* in grace into a humble heart—but he *pours* it in. [He who is in the low pits and caves of the earth sees the stars in the sky, when they who are upon the tops of the mountains discern them not.]

The altar under the law was hollow, to receive the fire, the wood, and the sacrifice; so the hearts of men, under the gospel, must be humble, empty of all spiritual pride and self-conceitedness, that so they may receive the fire of the Spirit, and Jesus Christ, who offered himself for a sacrifice for our sins.

Humility is both a grace, and a vessel to receive grace. There are none who see so much need of grace—as humble souls. There are none who prize grace—like humble souls. There are none who improve grace—like humble souls. Therefore God singles out the humble soul to fill him to the brim with grace—when the proud is sent empty away.

(2.) A second motive is, ***of all garments, humility does best befit Christians, and most adorn their profession.***

*Faith* is the champion of grace, and *love* the nurse grace—but *humility* the beauty of grace: 1 Peter 5:5, "Be clothed with humility." The Greek word imports that humility is the ribbon or string which ties together all those precious pearls—the rest of the graces. If this string breaks—they are all scattered.

The Greek word that is rendered *clothed*, comes from another Greek word that signifies to *knit*, and *tie knots*, as nimble women used to do, of ribbons, to adorn their heads and bodies—as if humility were the knot of

every virtue, the grace of every grace. Chrysostom calls humility the root, mother, nurse, foundation, and "bond of all virtue." Basil calls it "the storehouse and treasury of all good." **For what is the scandal and reproach of religion at this day? Nothing more than the pride of professors.** Is not this the language of most? They are great professors, Oh but very proud! They are great hearers, they will run from sermon to sermon, and cry up this man, and cry up that man, Oh but proud! They are great talkers, Oh but as proud as the devil! etc. Oh that you would take the counsel of the apostle, "Be clothed with humility"; and that Col. 3:12, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." No robes compared to these. [It is reported of the crystal, that it has such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a luster and beauty upon them. So does humility put a luster upon every grace.]

(3.) The third motive is this, ***humility is a magnet which draws both the heart of God and man to it.***

In Isaiah 57:15, "Thus says the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." The Lord singles out the humble soul of all others, to make him an habitation for himself. Here is a wonder! God is on high; and yet the higher a man lifts up himself, the farther he is from God; and the lower a man humbles himself, the nearer he is to God. Of all souls, God delights most to dwell with the humble, for they do most prize and best improve his precious presence.

In Proverbs 29:23, "A man's pride shall bring him low—but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit." Proverbs 22:4, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor," etc. The Hebrew is, "The heel of humility." Riches and honor follow humility at the very heels. One of the ancients used to say that **humility is the first, second, and third grace of a Christian.** Humility is a very drawing grace; it draws men to think well and speak well of Christ, the gospel, and the people of God; it makes the very world to say, Ay, these are Christians indeed; they are full of light, and yet full of lowliness; they are high in worth, and yet humble in heart. Oh, these are the crown and the glory of religion.

A humble soul is like the violet, which by its fragrant smell, draws the eye and the hearts of others to him. Mat. 18:4, "They are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." He who is least in his own account is always greatest in God's, and in godly men's account.

(4.) The fourth motive is this, ***consider all the world cannot keep him up—who does not humble and keep down his own spirit.***

One asked a philosopher, what God was a-doing? He answered, "That his whole work was to lift up the humble, and to cast down the proud." That man cannot possibly be kept up, whose spirit is not kept down, as you may clearly see in Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, and Nebuchadnezzar; all the world could not keep them up, because their spirit was not kept down.

Proverbs 29:27, "A man's pride shall bring him low;" for it sets God against him, and angels against him, and men against him; yes, even those who are as proud as himself. It is very observable, that whereas one drunkard loves another, one swearer loves another, and one thief loves another, and one unclean person loves another, etc.—yet one proud person cannot endure another—but seeks to undermine him, that he alone may carry the commendations, the praise, the promotion. It is storied of the Romans, that were the proudest people on the earth, that they reckoned it as a parcel of their praise—that they brought down the proud. All the world, sirs, will not keep up those people who do not keep down their spirits. [Dionysius, a proud king of Sicily, fell from a king—to a schoolmaster. Proud Valerian, the Roman emperor, fell from being an emperor to be a footstool to Sapor, king of Persia, as oft as he mounted his horse. Henry the Fourth, emperor, in sixty-two battles, had generally the better—and yet was deposed, and driven to that misery, that he desired only a clerkship in a house at Spira, that he himself had built. History is full of such instances.]

And oh! that professors would think of this in these days in which we live. All the world shall not keep up those who do not keep down their own spirits. **The very design of God is to stain the pride of all human glory, and to bring into contempt the proud of the earth.** Therefore now if men in our days shall grow proud and high, under

divine mercies, justice will be above them, and turn their glory into shame, and lay their honor in the dust. If your pride rises with your outward good—you will certainly fall, and great will be your fall.

(5.) The fifth consideration to provoke us to be humble is this: ***let us have always our eye fixed upon the example of Jesus Christ, and his humble and lowly demeanor.***

Christ by his example labors to provoke his disciples to keep humble, and to walk lowly: in John 13:4-5, 12-15 verses compared. He rises and washes his disciples' feet, etc., and mark what he aims at in that behavior of his, verse 12-14: "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." I have given you an example, says Christ, and I would have you to imitate my example. **Example is the most powerful rhetoric;** the highest and noblest example should be very quickening and provoking. Oh! here you have the greatest, the noblest example of humility, that was ever read or heard of. Upon consideration of this great and eminent example of Christ's humility, Guericus, a godly man, cried out, *You have overcome me, O Lord! you have overcome my pride. This example of yours has mastered me!* Oh that we could say with this good man, *You have overcome, O Lord! you have overcome our proud hearts, by this example you have overmastered our lofty spirits!*

This example of Christ's humility you have further set forth, Philip. 2:6-8, "Who being in the form of God," that is, in the nature and essence of God, being truly God, clothed with divine glory and majesty as God, "thought it no robbery," it being his right by nature, "to be equal with God." The Greek words that are rendered, "he thought it no robbery," import that he made it not a matter of triumph or ostentation to be equal with God, it being his right by nature, and therefore the challenging of it could be no usurpation of another's right, of taking to himself that which was not his own. "He thought it no robbery to be *equal* with God." The Greek is *equals*, that is, every way, equal, not a secondary and inferior God, as the Arians would have him. "But made himself of no reputation," verse 7. The Greek is "emptied himself," that is, he suspended and laid aside his glory

and majesty, or dis-robed himself of his glory and dignity, and became a sinner, both by imputation and by reputation, for our sakes.

And verse 8, "he humbled himself." This Sun of righteousness went ten degrees back in the dial of his Father, that he might come to us with healing under his wings. "And became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In these words there is a kind of gradation; for it is more to become obedient than to humble himself; and more to yield unto death than to become obedient; and yet more to be crucified than simply to die; for it was to submit himself to a most painful, ignominious, and cursed death. "He became obedient." That is, says Beza, "to his dying day," his whole life being nothing but a continual death.

I have read of an earl called Eleazarus, that being given to immoderate anger, was cured of that disordered passion by studying of Christ and his patience; he still dwelt upon Christ and his patience, until he found his heart transformed into the similitude of Jesus Christ. And oh! that you would never leave pondering upon that glorious example of Christ's humility—until your hearts be made humble, like the heart of Christ. Oh! that that sweet word of Christ, Mat. 11:29, might stick upon all your hearts, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me—for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find rest to your souls."

Bonaventure engraved this sweet saying of our Lord, "Learn of me—for I am meek and lowly in heart," in his study; and oh that this saying was engraved upon all your foreheads, upon all your hearts! Oh that it was engraved upon the dishes you eat in, the cups you drink in, the seats you sit on, the beds you lie on, etc. [It was a good law that the Ephesians made, that men should propound to themselves the best patterns, and ever bear in mind some eminent man.]

Jerome having read the pious life and death of Hilarion, folding up the book, said, Well! Hilarion shall be the champion whom I will imitate. Oh! when you look upon this glorious example of Christ, say, The Lord Jesus' example shall be that that my soul shall imitate.

(6.) Sixthly, consider ***Humility will free a man from perturbations and distempers.***

When there are ever such great storms without—humility will cause a calm within. There are a great many storms abroad, and there is nothing which will put the soul into a quiet condition but humility. A humble soul says, *Who am I, that I may not be despised? Who am I, that I may not be reproached, abused, slighted, neglected?* That which will break a proud man's heart, will not so much as break a humble man's sleep. In the midst of a storm, a humble soul is still in a calm. When proud hearts are at their wit's ends, stamping, swearing, and complaining at God, and man, and providence—a humble soul is quiet and still, like a ship in a harbor. Shimei, 2 Sam. 16:6, 13, comes railing and cursing of David, and calls him a bloody man, and a man of Belial, that is, a renegade, one who being desperately wicked had shaken off the yoke of government, and would be under no law. So the Hebrew word *Jagnat*, signifies men without yoke, or lawless. It signifies most flagitious men, and notorious and desperately wicked, stigmatized villains, even incarnate devils; and yet David remains silent, though urged by his mighty men to revenge himself. Oh! how would this cursing and railing have maddened and broken many a proud man's heart; and yet it stirs not David.

Fulgentius, after he was extremely persecuted, he had an opportunity to seek revenge—but he would not; for, says he, *We must suffer more for Christ than this.* 'What though I am thus and thus wronged? What though I have an opportunity for revenge? yet I must suffer more than this for Christ,' says the humble soul. A humble soul, when wrongs are done to him, is like a man with a sword in one hand and salve in another; he could kill but will cure.

One wondering at the patience and humble demeanor of Socrates, towards one who reviled him, Socrates said, *If we should meet one whose body were more unsound than ours, should we be angry with him, and not rather pity him? Why then should we not do the like to him whose soul is more diseased than ours?* A humble soul, when he meets with this and that wrong from men, he knows that their souls are diseased, and that rather moves him to pity than to revenge wrongs offered. A proud heart swells and grows big, when in the least wronged, and is ready to call for fire from heaven, and to take any opportunity for revenge of wrongs offered. *No man so abused as I, no man thus styled as I, says the proud*

*soul*. Oh—but a humble soul in patience possesses himself in all trials and storms.

Galladius observes upon Exod. 22:28, the patience and humble demeanor of those three emperors, Theodosius, Honorius, and Arcadius, towards those who spoke evil of them; they would have them subject to no punishment; for they said, *If it comes from lightness of spirit, it is to be despised; if from madness, it is worthy of pity; if from injury, it is to be forgiven; for injuries and wrongs are to be pardoned.* And this is the true temper of a humble soul, and by this he enjoys peace and quiet in the midst of all earthquakes and heartquakes.

(7.) The seventh consideration is this, consider ***humility exalts***.

He who is most humble, is and shall be most exalted and most honored. No way to be high, like this of being low. Moses was the meekest man on earth, and God made him the most honorable, calling of him up unto himself into the mount, making known his glory to him, and making of him the leader of his people Israel. Gideon was very little in his own eyes; he was the least of his father's house in his own apprehension, and God exalts him, making him the deliverer of his Israel.

It was a good saying of one, *Will you be great? begin from below.* As the roots of the tree descend—so the branches ascend. The lower any man is in this sense, the higher shall that man be raised. Mat. 23:12, "And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he who shall humble himself shall be exalted." God, who is wisdom itself, has said it, and he will make it good, though you see no ways how it should be made good. The lowest valleys have the blessing of fruitfulness, while the high mountains are barren; Proverbs 18:12, "Before destruction, the heart of man is lofty, and before honor is humility."

David came not to the kingdom until he could truly say, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lifted up," Psalm 131:1-2. Abigail was not made David's wife until she thought it honor enough to wash the feet of the lowest of David's servants, 1 Sam. 25. Moses must be forty years a stranger in Midian, before he became king in Jeshurun; he must be struck sick to death in the wilderness, before he goes to Pharaoh on that

noble embassy.

It was a sweet observation of Luther, "That for the most part when God set him upon any special service for the good of the church, he was brought low by some fit of sickness or other." Surely, as the lower the ebb—the higher the tide; so **the lower any descend in humility—the higher they shall ascend in honor and glory.** The lower this foundation of humility is laid, the higher shall the roof of honor be overlaid. If you would turn spiritual purchasers of honor, or of whatever else is good—there is no way like this of humility.

We live in times wherein men labor to purchase honor; some by their money, others by their friends; others by making themselves slaves to the lusts of men; others by the shedding of their blood in battle, and many by giving themselves up to all manner of baseness and wickedness, whereby their carnal ends may be attained, and themselves exalted; but these men and their honor will quickly be laid in the dust. Oh! but the readiest, the surest, the safest, the sweetest way to attain to true honor—is to be humble, to lie low. Humility makes a man precious in the eye of God. He who is little in his own account, is great in God's esteem.

(8.) The eighth and last consideration that I shall propound is this, consider that ***humility keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting, and snares of his spreading.***

As you may see in the three children in Daniel, and in those worthies in the 11th of the Hebrews, "of whom this world was not worthy." As the lowest shrubs are freed from many violent gusts and blasts of wind, which shake and rend the tallest cedars; so the humble soul is free from a world of temptations, which proud and lofty souls are shaken and torn in pieces with. The devil has least power to fasten a temptation upon a humble soul. He who has a gracious measure of humility, is neither affected with Satan's temptations—nor terrified with Satan's threatenings. The golden chain does not allure him—nor does the iron chain daunt him.

I have read of one who, seeing in a vision many snares of Satan spread upon the earth, he sat down and mourned, and said with himself, "Who

shall pass through these?" whereunto he heard a voice answering, "Humility shall pass through them." A proud heart is as easily conquered as tempted; as easily vanquished as assaulted. But the humble soul, when tempted, says with that worthy convert, "I am not the man that I once was." There was a time when my heart was proud and lifted up, and then you could no sooner knock but I opened; no sooner call but I answered; no sooner tempt but I did assent. Oh! but now the Lord taught me to be humble; I can resist, though I cannot dispute; I can fight—but not yield.

Katherine Bretterge, a humble precious soul, being once in a great conflict with Satan, said thus to him, "Satan, reason not with me, I am but a weak woman; if you have anything to say, say it to my Christ; he is my advocate, my strength, and my redeemer, and he shall plead for me." A humble soul is good at turning Satan over to the Lord Jesus, and this increases Satan's hell. It is reported of Satan, that he should say thus of a learned man, You do always overcome me; when I would throw you down, you lift up yourself in assurance of faith; and when I would exalt and promote you, you keep yourself in humility; and so you are too hard for me. The only way to avoid cannon-shot, as they say, is to fall down flat; no such way to be freed from temptations as to keep low.

And so I am done with the first head; namely, the motives that should move and provoke us to keep humble, to be meek, to be nothing in our own eyes.

I shall now come to some **HELPS and DIRECTIONS that may be useful to keep us humble and low in our own eyes.** And the first is this:

**[1.] *Dwell much upon the greatness of God's mercy and goodness to you.***

Nothing humbles and breaks the heart of a sinner like God's mercy and love. Souls who converse much with sin and wrath may be much terrified; but souls who converse much with grace and mercy will be much humbled. Luke 7, the Lord Jesus shows mercy to that notorious sinner, and then she falls down at his feet, and loves much and weeps much, etc.

In the 1 Chron. 17, it was in the heart of David to build God a house. God would not have him to do it—yet the messenger must tell David that God would build him a house, and establish his Son upon the throne forever. Look into the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses, and there you shall find that David lets fall such a humble speech, which he never did before God had sent him that message of advancement. "And David the king came, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that you have brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O God; for you have also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come," etc., 2 Sam. 7:18-19. And this sweetly and kindly melts him, and humbles him, before the Lord.

**Oh, if ever you would have your souls kept low, dwell upon the free grace and love of God to you in Christ!** [As honey flows naturally from the bee, so does mercy flow naturally from God.] Dwell upon the *firstness* of his love, dwell upon the *freeness* of his love, the *greatness* of his love, the *fullness* of his love, the *unchangeableness* of his love, the *everlastingness* of his love, and the *ardency* of his love. If this does not humble you, there is nothing on earth which will do it. Dwell upon what God has undertaken for you. Dwell upon the choice and worthy gifts which he has bestowed on you; and dwell upon that glory and happiness which he has prepared for you—and then be proud if you can.

**[2.] Keep faith in continual exercise, upon Christ as crucified, and upon Christ as glorified.**

There are two special sights of Christ, that tend much to humble and abase a soul. The one is a sight of Christ in his **misery**, in the 12th of Zech. ver. 10. And the other is a sight of Christ in his **glory** (Rev. 1:7, Isaiah 6:1, 3, 5, compared).

It is dangerous to be more *notion* than *motion*; to have faith in the *head* and none in the *heart*; to have an idle and not an active faith. It is not enough for you to have faith—but you must look to the acting of your faith, upon Christ as crucified, and upon Christ as glorified. Souls much in this will be very little and low in their own eyes. The great reason why the soul is no more humble is because faith is no more active. [As one

scale goes up, the other goes down; so as faith goes up, the heart goes down.]

**[3.] *Study your own natures more, and whatever evil you behold in other men's practices, labor to see the same in your own nature.***

**There is the seed of all sins, of the vilest and worst of sins—in the best of men.** When you see a drunkard—you may see the seed of that sin in your own nature. When you see an immoral man—the seeds of immorality you may see in your own nature. **If you are not as wicked as others**—it is not because of the goodness of your nature—but from the riches of God's grace. Remember this, there is not a worse nature in hell than that which is in you, and it would manifest itself accordingly—if the Lord did not restrain it. It would carry you to those horrid acts that are against the very light of nature. "By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10. "What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?" 1 Corinthians 4:7

[I have read of an Italian monster, who, capturing his enemy—set his dagger to his heart, and made him to abjure and blaspheme the Lord, that so he might save his life; which being done, he thrust him through, and with a bloody triumph, insulting over him, said, *Oh, this is right noble and heroic revenge, which does not only deprive the body of temporal life—but brings also the immortal soul to endless flames everlastingly.* See what natures you carry with you. It was a good saying of one of the fathers: Other vices are in sins, says he; but pride and high confidence is most apt to creep in upon duties well done.]

There was one who was a long time tempted to three horrid sins: to be drunk, to lie with his mother, and to murder his father. Being a long time followed with these horrid temptations, at last he thought to get rid of them, by yielding to what he judged the least, and that was to be drunk; but when he was drunk, he did both lie with his mother and murder his father. Why, such a hellish nature is in every soul that breathes! and did God leave men to act according to their natures, men would be all

incarnate devils, and this world a total hell.

Such is the corruption of our nature, that propound any divine good to it, it is entertained as fire by water; but propound any evil, and it is like fire to straw. It is like the foolish satyr who made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that unctuous matter, which the naturalists say that it sucks and snatches the fire to it with which it is consumed.

There was a holy man who rarely heard of other men's crimson sins—but he usually bedewed the place with his tears, considering that the seeds of those very sins was in his own nature. In your nature you have that that would lead you with the pharisees to oppose Christ; and with Judas, to betray Christ; and with Pilate, to condemn Christ; and with the soldiers, to crucify Christ, etc. Oh, what a monster, what a devil would you prove, should God but leave you to act suitable to that sinful and woeful nature of yours!

**[4.] *Dwell much upon the imperfection which follows and cleaves to your best actions.***

Oh the wanderings! Oh the deadness, the dullness, the fruitlessness of your spirit in religious duties! Man is a creature apt to hug himself in religious services, and to pride himself in holy duties; and to stroke himself after duties, and to warm himself by the sparks of his own fire, his own performances, Isaiah 50:11. Whenever you come off from holy services, sit down, and look over the spots, blots, and blemishes which cleave to your choicest services. The fairest day has its clouds, the richest jewels their flaws, the finest faces their spots, the fairest copies their blots—and so have our finest and fairest duties. When we have done our best, we have cause to fall down at Jesus' feet, and with tears in our eyes sue out our pardon.

**[5.] *In the day of your prosperity, forget not your former poverty.***

In the day of your present greatness, forget not your former baseness. Humble Jacob, in the day of his prosperity, remembers his former poverty: "I am not worthy of all the faithfulness and unfailling love you

have shown to me, your servant. When I left home, I owned nothing except a walking stick, and now my household fills two camps!" Gen. 32:10. And so David, in his prosperity, remembered that his sheep-hook was changed into a scepter, and his seat of turf into a royal throne, Psalm 78:71, 1 Chron. 17. And when Joseph was a royal favorite, he remembered that he had been an imprisoned slave. And when Gideon was raised to be a savior to Israel, he remembered how God took him from the threshing-floor, Judges 6:11, and how God changed his threshing instrument of wood into one of iron, to thresh the mountains, as God himself phrases it, Isaiah 41:15.

Primislaus, the first king of Bohemia, kept his country shoes always by him, to remember from whence he was raised.

Agathocles, by the furniture of his table, confessed that from a potter he was raised, to be a king of Sicily.

We live in times wherein many a man has been raised from the ash-heap to sit with princes; and oh that such were wise to remember their former low and contemptible beings, and to walk humbly before the Lord! otherwise who can tell but that greater contempt shall be poured forth upon them, than that which they have poured upon princes.

**[6.] *Look upon all that you have received, and all that you shall hereafter receive—as the fruit of free grace.***

Look upon your **adoption** into God's family, and write this motto, 'This is the fruit of free grace!' Look upon your **justification**, and write this motto, 'This is the fruit of free grace!' Look upon all your **graces**, and write, 'These are the fruit of free grace!' Look upon your **experiences**, and write, 'These are the fruits of free grace!' Look upon your **strength** to withstand temptations, and write, 'This is the fruit of free grace!' Look upon divine **power** to conquer corruptions, and write, 'This is the fruit of free grace!' Look upon the **bread** you eat, the wine you drink, the clothes you wear, etc., and write, 'These are the fruits of free grace!' 1 Cor. 4:7, "Who makes you to differ from another? and what have you who you have not received? and if you have received it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?" Who makes you to differ? Episcopus, a great

insolent Arminian, answered, *I make myself to differ—by the improvement of nature.*

This age is full of such proud monsters; but a humble soul sees free grace to be the spring and fountain of all his mercies and comforts; he writes *free grace* upon all his temporals, and upon all his spirituals, etc. "By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

**[7.] *Meditate much upon these two things:***

*First, The great mischief that sin has done in the world.*

It cast angels out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise. It has laid the first corner-stone in hell, and ushered in all the evils and miseries that are in the world. It has threw down Abraham, the best believer in the world; and Noah, the most righteous man in the world; and Job, the most upright man in the world; and Moses, the meekest man in the world; and Paul, the greatest apostle in the world. Oh, the diseases, the crosses, the losses, the miseries, the deaths, the hells—which sin has brought upon the world!

Basil wept when he saw the rose, because it brought to his mind the first sin, from whence it had the prickles, which it had not while man continued in innocency, as he thought! Oh, when he saw the prickles his soul wept; so when we see, hear, or read of the blood, misery, wars, and ruins which sin has brought upon us, let us weep and lie humble before the Lord.

*Secondly, Meditate much on this, that many wicked men take more pains to damn their souls and go to hell—than you do to save your soul and to get to heaven, Mat. 22:15.*

Oh, what pains do wicked men take to damn their souls and go to hell! Lactantius says of Lucian, that he spared neither God nor man. He took pains to make himself twice told a child of wrath.

It is said of Marcellus, the Roman general, that he could not be quiet, neither conquered nor conqueror. Such restless wretches are wicked men.

The drunkard rises up in the morning, and continues until midnight, until wine inflames him, Isaiah 5:11. The unclean person wastes his time, and strength, and estate—and all to ruin his own soul.

Theotimus, being told by his physician, that if he did not leave his lewd courses, he would lose his sight, answered, *then farewell, sweet light*. What a great deal of pains does the worldling take! He rises up early, and goes to bed late, and leaves no stone unturned—and all to make himself but the more miserable in the close.

Pambus wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost, partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell, and partly because he had not been so careful to please God—as she had been to please a wanton lover. Oh, sirs! what reason have you to spend your days in weeping? When you look abroad, see what pains most men take to damn their souls and go to hell—and then consider what little pains you take to escape hell, to save your souls, and go to heaven.

**[8.] *Get more internal and experimental knowledge and acquaintance with God.***

If ever you would keep humble, no knowledge humbles and abases like that which is inward and experimental. We live in days wherein there is abundance of *notional* light. Many professors know much of God notionally—but know nothing of God experimentally; they know God in the history—but know nothing of God in the mystery. They know much of God in the letter—but little or nothing of God in the Spirit; and therefore it is that they are so proud and high in their own conceits, where as he who experimentally knows the Lord—is a worm and no man in his own eyes. As the sun is necessary to the world, the eye to the body, the pilot to the ship, the general to the army—so is experimental knowledge to the humbling of a soul. Who more experimental in their knowledge than David, Job, Isaiah, and Paul? And who are more humble than these worthies? [It is a sad thing to be often eating of the tree of knowledge—but never to taste of the tree of life.]

Seneca observed of the philosophers, that when they grew more learned, they were less moral—so a growth in *mere notions* will bring a great decay in humility and zeal, as it is too evident in these days. Well, remember this, a drop of *experimental* knowledge will more humble a man than a sea of *notional* knowledge.

**[9.] *Look up to a crucified Christ for special power and strength against the pride of your hearts.*** It is sad in these knowing times to think how few there are, who know the right way of bringing under control, the power of any sin. Most men scarcely look so high as a crucified Christ for power against their powerful sins. One soul sits down and complains, *Such a lust haunts me, I will pray it down.* Another says, *Such a sin follows me, and I watch it down, or resolve it down.* And so a crucified Christ is not in all their thoughts. Not but that you are to hear, pray, watch, and resolve against your sins; but above all, you should look to the acting of faith upon a crucified Christ. [Psalm 10:4. It was the blood of the sacrifice and the oil that cleansed the leper in the law, and that by them was meant the blood of Christ and the grace of his Spirit, is agreed by all.]

As he said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like that," so I say, *There is none like this, for the bringing under the pride of men's hearts.*

The weaker the house of Saul grew, the stronger the house of David grew. The weakening of your pride will be the increase and strengthening of your humility, and therefore what the king of Syria said unto his fifty captains, "Fight neither with small nor great—but with the king of Israel," so say I, If you would keep humble, if you will lie low, draw forth your artillery, place your greatest strength against the pride of your souls. The death of pride will be the resurrection of humility. And that this may stick upon you, I shall lay down several propositions concerning pride; and I am so much the more willing to fall upon this work, and to make it the subject of our discourse at this time, because this horrid sin does appear so boldly and impudently, and that not only among profane people—but professors also.

There are **ten propositions that I shall lay down concerning pride.**

[1.] And the first is this, ***Of all sins, pride is most dangerous to the souls of men.*** Pride is a sin that will put the soul upon the worst of sins. Pride is a gilded misery, a secret poison, a hidden plague. It is the engineer of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the moth of holiness, the blinder of hearts, the turner of medicines into maladies, and remedies into diseases. It is the original and root of most of those notorious vices that are to be found among men. It was pride which put Herod upon seeking the blood of Christ. It was pride which put the Pharisees upon the persecuting of Christ. It was pride which made Athaliah destroy all the seed-royal of the house of Judah, that she might reign, 2 Chron. 22:10. It was pride that put Joab upon murdering treacherously, under guise of friendship, Abner, 2 Sam. 3:27, and Amasa, 2 Sam. 20:9-10. Zimri, out of ambition to reign, murdered Elah his Lord, 1 Kings 16:8-10. Omri, out of pride and ambition to reign, when he "saw that the city had been taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned it down over himself and died in the flames." 1 Kings 16:18.

It is pride which has ushered in all the contentions that are in towns, cities, countries, families, and pulpits throughout the world. It was pride and ambition to reign, which put Absalom upon pursuing his father's life, from whom he had received life. [A world of instances out of histories might be given, if it were needful, further to evidence this truth.]

It is very remarkable, that the pride and ambition of Nebuchadnezzar did usher in the destruction of the **Assyrian** monarchy; and the ambition and pride of Cyrus that did usher in the overthrow of the **Babylonian** monarchy; and the ambition and pride of Alexander was the cause of the annihilation of the **Persian** monarchy; and it was the pride and ambition of the Roman commanders that was the cause of the utter subversion of the **Grecian** monarchy. There is no tongue which can express, nor heart which can conceive, the horrid sins and miseries which pride has ushered in among the children of men. All sin will fill a proud heart that is resolved to rise. Great sins are no sins with such a soul; he makes nothing of those very sins that would make the very heathen to blush.

[2.] The second proposition that I shall lay down concerning pride is this, ***Where pride has possessed itself thoroughly of the soul, it turns the heart into steel, yes, into a rock.***

As you may see in **Pharaoh**. Pride turned his heart into steel, yes, into a very rock. God strikes again and again; he sends plague upon plague; and yet the more he is plagued, the more he is hardened. His pride turned his soul into a rock: he is no more sensible of the frowns of God, the threatenings of God, the plagues, the strokes of God, than a rock. Pride had hardened his heart; he stirs not, he yields not. [Proud souls are of his mind that said, Though you do convince me—yet will I not be convinced.]

It was the pride of **Saul** that turned his heart into steel: "I have sinned," says he, "yet honor me before the people," 1 Sam. 15:30. God gave him many a blow, many a knock, and many a check, and yet, after all, "Honor me before the people." Oh how desperately was his heart hardened in pride!

In Dan. 5:18, **Nebuchadnezzar's** mind, says the text, "was hardened in pride." He saw the vengeance of the Almighty upon his predecessors, and God took him up, and lashed him until the blood came, and yet he made nothing of it, because his heart was hardened in pride. Pride sets a man in opposition against God. Other sins are aversions from God—but this sin is a coming against God. In other sins a man flies from God—but in this sin a man flies upon God: James 4:6, "God resists the proud." A man does

not resist another until he is set upon; the traveler does not resist until such time as the thief attacks him. Says the text, "God resists the proud." It intimates thus much to us, that the proud heart attacks God himself, and therefore God resists him. He places himself in battle array against the proud. God brings forth his battalia against the proud, and they bring forth their battalia against God. A proud heart resists, and is resisted; this is flint to flint, fire to fire; yet in the day of God's wrath the proud shall be burnt up as stubble, both branch and root, Mal. 4:1.

[3.] The third proposition concerning pride is this, ***Pride is a sin that shows itself not one way—but many ways.*** For instance,

*First*, Sometimes it shows itself in the **LOOKS**, Proverbs 6:17: he tells you of seven things that the Lord hates, and one is a proud look. The Hebrew word there is, "The haughty eye." The haughty eye God hates. **Men's hearts usually show themselves in their eyes:** Psalm 131:1, "My heart is not haughty, nor my eye lofty." There are such who show pride in their very looks—but the Lord looks aloof at them, Psalm 138:6.

*Secondly*, Sometimes pride shows itself in **WORDS**: Dan. 4:30, "Is not this the great Babylon **I** have built as the royal residence, by **my** mighty power and for the glory of **my** majesty?" and in chapter 15, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" It was a very proud saying of one, "We have not so lived and deserved of God that the enemy should vanquish us." These were the proud ones, that spoke loftily, and that set their mouths against the heavens, as the psalmist speaks, Psalm 73:6, 8, 9, compared. And such a one was Henry the Second. Hearing that his city Mentz was taken, he used this proud blasphemous speech, "I shall never love God any more, who allowed a city so dear to me to be taken away from me." Such a proud wretch, both in words and actions, was Sennacherib, as you may see in Isaiah 37, from ver. 8 to 18.

*Thirdly*, Sometimes pride shows itself in the **CLOTHING** of the body; so Herod's pride appeared: Acts 12:21, "Herod was arrayed in royal apparel." In cloth of silver, says Josephus, which, being beaten upon by the sunbeams, dazzled the people's eyes, and drew from them that blasphemous acclamation, "It is the voice of God, and not of man." The people being most commonly like the Bohemian curs, that used to fawn

upon a good suit. So the rich man, Luke 16:19, was clothed in purple, and in silk. He was commonly so clothed; it was his every-day's wear, as the Greek word implies.

*Question.* But here a question may be asked, **May not people clothe themselves according to their dignities, ranks, and places** that God has put them in in the world?

*Answer.* I answer, They may, and ought so to do. If God has lifted them up in the world above others, they may wear better apparel than others, Gen. 41:42, Esther 6:8, Psalm 45:13-14, 2 Sam. 13:18, Lam. 4:5, Mat. 11:8, Gen. 27:15, Isaiah 52:1, Hosea 2:13, Exod. 28:40. I cite these scriptures so much the rather, because some, through weakness and peevishness, stumble and are not satisfied herein. There is nothing in the law of God or nature against it.

*Question.* But you may say, **May not people sin in their apparel?**

*Answer.* I answer, Yes, and that in four cases.

[1.] When it is not modest—but carries with it provocation to lust and immorality: Proverbs 7:10, "A woman came to meet him, dressed like a harlot." The Hebrew word signifies a clothing finely set and fitted to the body; and says the text, "She was subtle of heart," or trussed up about the breasts, with her upper parts naked; so Levi-Ben-Gersom reads the words, "She met him with her naked breasts," at this day too commonly used by such as would not be held harlots. Oh what a horrid shame and reproach is it to religion, the ways of God, and the people of God, that professors should go so! One says "that superfluous apparel is worse than whoredom, because whoredom only corrupts chastity—but this corrupts nature." Another says, "If women adorn themselves so as to provoke men to lust after them, though no ill follow upon it—yet those women shall suffer eternal damnation, because they offered poison to others, though none would drink of it."

[2.] People sin in their apparel when they exceed their degree and rank in costly apparel, which is that which is condemned by the apostle, 1 Tim. 2:9, 1 Pet. 3:3. The apostle does not simply condemn the wearing of gold

—but he condemns it in those who go above their degree and rank. The words are rather an admonition than a prohibition.

[3.] It is sinful when it is so expensive as that it hinders works of mercy and charity. Oh how many proud souls are there in these days that lay so expense much upon their backs, that they can spare nothing to fill the poor's bellies. Silk clothing hinders works of charity and mercy. Surely those who put on such costly ornaments upon their backs as close up the hand of charity, will at last share with Dives in his misery.

[4.] When persons habit themselves in strange and foreign fashions, which is the sin, shame, and reproach of many among us in these days. Now that is strange apparel which is not peculiar to the nations where men live. The Lord threatens to punish such, Zeph. 1:8, that are clothed with strange apparel. There are too many women and men in our days that are like the Egyptian temples, very gypsies, painted without and spotted within; varnish without and vermin within.

Mercury being to make a garment for the moon, as one says, could never fit her—but either the garment would be too big or too little, by reason she was always increasing or decreasing. May not this be applied to the vain curiosity of too too many professors in these days, whose curiosity about their clothes can never be satisfied?

I shall conclude this head with this counsel: Clothe yourselves with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, and with the purple of modesty—and God himself will be a suitor to you. **Let not the ornaments upon your backs speak out the vanity of your hearts.** "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." 1 Timothy 2:9-10

*Fourthly*, Sometimes pride shows itself by the gesture and **DEMEANOR** of the body. Isaiah 3:16, "The daughters of Zion were haughty, and walked with stretched out necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a tinkling with their feet." Oh earth! earth! do you not groan to bear such monsters as these?

*Fifthly*, And sometimes pride shows itself in **contemptuous challenges of God**; as Pharaoh, "Who is the God of the Hebrews, that I should obey him?"

*Sixthly*, Sometimes pride shows itself by **bragging promises**, "I will arise, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, and my lusts shall be satisfied," Exod. 15:9.

[4.] The fourth proposition that I shall lay down is this: ***Pride is a sin which of all sins, makes a person most like Satan.***

**Pride is Satan's disease.** Pride is so base a disease, that God had rather see his dearest children to be buffeted *by* Satan, than that in pride they should be *like* Satan. When Paul, 2 Cor. 12:7, under the abundance of revelations, was in danger of being puffed up, the Lord, rather than he would have him proud like to Satan, suffers him to be buffeted by Satan. Humility makes a man like to angels, and pride makes an angel a devil. Pride is worse than the devil, for the devil cannot hurt you until pride has possessed you. If you would see the devil portrayed to the life—look upon a proud soul; for as face answers to face, so does a proud soul answer to Satan. Proud souls are Satan's apes, and none imitate him to the life like these. And oh that they were sensible of it, before it be too late, before the door of darkness be shut upon them!

[5.] A fifth proposition is this: ***Pride cannot climb so high—but justice will sit above her.***

One asked a philosopher what God was a-doing? He answered, That his whole work was to exalt the humble and pull down the proud. **It was pride which turned angels into devils**; they would be above others in heaven, and therefore God cast them down to hell. The first man would know as God, and the Babel-builders would dwell as God—but justice set above them all. This truth you see verified in the justice of God upon Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Belshazzar, and Nebuchadnezzar; all these would be very high—but justice takes the right hand of them all, and brings them down to the dust.

Yes, pride cannot climb so high in the hearts of saints—but divine justice

will be above it. Uzziah his heart was lifted up, 2 Chron. 26:16—but justice smites him with a leprosy, and so he died, out of grief and sorrow, says Josephus. David glories in his own greatness, 2 Sam. 24:1, *seq.*, and for this, seventy thousand fall by the hand of justice. Hezekiah's heart was lifted up—but wrath was upon him, and upon all Judah and Jerusalem for it, 2 Chron. 32:25, *seq.* **Pride sets itself against the honor, being, and sovereignty of God**, and therefore justice will in spite of all sit above her. Other sins strike at the word of God, the people of God, and the creatures of God—but pride strikes directly at the very being of God, and therefore justice will be above her.

Nebuchadnezzar was proud, and God smites his reason, and turns him into a beast. Oh! how many young professors are there in our days, who have been proud of their notions, and proud of their parts and gifts—and justice has so smitten them, that they have lost that life, that sweetness, that spiritualness, which quickness what once they had, and are dried and shriveled up by a hand of justice. They are like the apples of Sodom, splendid on the outside—but rotten and worthless within. Some there are who have been very shining—yet by reason of pride have fallen from a *seeming* excellency to be naught, and from naught to be very naught, and from very naught to be stark naught. Isaiah 23:9, "The Lord Almighty has purposed it to destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness." The Hebrew word that is here rendered *purposed*, signifies to consult, or take counsel. It is consulted and agreed upon in counsel, that he will destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness; and the counsel of the Lord shall stand, Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 2:11-12, "The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted. In that day the Lord Almighty will punish the proud, bringing them down to the dust!" Isaiah 2:11-12

Divine justice will take the right hand of all proud ones on the earth. God bears, as I may say, a special hatred against pride. His heart hates it, Proverbs 6:16-17; his mouth curses it, Psalm 119:21; and his hand plagues it, as you have seen in the former instances, and as you may see further in these following instances:

The king of Egypt, which Jeremiah prophesied against, in his forty-fourth chapter, was so puffed up with pride, that he boasted his kingdom was so

surely settled, that it could not be taken from him either by God or man. Not long after he was taken in battle by Amasis, one of his own subjects, and hanged.

Dionysius the tyrant said in the pride of his heart, that his kingdom was bound to him with chains of adamant; but time soon confuted him, for he was driven out, and forced to teach a school at Corinth for a poor living.

Cares, a soldier, being proud of his valor, because he had given Cyrus a great wound, shortly after he ran mad. In all ages there are notable instances to prove that pride has not got so high—but justice has set above her.

[6.] The sixth proposition is this, ***Of all sins, spiritual pride is most dangerous, and must be most resisted.***

Spiritual pride is the lifting up of the mind against God; it is a tumor and swelling in the mind, and lies in despising and slighting of God, his word, promises, and ordinances, and in the lifting up of a man's self, by reason of birth, breeding, wealth, honor, place, relation, gifts or graces, and in despising of others. Of this spiritual pride Habakkuk speaks, chapter 2:4, "His heart that is lifted up in him, is not upright." Proverbs 16:5, "The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." or, who "lifts up his heart against God," or his decrees; as Lewis the Eleventh did, in that proud speech of his, "If I shall be saved, I shall be saved; and if I shall be damned, I shall be damned; and there is all the care that I shall take." Like to this, was that proud and wretched speech of one Rufus, who painted God on the one side of his shield, and the devil on the other, with this mad motto: "If you will not have me, here is one will." Spiritual pride is a white devil, as one calls it, a gilded poison, by which God is robbed of his honor, a man's own soul of his comfort and peace, and others of that benefit and fruit which otherwise they might receive from us.

Satan is subtle; he will make a man proud of his very graces; he will make him proud that he is not proud. Pride grows with the decrease of other sins, and thrives by their decay. Other sins are nourished by poisonous roots, as adultery is nourished by idleness, and gluttony and murder by

malice and envy; but this white devil, spiritual pride, springs from good duties and good actions towards God and man. Spiritual pride is a very great enemy to the good and salvation of man. Pride is like a very great *swelling*, which unfits men for any service.

Again, spiritual pride is a very great enemy to the good and salvation of men. The Greek word signifies *swelling*, for pride is like a great swelling in the body, which unfits it for any good service. John 5:40, "You will not come to me, that you may have life;" and ver. 44, "How can you believe in me, who seek honor one of another?" Christ blesses his Father, Mat. 11:25, that he had "hidden those things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes and sucklings." It is the pride of men's hearts that makes them throw off ordinances, as poor and low things, when, alas! in their practices they live below the power, beauty, glory, and holiness of the least and lowest ordinance. There is more holiness, purity, and glory manifested in the lowest administrations of Christ—than is held forth by them, in their highest practices.

[7.] The seventh proposition is this, ***Pride un-mans a man; it makes him do acts which are below a man.***

As you may see in Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Nebuchadnezzar, etc. It makes men bedlams. It was pride which made Hildebrand to cause Henry the Fourth to stand three days at his gate, with his wife and his child, barefooted. It was pride that made Adonibezek cause seventy kings, with their thumbs and great toes cut off, Judges 1:5-7, to gather their food under his table. Oh! what wretched unmanly acts has the pride of many persons put them upon.

[8.] The eighth proposition is this, ***The poorest are oftentimes the proudest.***

Interesting is the parable of Jotham: the best trees refused to be king—but the bramble wanted it; and did hope and aspire to it, Judges 9:15. So in 2 Kings 14:9, "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give your daughter to my son to wife." Hagar the kitchen-maid will be proud, and insult over her mistress Sarah, Gen. 21. The poor sons of Zebedee desired to sit at Christ's right hand and left,

Mat. 20:20-21. And those who Job disdains to set with the dogs of his flock—despise him in the day of his sorrow, Job 30:1. The foot strives to be equal with the head, the servant as the master, the cobbler as the councillor, and the peasant as the prince, etc.

[9.] The ninth proposition is this, ***Pride is a sure forerunner of a fall.***

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty mind before a fall," Proverbs 16:18, 18:12. Herod fell from a throne of gold—to a bed of dust. Nebuchadnezzar fell from the state of a mighty king—to be a beast. Adam fell from innocency to mortality. The angels fell from heaven to hell—from felicity to misery.

[10.] The tenth and last proposition is this: ***God will by an invincible power, conquer proud souls.***

You haughty ones, who think to escape—and battle it out, remember this—God will by an almighty and invincible power conquer you; when you think not of it, he will eat you like a moth. Isaiah 47:10-11, "You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away. A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom; a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you."

Impunity oftentimes causes impudency—but God's forbearance is no acquittance. The longer the hand is lifted up, the heavier will be the blow at last. Of all metals, lead is the coldest—but being melted, it becomes the hottest. Humble souls know how to apply this, and proud souls shall sooner or later experience this. [Pope Innocent the Fourth, as he was walking securely in his palace, heard that sorrowful and dreadful summons, *Come, you wretch, receive your judgment!* and soon after he was found dead. Eccles. 8:11.]

II. I shall now proceed to a second doctrine, namely, **That all saints are not of an equal size and growth in grace and holiness.**

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!"  
Ephesians 3:8

Some are higher, and some are lower; some are stronger and some are weaker—in spiritual graces and heavenly excellencies. "Unto me who am less than the least," etc.

Among true believers, some may be found to be but weak believers. This point flows as natural from the words as the stream does from the fountain, and no point more clear in all the Scripture than this.

In Romans 14:1, you read of some who are **weak** in the faith; "Those who are weak in the faith receive," says the apostle. None are to be rejected in whom is anything of Christ is to be found. And so Mat. 14:31, there is mention made of "little faith." 1 Cor. 9:22, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak." You read of babes in grace: 1 Pet. 2:2, 3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." 1 John 2:12-14, there is mention made of "little children, of young men, and of fathers." All are not fathers in grace, nor all are not young men in grace; there are some children in grace. A Christian in this life has his degrees of growth; he is first a child in grace, and then a young man in grace, and then a father in grace. [It is with Christians as it is with planets: the moon goes her course once a month, the sun once a year, the rest not in many years; yet at length they finish their course.]

For the further opening of this point, I shall endeavor these four things.

I. I shall endeavor to decipher to you souls weak in grace.

II. I shall endeavor to lay down those things which may encourage, support, and comfort souls who are weak in grace.

III. I shall speak to the duties which lie upon those who are weak in grace.

IV. I shall speak to the duties which lie upon those who are strong in grace, towards those who are weak in grace.

Of these four we shall speak, as the Lord shall assist.

I. I shall begin with the first, ***To decipher souls weak in grace.***

The first thing by which I shall describe, discover and decipher souls weak in grace is this:

***[1.] Weak Christians are usually much concerned and taken up with the poor low things of this world.***

They are much in carking and caring for them, and in pursuing and hunting greedily after them. That is a clear text for this: Mat. 6:25, to the end. Christ labors by several weighty arguments to fence and fortify his disciples against those uncertain, doubtful, carking worldly cares—which divide, distract, distemper, torture, and tear the heart in a thousand pieces. And yet neither these arguments, nor yet the presence of him who was the great landlord of heaven and earth, and whose love and affections were still yearning towards them, and whose special eye of providence was still over them—could rid their heads and hearts of these worldly cares that do but vex and perplex the souls of men. And it is very observable, that after this stinging lecture which Christ gave them, they did argue three different times, as to who should be greatest and highest in worldly enjoyments. Their hearts should have been only in heaven, and yet they strive for earth, as if there were no heaven, or as if earth were better than heaven. All which does clearly evidence, that their graces were very weak, and their corruptions very strong.

Men who have little of the *upper* springs within, are much concerned after the springs *below*. Baruch was godly—but weak in grace; he had but some sips and tastes of the glory of the eternal world, and that made him, when God was a-pulling down all worldly glory, to seek for earth as if there were no heaven, Jer. 45:1-5. Certainly there is but little of Christ and grace within—where the heart is so strongly concerned about earthly

things. Where there is such strong love and workings of heart after these poor things, it shows our soul's enjoyment of God to be but poor and low.

In the Old Testament, the Jews, being babes and infants in grace and holiness, had a world of temporal promises, and very few spiritual promises. But now in the days of the gospel, the Lord is pleased to double and treble his Spirit upon his people, and now you meet with very few temporal promises in the gospel—but the gospel is filled with spiritual promises. The gospel drops nothing but marrow and fatness, love and sweetness; and therefore God looks in these days that men should grow up to a greater height of holiness, heavenliness, and spiritualness, than what they attained to in those dark days, wherein the sun shined but dimly. Those who are rich and strong in grace, look upon the world with a holy scorn and disdain. As Themistocles, when he saw in the dark a thing like a pearl, he scorned to stoop for it himself, saying to another, "You scoop it up—for you are not Themistocles."

Abraham, a man strong in grace, looked with a holy scorn and with an eye of disdain upon these poor things. When Melchisedec had made him heir of all things, he refused the riches that the king of Sodom offered him, because God was his shield and his exceeding great reward, Gen. 14:21, 15:1. The greatest bargain which a soul rich in grace will make with God for himself is this, "Give me but bread to eat and clothes to wear--and you shall be my God." So it was with that brave soul, Gen. 28:21. Jacob desires but bread and clothing. Mark, he asks bread—not dainties; clothing—not ornaments. A little of this world will satisfy a man who is strong in grace; much will not satisfy a man who is weak in grace; nothing will satisfy a man who is void of grace.

Souls weak in grace, have their hearts much working after these poor base things; as you may see, Mat. 18:1, "Who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The question is stated by the disciples, whom one would have thought should have had their hearts and thoughts in heaven; but they dreamed of an earthly kingdom, where honors and offices would be distributed, as in the days of David and Solomon. And it is observable in Mark 9:33-34, that they are at it again: "And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that you disputed among yourselves by the way? But they remained silent" (they were

ashamed to tell him); "for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be greatest." Says one, I'll have this, and says another, I'll have that, etc.; or as it is in the Greek, "they disputed who was greatest;" so in Luke 9:46. Says one, I am greater than you; No, says another, I am greatest.

It is an argument of a childish disposition—to be concerned more with rattles and baubles, than with jewels and pearls. That Christian has little of the power of grace within him, whose heart is so strongly carried out to these vanities below. Grown men prefer one piece of gold above a thousand new pennies. A soul who is strong in grace, that is high in its spiritual enjoyments, prefers one good word from God, one good look from Christ, above all the dainties of this world. "Lord," he prays, "lift up the light of your countenance upon me." Warm my heart with the beams of your love, and then a little of these things will suffice.

You see Moses and all those worthies in the 11th of the Hebrews, who were men strong in grace—how bravely they trample upon all things below God. They left their families and their countries, where they lived like princes—to wander in a wilderness, upon the bare command of God. So Luther, a man strong in grace, when he had a gown and money given him by the elector, he turned himself about, and said, "I shall not put me off with these poor base things." Souls who know by experience what the bosom of Christ is, what spiritual communion is, what the glory of heaven is, will not be put off by with things which are mixed, mutable, and momentary. And to shame many professors in these days, I might bring in a cloud of witnesses; even from among the very heathen, who never heard of a crucified Christ, and yet were more crucified to things below Christ than many of those who pretend much to Christ. But I shall forbear, only desiring that those who think and speak so scornfully and contemptuously of heathens may not at last be found worse than heathens; yes, be judged and condemned by heathens in the great and solemn day of the Lord.

*Secondly*, In order to a further deciphering of weak Christians, I shall lay down this:

**[2.] *That weak saints do usually over-fear troubles before***

***they come; yes, those future evils that, forty to one, may never come to pass.***

The very empty thoughts and fears of possible trouble is very terrible and perplexing to a weak saint. When it was told the house of David, saying, "Syria is confederate with Ephraim, the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind," Isaiah 7:2. Their heart quaked and quivered, as we say, like an aspen leaf. It is an elegant expression, showing, in their extremity, the baseness of their fears, arguing no courage or spirit at all in them. The very news and conceit of trouble or calamities, oh how does it perplex, and vex, and grieve, and overwhelm weak Christians! [The chameleon, says Pliny, is the most fearful of all creatures, and does therefore turns into all colors to save itself; and so it is often with weak Christians..... Pray for me, said Latimer in his letter to Ridley; for I am sometimes so fearful, that I would creep into a mouse-hole.]

The very hearing of trouble at a distance makes them to stagger and reel, and ready to say, *Will God now save? Will he now deliver?* It puts them into those shaking fits, that they know not what to do with themselves, nor how to perform the service they owe to God or man. Now tell me, can you call that a stout spirit, a strong spirit—who is daunted with the very report and thoughts of calamity? Or who has immoderate fear of a thousand things that perhaps shall never happen; as fears of foreign invasions, or fears of home-bred confusions, fears of change of religion, or being surprised with such or such diseases, or being ruined in their outward estate by such and such devices or disadvantages, or by falling under the frowns of such a great man, or under the anger and revenge of such and such a man, and a thousand such like things. Now, this speaks out much weakness in grace. Souls strong in grace are carried above these fears; yes, with the leviathan in Job, they can laugh at the shaking of a spear, chapter 41:29. They can say with David, "Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil; for you are with us, your rod and your staff do comfort us," Psalm 23:4. But weak souls are afraid of their own shadow. The very *shadow of trouble* will exceedingly trouble such souls, and oftentimes make their lives a very hell. [Bucephalus was not afraid of his burden; the shadow only frightened

him. So weak Christians are afraid of the *shadow* of the cross.]

**[3.] *Thirdly, Fainting in the day of adversity speaks of a soul to be but weak in grace.***

Weak Christians are overcome with little crosses. The least cross does not only startle them—but it sinks them, and makes them ready to sit down and to cry out with the church, "Behold you who pass by, see whether there be any sorrow like my sorrow," Lam. 1:12. Before trouble comes, weak Christians are apt to think that they can bear much and endure much; but, alas! when the day of trial comes upon them, when they are put to it, they prove but men of poor and impotent spirits, and then they roar, and complain, and lie down in the dust—allowing crosses and losses to bind them hand and foot, and to rob them of all their comforts. And now though they have many comforts, compared to their one cross—yet their one cross does so damp and daunt their hearts, that joy and comfort flies away from them, and they sit down overwhelmed. Certainly this speaks out little of Christ within. All Rachel's comforts were no comforts, because her children were not. This speaks out much weakness within.

Proverbs 24:10, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small;" if you shrink, if you abate and slacken, in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Man has no trial of his strength until he is in trouble; faintness then reveals the weakness. Afflictions test what strength we have—as hard weather tries what health we have. A weak Christian sinks under a little burden; every frown, every sour word, every puff of wind blows him down, and makes him sink under his burden. But now a soul strong in grace bears up bravely against all winds and weather. That is a wonderful text, and worthy to be written in letters of gold, which you have in Gen. 49:23-24, "Joseph's bow abode in strength, though the archers sorely grieved him, shot at him, and hated him. And the arms of his hands were made strong, by the mighty God of Jacob." The archers that sorely grieved him were his barbarous brethren who sold him; his adulterous mistress who, harlot-like, hunted for his precious life; his injurious master, who without any desert of his, imprisoned him; the tumultuating Hebrews, who perhaps spoke of stoning him; and the envious courtiers and enchanters spoke evilly of him before Pharaoh, to bring him out of favor. All these shot sorely at him. The word that is

rendered *archers* in the Hebrew, is arrow-masters, which term implies skillfulness in shooting. They were cunning and skillful to hit the mark, and they shot at him, as at a mark; but yet "his bow abode in strength."

When God in the midst of weakness makes a soul strong, that soul will not only face enemies and difficulties—but triumph over them. Those who are strong in grace seldom lack courage or counsel when they are in the worst battle. They always find their hope to be an anchor at sea, and their faith a shield upon land; and therefore they triumph in all storms and dangers. They stand firm when they are under the greatest pressures: 2 Cor. 11:23, "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often," etc. And yet he triumphs in 2 Cor. 1:12, "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." Strong Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ, and therefore often sings it out: "I, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ;" not "I Paul, enrapt up in the third heaven." He preferred his crown of thorns before a crown of gold, his prison rags above all royal robes. [*If we perish, Christ perishes with us*, said Luther.]

**[4.] *Fourthly, A weak Christian thinks that little to be much, which he suffers for Christ.***

In Mat. 19:27, then "answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have?" Their worldly case in following Christ, was little worse than when they only traded in fishing; and yet, "we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have?" This their all was not worth a speaking of, and yet, for this they look for some great worldly reward and recompense. "We have forsaken all."—A few broken boats, and a few tattered and torn nets, and a little old household stuff, and Christ maintained them too, upon his own cost and charge; and yet say they, "We have forsaken all, and followed you." Neither is it without an emphasis, that they begin with a *Behold*; "Behold we have forsaken all," as if Christ were greatly beholding to them. Let their wills be but crossed a little, by servants, children, friends, etc, or let them but suffer a little in their names or estates, etc., and presently you shall have them a-sighing it out, "No sorrow like our sorrow, no loss to

our loss, no cross to our cross," etc. [Weak Christians are like children; they look for a great reward for a little work.] Whereas souls strong in grace suffer much, and yet count that much but little. A soul strong in grace can suffer much, and yet make nothing of it. *I am heartily angry,* says Luther, who suffered very much, *with those who speak of my sufferings, which if compared with that which Christ suffered for me, are not once to be mentioned in the same day, etc.*

**[5.] *Fifthly, Those who are weak in grace dwell more upon what may discourage them in the ways of grace and holiness, than they do upon what may encourage them.***

They dwell more upon their sins—than upon a Savior; more upon their misery—than upon free grace and mercy; more upon that which may feed their fears—than upon that that may strengthen their faith; more upon the cross—than upon the crown; more upon those who are against them—than those who are for them: Isaiah 51:12-13, "I, even I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear? Yet you have forgotten the Lord, your Creator, the one who put the stars in the sky and established the earth. Will you remain in constant dread of human oppression? Will you continue to fear the anger of your enemies from morning till night?"

The same is intimated Romans 4:19-20, "Abraham, being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body being dead, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." Mark, "being not weak in faith." Souls weak in faith are very apt to dwell upon discouragements—but strong Christians look above all discouragements. "He considered not." The Greek is, he cared not for his own body, he did not mind that; but in the 20th verse, "he considered him who had promised." Souls strong in grace dwell more upon their encouragements to holiness and believing, than upon their discouragements. "He considered him who had promised." He had an eye fixed upon the faithfulness of God, and the sufficiency and almightiness of God—and this bore up his heart above all discouragements.

So in 2 Cor. 4:16-18, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory; while we look not (mark, they are not doating upon their discouragements) upon

things which are seen—but upon things which are not seen: the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal." **An eye fixed upon encouragements makes heavy afflictions light, long afflictions short, and bitter afflictions sweet.** Those blessed martyrs found it so—who were cast out all night, in a cold frosty night, naked, and were to be burnt the next day, who thus comforted themselves, *The winter is sharp—but paradise is sweet; here we shiver for cold—but the bosom of Abraham will make amends for all.*

Weak Christians have eyes to behold their discouragements—but none to see their encouragements; they look more upon their corruption than upon their sanctification; upon their disobedience than their obedience; upon their distrust than upon their faith; upon the old man than upon the new—and this keeps them low and weak in spirituals, it causes a leanness in their souls.

**[6.] Sixthly, The zeal of weak Christians usually outstrips their wisdom and knowledge.**

Weak Christians are very zealous—but not according to knowledge: Romans 10:2, "For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God—but not according to knowledge." They were very zealous—but not true zealots, they are very peevish and pettish and censorious; but they lack wisdom and knowledge to manage their zeal, to God's glory and their brethren's good. Such zeal had those two Rabbis who set upon Charles the Fifth, to persuade him to turn Jew, as judging their religion to be the only religion in the world, and for which they were put to a cruel death, in the year 1530. A great zeal they had to the winning over of him to Judaism—but this zeal was their ruin. **Zeal without knowledge is as wild-fire in a fool's hand;** it is like the devil in the demoniac, that sometimes cast him into the fire, and sometimes into the water. So the disciples of Christ were weak in their light, and furious in their zeal: Luke 9:54, "Let fire come down from heaven, and consume them," say they. But mark what Christ says, ver. 55: "You know not what manner of spirits you are of;" that is, you know not what spirit acts you. You think that you are acted by such a spirit as Elijah of old was acted by—but you err, says Christ; "you have a zeal—but not according to knowledge," therefore it is a human fervidness and not a divine motion.

Zeal is like fire: in the chimney it is one of the best servants—but out of the chimney it is one of the worst masters. Zeal kept by knowledge and wisdom, in its proper place, is a choice servant to Christ and saints; but zeal not bounded by wisdom and knowledge, is the high way to undo all, and to make a hell for many at once. [Josephus, tells of some who imposed the name of *Zelote* upon themselves, as if they were zealous for the honor and service of God, and under this pretense committed all riots and imaginable wickedness. It were well if we had no such monsters among us in these days.]

Weak Christians are usually most zealous about circumstances and things that have least of God and Christ and the power of holiness in them; and most cold about things of value and substance—as woeful experience does evidence in these days. Zeal ordered by wisdom, feeds upon the faults of offenders, not on their persons. It spends itself and its greatest heat principally upon those things that concern a man's self. It is most exercised about substantials: Tit. 2:14—but that which is rash, is most exercised about circumstantial; Gal. 1:14, Paul was, in the days of his ignorance, very zealous for the traditions of his fathers, etc.

**[7.] *Seventhly, Among all saints, the weakest saints act most like carnal sinners.***

No saint is so like a sinner—as a weak saint. "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as carnal (worldly)--mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?" 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. They were advanced but very little above the imperfections and passions and sins of mere men, of such who had nothing of the Spirit in them, etc. Do wicked men quarrel with their teachers—when they themselves are in fault? So did these babes here. Do wicked men impute their not profiting to the minister, as he who, having a thorn in his foot, complains of the roughness of the way as the cause of his limping, whereas it was the thorn and not the roughness of the way which hurt him. Or as she, that, being struck with a sudden blindness, bid open the window, whereas it was not the lack of light—but lack of sight,

which troubled her. So did these babes in the text lay the fault of their non-proficiency upon their teachers, when the fault was wholly in themselves. [In many things, weak Christians are carnal men's apes.]

Now he calls them *carnal*, partly because the flesh was strong in them, and partly because they followed and relished the things of the flesh, and partly because they did in their actions resemble carnal men. Do carnal and wicked men cry up one godly man, and cry down another? Do they lift up one, and abase another? So did they. Are wicked men full of envy, strife, and divisions? So were they. And these overflowings of the gall and spleen, come from a fullness of bad humours, from that abundance of carnality that was in them.

But now souls strong in grace are higher than carnal men, as Saul was higher than the people by head and shoulders. Souls strong in grace have their feet where carnal men's heads are—they have their feet on the world. Proverbs 15:24, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." Souls who are strong in grace, do act rather like angels than like carnal men; they do as much resemble the Father of spirits, as carnal men do the Father of lies.

**[8.] *Eighthly, Souls weak in grace are easily drawn aside out of the ways of holiness.***

You know a man who has but a little bodily strength, is easily thrust out of the way; so it is with souls weak in grace: 1 John 3:7, "Little children, let no man deceive you; he who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." Says the apostle, "Little children, let no man deceive you." Many in these days, under pretenses of high and glorious enjoyments of God, neglect and despise righteousness and holiness, crying up visions and manifestations, when their visions are only the visions of their own hearts and their manifestations are plain delusions. Ah! but says the apostle, "Little children, let none of these deceive you." I tell you he, and only he, who does righteousness, is righteous, as God is righteous. Children, you know, may be easily deceived, and made to take shiny pennies for gold, because they are prettier and brighter. Children in grace are soon deceived, hence is it that they are so deluded.

Heb. 12:12-13, "Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Some think that the apostle alludes to those combats of the heathens, wherein it was a token of yielding, when a man hung down his hands. You are weak, says the apostle, and by reason of trials you are apt to hang down your hands, and to give up all as lost; therefore, says he, lift up your hands to fight, and your feet to run, take heart and courage, faint not, give not over, turn not aside because of the sharpness of afflictions. But souls strong in grace will hold on in the ways of grace and holiness, in the face of all dangers and deaths, Psalm 44.

**[9.] *Ninthly, Weak Christians are apt to make sense and feeling, the judge of their spiritual estates and conditions.***

And, therefore, upon every turn they are apt to judge themselves miserable, and to conclude that they have no grace, because they cannot feel it, nor discern it, nor believe it; and so making sense, feeling, and reason, the judge of their estates—they wrong, and perplex, and vex their precious souls, and make their lives a very hell.

The Canaanite woman had strong faith—but no assurance that we read of, Mat. 15:22, *seq.* Gal. 4:6, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Mark, they are first the sons of God, and then the Spirit cries, Abba, Father. 1 John 5:13, "These things have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." Mark, they did believe, and they had eternal life, in respect of Christ their head, who, as a public person, was gone to heaven, to represent all his saints. And they had eternal life in respect of the promises, and they had eternal life in respect of the beginnings of it—and yet they did not know it, they did not believe it. "Therefore these things write I unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God," says he, "that you may know that you have eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." Ponder on Micah 7:7-9.

The word shall judge us at last, John 12:48; and therefore strong saints make only the word of God the judge of their spiritual condition now.

**[10.] *Tenthly, Their thoughts and hearts of weak Christians are more taken up with the love-tokens, and the good things***

***they have from Christ—than with Christ himself.***

Oh their graces, their comforts, their enlargements, their meltings, and their warmings, etc., are the things which most absorb them. Their thoughts and hearts are so exercised about these things, that Christ himself is much neglected by them. The child is so absorbed with dolls and rattles, etc., that the mother is not thought of. And such is the behavior of weak Christians towards Christ.

But now souls who are strong in grace are more taken with the person of Christ than they are with the love-tokens of Christ. They bless Christ indeed for every grain of grace, and for every good word from heaven, and for every good look from heaven; ay—but Christ himself is more to them than all these. [Christ is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory, etc.] This is remarkable in the church, Cant. 5:9-10, "What is your beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? etc. "My beloved is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!" etc. She does not say, My beloved is one that I have got so many thousands by, and heaven by, and pardon of sin by, and peace of conscience by. Oh no! but he dazzling. Her soul was taken most with the person of Christ.

It is an argument of weakness of grace, when the heart is more exercised about the bracelets, and the kisses, and the love-tokens of Christ—than it is about Christ himself. [That wife is but weak in her love, who is more taken up with her husband's presents than with his person.] But now says one strong in grace, My bracelets are precious—but Christ is more precious; the streams of grace are sweet—but the fountain of grace is most sweet; the beams of the sun are glorious—but the sun itself is most glorious. A naked Christ, a despised Christ, a persecuted Christ, is more valued by a strong Christian, than heaven and earth are by a weak Christian. [Christ's himself, to a strong Christian, is the greatest cordial in all the world.]

***[11.] Eleventhly, Souls weak in grace are easily stopped and taken off from acting graciously and holily, when discouragements face them.***

This you may see in that remarkable instance concerning Peter, in that

26th of Matthew, from the 69th to the end. A silly wench outfaces him; she daunts this self-confident champion; she easily stops and turns him by saying, "You were one of those with Jesus the Galilean," v. 70. "But Peter denied it in front of everyone—I don't know what you are talking about." He makes as if he did neither understand her words or her meaning; and this false dissembling was a true denying of Christ. Now Mark says, chapter 14:68, that upon the very first denial of Christ, the rooster crowed, and yet this fair warning could not secure him—but when another maid saw him, and said, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth," ver. 72, he denied it with an oath, saying, "I do not know the man!" This was fearful and dreadful, and the worse because his Master, whom he forswore, was now upon his trial, and might say with wounded Caesar, "What! and you my son Brutus!" Is this your kindness to your friend, to him who has loved you, and saved you, and owned you? etc. Then ver. 73, "Surely you are one of them, for your speech betrays you." And ver. 74. "He began to curse and to swear, I know not the man!" The Greek word that is rendered *curse*, imports a cursing and a damning of himself, an imprecation of God's wrath, and a separation from the presence and glory of God, if he knew the man." Some writers say, that he cursed Christ. "I know not the man," says he.

Though it were ten thousand times better to bear than to swear, and to die than to lie—yet when discouragement faces him, he is so amazed and daunted, that he tells the most incredible lie that almost could be uttered by the mouth of man. For there was no one more than Peter, who knew Christ. Neither could Peter allege any cause why he came there, if he had not known Christ.

But, ver. 75, "He went out, and wept bitterly." One sweet look of love breaks his heart in pieces, he melts under the beamings forth of divine favor upon him. Once he leapt into a sea of waters to come to Christ, and now he leaps into a sea of tears, because he had so shamefully denied Christ. Clement notes, that Peter so repented, that all his life-time after, every night when he heard the rooster crow, he would fall upon his knees and weep bitterly, begging pardon for this dreadful sin. Others say, that after his lying, cursing, and denying of Christ, he was ever and anon weeping, and that his face was furrowed with continual tears. He had no

sooner taken in poison—but he vomits it up again, before it got to the vitals. He had no sooner handled a serpent—but he turns it into a rod to scourge his soul with remorse.

This truth is further confirmed by the speech and carriage of the disciples: Luke 24:21, *seq.*, "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." Here their hope hangs the wing extremely. Weak souls find it as hard to wait for God, as it is to bear evil. This weakness Christ checks, ver. 25, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," etc. And John 16:5, the first news Christ tells them, is of their sufferings and of his leaving of them; and upon the thoughts hereof their hearts were so filled with sorrow, that they could not so much as say, "Master, where are you going?" ver. 6. But now, souls strong in grace will hold on in holy and gracious actings in the very face of the greatest discouragements. And so the three Hebrew children, they hold up in the face of all discouragements. And so those brave worthies, of whom this world was not worthy, Heb. 11, their hearts were strong, notwithstanding all discouragements, to hold on in ways of holiness, and in their actings of faith upon God, in the face of all dangers and deaths which did attend them. Such a spirit shined in Chrysostom when he bid them tell the enraged empress, *I fear nothing but sin!*

When Henry the Eighth had spoken and written bitterly against Luther, says Luther, *Tell the Henries, the bishops, the Turks, and the devil himself—do what they can—we are children of the kingdom, worshiping of the true God, whom they, and such as they, spit upon and crucified.* And of the same spirit and metal were many martyrs. Basil affirms of the primitive saints, that they had so much courage and confidence in their sufferings, that many of the heathens, seeing their heroic zeal and constancy, turned Christians.

**[12.] *Twelfthly, Weak saints mind their wages more than their work.***

Their wages are joy, peace, comfort, and assurance, etc.; and their work is waiting on God, believing in God, walking with God, acting for God, etc. Now, weak saints' minds are more carried out, and taken up about their wages, than they are about their work, as experience does abundantly

evidence. [Children mind more play-days than they do working-days, or school-days.] Ah! Christians, if you don't mind your wages more than your work, what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? 1 Sam. 15:14. What means those earnest and vehement cryings out and wrestlings for joy, peace, comfort, and assurance—when the great work of believing, of waiting, and of walking with God—is so much neglected and disregarded?

But now strong saints are more mindful of their work than they are of their wages. *Lord!* says a strong saint, *do but uphold me in a way of believing, in a way of working, in a way of holy walking, etc., and it shall be enough, though I should never have assurance, comfort, peace, or joy, until my dying day. If you will carry me forth so as you may have honor, though I have no comfort; so you may have glory, though I have no peace, I will bless you, Romans 4:18-20. I know, says such a soul, though a life of comfort be most pleasing to me—yet a life of believing, abstracted from comfort, is most honorable to you, and therefore I will be silent before you. Lord! do but help me in my work, and take your own time to give me my wages—to give me comfort, joy, peace, assurance.* They are not the best servants, who mind their wages more than their work, nor they are none of the best Christians that mind their comforts and their in-comings of the Spirit of graces—more than that homage and duty that they owe to God.

Before I come to the second thing premised, give me permission to give you this hint; namely, that there is no such way to joy, peace, and assurance, as this—to mind your work more than your wages. Ah! had many mourning, complaining Christians done thus—their mourning before this had been turned into rejoicing, and their complaining into singings. Christians, the high way to comfort is to mind comfort less, and duty more; it is to mind more what you should do, than what you would have, as you may see in Eph. 1:13, "In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of faith, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The original runs thus—in whom believing, you were sealed. While faith is busied and exercised about Christ, and those varieties of glories and excellencies which are in him—the Lord comes, and by his Spirit seals up

the life, and love, and glory of them.

Thus by divine assistance I have dispatched the first thing, namely, the deciphering of weak Christians.

**II.** The second thing that I propounded for the further opening and clearing of this point was, ***to hold forth to you those things which tend to support, comfort, and uphold weak Christians.*** And truly I must needs say, that if ever there was a time wherein weak Christians had need of support, I truly believe this is the time wherein we live, for by the horrid profaneness of men on the one hand, and the abominable, loose, and rotten principles of others on the other hand—the hearts of many weak Christians especially are saddened, which God would not have saddened; and their spirits wounded and grieved, which God would have comforted and healed; and therefore I shall dwell the longer upon this second thing,

And the *first* thing that I shall lay down by way of support is this.

***Support 1. That the weakest Christians have as much interest and property in Christ, and all the fundamental good which comes by Christ—as the strongest saints have.*** [He who looked upon the brazen serpent, though with a weak sight—was healed as thoroughly as he who looked upon it with a stronger sight. A weak faith is a joint possessor of Christ; though no faith can be a joint purchaser of Christ.]

Weak saints are as much united to Christ, as much justified by Christ, as much reconciled by Christ, and as much pardoned by Christ—as the strongest saints. It is true, weak Christians cannot make so much improvement and advantage of their interest in Christ, as strong saints can; they have not that power, that wisdom, that spiritual skill to make that advantage of their interest and property in Christ as strong saints have; yet have they as much interest and property in the Lord Jesus, and all the fundamental good that comes by him—as the strongest saint who breathes. The sucking child has as much interest and property in the

father, and in what belongs to the father—as the child that is grown up to adulthood; though the young child has not that skill, nor that power, nor wisdom to improve that interest to his advantage, as he who is grown up has. It is just so here; a soul weak in grace has as much interest in the Lord as the strongest saint has—though he has not that skill to improve that interest. And is not this a singular comfort and support? Truly, were there no more to bear up a poor weak saint from fainting under all their sins, and sorrows, and sufferings—yet this alone might do it, etc.

The *second* support and comfort to weak saints is this:

***Support 2. That God does with an eye of love, reflect upon the least good that is in them, or done by them.*** [The least star gives light; the least drop moistens.]

And is not this a glorious comfort and support, that the Lord looks with an eye of love upon the least good that is in you, or done by you? You cannot have a good thought—but God looks upon that thought with an eye of love: Psalm 32:5, "I said I would confess my sin, and you forgave my iniquity." I said it in my thoughts, that I would confess my sin, and you presently meeting me with pardoning mercy, forgave my iniquity. So in Mal. 3:16, "And there was a book of remembrance written for those who feared the Lord, and who *thought* upon his name." They had but some *thoughts* of God—and God reflects upon those thoughts with an eye of love.

Isaiah 38:5, "I have heard your prayers, I have seen your tears." Tears we look upon but as poor things, and yet God looks upon them as pearls, and therefore he puts them into his bottle, as the psalmist speaks. So in Psalm 6:8, one observes that there are two strong things in tears: (1.) They drop downward, and fall to the earth; yet they reach upwards, and pierce the heavens. (2.) They are silent—yet cry very loud. There is not a bit of bread, not a drop of drink which you give—but God casts an eye of love upon it, Mat. 25:35-36.

There is not a desire that arises in your soul—but the Lord takes notice of it: Proverbs 10:17, "You have heard the *desire* of the humble." Weak saints are full of desires, their whole life is a life of desires, they are still a-

breathing out holy desires: *Lord, pardon such a sin; and give me power against such a sin; and strength, Lord, to withstand such a temptation; and grace, Lord, to uphold me under such an affliction, etc.*; and the Lord hears and answers such gracious breathings and longings.

It was holy Jewel's desire, that he might die preaching; and God looked with an eye of love upon his desire, and he had it.

It was Latimer's desire, that he might shed his heart's blood for Christ; and God looked with an eye of love upon the breathings of his heart, and he had it.

The Israelites did but *groan*, and God looked upon their groans with an eye of love; he comes down, he makes his arm bare, he tramples upon their proud enemies, and by miracles he saved them. O weak Christian! is not this a singular comfort, that the Lord reflects with an eye of love upon your thoughts, upon your desires, upon your tears, and upon your groanings, etc. What though others slight you! what though others take no notice of you! yet the Lord casts an eye of love upon you!

Some think it very strange that God should set down in Scripture the story of Jacob, a poor countryman, Gen. 31, that he had a few ewes and lambs, streaked and spotted; and yet take no notice of the great emperors and kings of the earth, nor of their great actions and warlike designs in the world. But this is to show that tender love and respect which God bears to his children, above what he does to the great ones of this world. God is more taken with Lazarus's patched coat, than with Dives's silken robe, etc.

A *third* thing that I shall propound for the support and comfort of weak saints is this:

***Support 3. Consider, the Lord looks more upon your graces, than he does upon your weaknesses. Or thus—The Lord will not cast away weak saints, by reason of the weaknesses which cleaves to their persons or services.***

In 2 Chron. 30:18-20, there came a multitude of people to eat the

Passover—but they were not prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary; therefore Hezekiah puts up a prayer for them, and the text says, that the "Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people." The Lord looked upon their uprightness, and so passed over all their other weaknesses. He did not cast off Peter for his horrid sins—but rather looks upon him with an eye of love and pity: Mark 16:7, "Now go and give this message to his disciples, including *Peter*: Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died!" O admirable love! O matchless mercy! where sin abounds, grace does superabound. This is the glory of Christ, that he behaves sweetly towards his people, when they behave unworthily towards him. Christ looks more upon Peter's sorrow than upon his sin, upon his tears than upon his cursings, etc.

The Lord will not cast away weak saints for their great unbelief, because there is a little faith in them. He will not throw them away for that hypocrisy that is in them, because of that little sincerity which is in them. He will not cast away weak saints for that pride that is in them, because of those rays of humility which shine in them. He will not despise his people for their passions, because of those grains of meekness which are in them. We will not throw away a little gold because of a great deal of dross which cleaves to it, nor a little wheat because mixed with much chaff—and will God? will God?

We will not cast away our garments because of some spots, nor our books because of some blots, nor our jewels because of some flaws—and do we think that the Lord will cast away his dearest ones, because of their spots, and blots, and flaws? Surely not! God looks more upon the bright side of the cloud—than the dark: James 5:11, "Remember the *patience* of Job." It is not, remember the *murmuring* of Job, the *cursing* of Job, the *complaining*s of Job, the *impatience* of Job; but, "Remember the *patience* of Job." God looks upon the pearl, and not upon the spot which is in it. So in Heb. 11:30-31, there is mention made of Rahab's faith, love, and peaceable behavior towards the spies—but no mention made of her lie. The Lord overlooks her *weakness*, and keeps his eye upon her *virtues*.

Where God sees but a *little grace*, he does as it were hide his eyes from those circumstances that might seem to deface the glory of it. So in 1 Pet.

3:6, "Even as Sarah *obeyed* Abraham, calling him Lord." Mark there was but one good word in Sarah's speech to Abraham, she called her husband *Lord*; the speech otherwise was a speech of unbelief—yet the Holy Spirit speaking of her in reference to that speech, conceals all the evil in it, and mentions only the reverent title she gave to her husband, commending her for it.

He who drew Alexander, while he had a scar upon his face, drew him with his finger upon the scar. So when the Lord comes to look upon a poor soul, he lays his finger upon the scar—upon the infirmity—that he may see nothing but grace, which is the beauty and the glory of the soul.

Ah! but weak Christians are more apt to look upon their infirmities than on their graces, and because their little gold is mixed with a great deal of dross, they are ready to throw away all as dross. Well, remember this, the Lord Jesus has as great and as large an interest in the weakest saints, as he has in the strongest. He has the interest of a friend, and the interest of a father, and the interest of a head, and the interest of a husband; and, therefore, though saints are weak, yes, though they are very weak—yet having as great and as large an interest in them as in the strongest saints—he cannot but overlook their weakness, and keep a fixed eye upon their graces.

A *fourth* support is this:

***Support 4. That the Lord will graciously preserve and strengthen those weak graces which are in you.*** [The tallest oak was once an acorn; the most learned doctor was once in his alphabet book.]

Though your graces be as a spark of fire in the midst of an ocean of corruption—yet the Lord will preserve and blow up that spark of fire into a flame. It was the priest's office in the time of the law, to keep the fire in the sanctuary from going out; and it is the office of our Lord Jesus, as he is our high priest, our head, our husband, our mediator—to keep alive that heavenly fire which he has kindled in any of our souls. His honor, his faithfulness, and his goodness is engaged in it, and therefore he cannot but do it—else he would lose much love and many prayers and praises—

did he not nourish, preserve, and strengthen his own work in his own people.

The faith of the disciples was generally weak, as I have formerly showed you, and yet how sweetly does the Lord Jesus react towards them! John 16, Acts 2. He was still a-breathing out light, life, and love upon them; he was still a-turning their water into wine, their bitter into sweet, and their discouragements into encouragements—and all to raise and keep up their spirits. His heart was much in this thing, therefore says he, "It is necessary that I leave you, that I may send the Comforter to be a comfort and guide unto you." I will pour out my Spirit upon you, that a little one may become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation, and that the feeble may be as David, and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord, Zech. 12:8.

That is a sweet text, Isaiah 65:8, "But I will not destroy them all," says the Lord. "For just as good grapes are found among a cluster of bad ones (and someone will say, 'Don't throw them all away—there are some good grapes there!'), so I will not destroy all Israel. For I still have true servants there." Oh, says Christ to the Father, here are a company of weak saints that have some buddings of grace, oh do not destroy it, Father! there is a blessing in it, though it be but weak. The genuine sense of the similitude, I think, is this: when a vine being blasted or otherwise decayed is grown so bad and so barren, that scarce any good clusters of grapes can be discerned on it, whereby it may be deemed to have any life, or of ever becoming fruitful again, and the farmer is about to cut it down to the ground, one standing by sees here a cluster, and there a little cluster, and cries out, Oh do not not cut down the vine, it has a little life, and by good husbandry it may be made fruitful. We may look upon the Lord Jesus as thus pleading with his Father's justice: *Father, I know you see that these souls are dry and barren, and that there is little or no good in them, and therefore you might justly cut them down. But, O my Father! I see here a bunch and there a bunch, here a little grace and there a little grace—surely there is a blessing it. Oh spare it, let it not be destroyed.*

Mat. 12:27, "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory." [It is the custom of Biblical writers, to use phrases whereby they understand much more than

they do express: an example whereof you have in this verse, where Christ's not breaking the bruised reed signifies his great mercy and kindness in repairing, and restoring, and curing the bruised weakling. And so his not quenching the smoking flax is his enlivening, quickening, and inflaming that fire or spark of grace or goodness which was almost quenched, etc.]

"A bruised reed he will not break." The Jewish commentators understand it thus: he shall not tyrannise over—but nourish and cherish the poor, weak, feeble ones, who are accustomed to be oppressed by great ones. But men more spiritual understand it thus: Christ will not behave roughly and rigorously towards poor weak tender souls, whose graces are as a bruised reed and as smoking flax. A reed is a contemptible thing, a fragile thing, it will break sometimes before a man is aware; a *bruised* reed is more fragile, it will be broken with a touch—yet Christ will not break such a bruised reed, that is, a soul weak in grace.

"A smoldering wick he will not snuff out." The wick of a candle is of little worth, and yet less when it smokes, as yielding neither light nor heat—but rather smokes, and offends with an foul smell, which men cannot bear—but will put it out. But the Lord Jesus Christ will not do so. Souls whose knowledge, love, faith, and zeal do as but smoke—the Lord Jesus will not trample under foot; nay, he will cherish, nourish, and strengthen such—to life eternal. Look, what wax is to the wick, or oil is to the lamp—that will the Lord Jesus be to the graces of weak Christians.

"Till he leads justice to victory." That is, until the sanctified frame of grace begun in their hearts be brought to that perfection that it prevails over all opposite corruption.

Thus you see how sweetly the Lord Jesus behaves towards souls weak in grace; therefore let not those who bring forth a hundredfold despise those who bring forth but thirty, nor those who have five talents despise those who have but two.

The *fifth* support is this:

***Support 5. That weak saints may be very useful to the strong,***

***and sometimes may do more than strong saints can.***

As you may see in 1 Cor. 12:14-28. The apostle in this Scripture discovers the singular use of the weakest saint in the body of Christ, by the usefulness of the weakest and lowest member in the natural body to the strongest: ver. 21, "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the foot, I have no need of you." By the *head* and by the *eye* he means such saints as were eminent in gifts and graces, who were adorned more richly and who shined more gloriously in grace and gracious abilities than others. Oh these should not despise those who were not so eminent and excellent as themselves; for God has so tempered the inequality of the members in the natural body, that the more excellent and beautiful members cannot do without the more abject and weak members; therefore slight not the weakest saints, for certainly, at first or last, the weakest will be serviceable to the strongest. A dwarf may be useful to a giant, a child to a man; sometimes a little finger shall do that which a limb in the body cannot do; it is so often in Christ's spiritual body. I will give you a very famous instance for this.

Weak Christians may be of singular use to the strongest; those who know most may learn more even from the weakest saints. [A little star has light and influence, though not the glory which is proper to the sun.]

Junius was converted by discoursing with a ploughman. In Acts 18:24-27, Apollos, though he was an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures as the text speaks—yet was he furthered and bettered in the knowledge of Christ's kingdom by Aquila and Priscilla. A poor tent-maker and his wife were instrumental to acquaint him with those things that he knew but weakly, and so communicated their light and knowledge to him.

The *sixth* support is this:

***Support 6. Where there is but a little grace, there God expects less, and will accept of less, though it be accompanied with many failings.***

You say, Oh! I have but a little grace, a little faith, a little love, a little zeal. Oh know, where there is but a little grace, there God expects less

obedience, and will accept of less service: 2 Cor. 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man has, and not according to that which he has not." The two pennies dropped into the treasury, Luke 21:3, by the poor widow, her heart being in the action, were more acceptable than large amounts cast in by the rich people. Noah's sacrifice could not be great, and yet it was greatly accepted by God. In the time of the law, God accepted a handful of meal for a sacrifice, and a parcel of goat's hair for an oblation; and certainly God has lost none of his affections to poor souls in the time of the gospel.

Canticles 2:14, "Let me hear your *voice*, for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely." The Hebrew word for *voice* signifies any sound such as birds or brutes make. Their *chattering* is like lovely songs in the ear of God, their *penny* is a sweet offering. Parents, who have but some drops of that love and tender affection that is in God to his people—they accept of a very little service from their weak children; and will not God? In time of strength God looks for much—but in the time of weakness God will bear much, and overlook much, and accept of a little, yes, of a very little. [It is very observable that the eagle and the lion, those brave creatures, were not offered in sacrifice unto God—but the poor lamb and dove: to note that your brave, high, and lofty spirits God regards not; but your poor, meek, lowly spirits God accepts.]

One, writing of the tree of knowledge, says that "it bears many leaves—but little fruit." Though weak saints have a great many leaves, and but little fruit, little grace—yet that little the Lord will kindly accept of.

Artaxerxes, the Persian monarch, was famous for accepting of a little water from the hand of a loving subject; God makes himself famous, and his grace glorious, by his kind acceptance of the weakest endeavors of his people, etc.

The *seventh* support is this:

***Support 7. The least measure of grace is as true and as good and sure a pledge of greater measures of grace that the soul shall have here, and of glory that the soul shall have hereafter—as the greatest measure of grace***

"He who has begun a good work, he will perfect it to the day of Christ," Philip. 1:6. Christ is called not only the *author*—but also the *finisher* of our faith, Heb. 12:2. In Mal. 4:2, "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture." And so in Job 17:9, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Zech. 12:8, "On that day the Lord will defend the people of Jerusalem; the weakest among them will be as mighty as King David! And the royal descendants will be like God, like the angel of the Lord who goes before them!" So in Hosea 14:5-7, "I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. It will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. Its branches will spread out like those of beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedar forests of Lebanon. My people will return again to the safety of their land. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon."

The tree in Alcinous's garden always had blossoms, buds, and ripe fruits, one under another. Such a tree, will God make every Christian to be. "The righteous," though ever so weak, "shall flourish like the palm tree," Psalm 92:12-14. Now the palm tree never loses his leaf or fruit, says Pliny.

An old man being asked if he grew in goodness, answered, Yes, doubtless I believe I do, because the Lord has said, "They shall still bring forth fruit *in old age*, they shall be fat, and flourishing."

In the island of St. Thomas, on the back side of Africa, in the midst of it is a hill, and over that a continual cloud, wherewith the whole island is watered. Such a cloud is Christ to weak saints. Though our hearts naturally are like the isle of Patmos, which is so barren of any good as that nothing will grow but on earth that is brought from other places—yet Christ will make them like "a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not," Isaiah 58:11.

The *eighth* support is this:

***Support 8. That the least good that is done by the weakest saint shall not be despised by Christ—but highly esteemed and***

## ***rewarded.***

The Lord comes—with a great reward for a little work. As you may see in Mat. 19:27, "Behold we have forsaken *all*, and followed you, and what shall we have?" A great *all!* a great catch indeed, as I have formerly showed you; they left a few old boats and torn nets and poor household stuff—yet Christ reacts very sweetly and lovingly to them, and tells them in verse 28, that they would "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Christ tells them they shall sit as kings. They are here but obscure kings—but kings elected; but in that day they shall be kings crowned, kings glorified, kings acknowledged. Then they shall as far outshine the glory of the sun, as the sun now outshines a twinkling star. In that day they shall be "higher than the kings of the earth," Psalm 89:27.

So in Mat. 10:42, "And whoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, truly I say unto you, he shall never lose his reward, for a cup of cold water." Water, the common element, and cold water, which cost them not so much as fire to warm it; for that, there is a torrent and a very sea of all pleasures provided for you to all eternity. God esteems men's deeds by their minds—and not their minds by their deeds. The least and cheapest courtesy that can be showed shall be rewarded. There is an emphasis in that deep asseveration, "Truly I say unto you, he shall never lose his reward." God is not likely to break his promise; neither will he forget the least good done by the least saint. The butler may forget Joseph, and Joseph may forget his father's house—but the Lord will not forget the least good done by the weakest saint.

Agrippa, having suffered imprisonment for wishing Caligula emperor, the first thing Caligula did when he came to the empire, was to promote Agrippa to a kingdom. He gave him also a chain of gold as heavy as the chain of iron, which was upon him in prison. And will not Christ richly reward for all our well-wishes toward him, and for all our gracious actings for him? Surely he will. He has a king's heart, as well as a king's purse.

The Duke of Burgundy, being a wise and loving man, did bountifully

reward a poor gardener, for offering of him a root, being the best present the poor man had; and will not our God, whose very nature is goodness, kindness, and sweetness, etc., do much more? Surely he will reward the least good done by the weakest saint. Therefore be not discouraged, weak Christians, though you should meet with hard measure from the world, though they should reward your weak services with reproaches, etc., for the Lord will reward you; he "will not despise the day of small things," Heb. 6:10. What though, O precious soul, your language is clipped and broken? what though you can but chatter like a crane? what though you can not talk as fluently and eloquently for Christ as others? what though your hand is so weak, that you can not do so much for Christ as others? nor do so well for Christ as others? Yet the Lord, seeing your heart sincere, will reward you. **You shall have an everlasting rest for a little labor, and a great reward for a little work!**

The *ninth* support is this:

***Support 9. That as your graces are weaker than others—so your temptations shall be fewer—and your afflictions lighter than others.***

God in much wisdom and love will suit your burdens to your backs; he will suit all your temptations and afflictions to your strength. Your burdens shall not be great—if your strength be but little; as you may see, 1 Cor. 10:13, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." The Lord, O weak Christian! will suit your burden to your back—and his strokes to your strength. This is most evident in Scripture, that *the strongest in grace have always been most tempted, afflicted, and distressed*. [When Latimer was at the stake, ready to be burned, he breathed out those sweet words, *God is faithful!*]

If **Abraham** excels others in *faith*, God will test the strength of Abraham's faith to the uttermost, and put him to that test, which he never put man to before, Gen. 20. If **Moses** excels all others in *meekness*, the Lord will test the strength of that grace, and Moses shall have to do with as proud and as murmuring a generation, as ever man had to do with. If

**Job** excels all others in *patience*, he shall be exercised with such strange and unheard of afflictions, as shall try not only the truth—but also the strength of his patience to the uttermost. If **Paul** has more glorious *revelations* than the rest of the apostles, Paul shall be more buffeted and exercised with temptations, than the rest of the apostles. [Num. 12:3; Exod. 16:7-8; Num. 14:27, 36, and 16:11; Exod. 15:24; James 5:11; read the 1st, 6th, and 7th chapters of Job; 2 Cor. 12:1-11.]

And thus you see it clear by all these instances, that the **best and choicest saints have always met with the worst and greatest temptations and afflictions**. So when the disciples were in the lowest form, when they were weak in grace, the Lord Jesus exercises them but with light afflictions; but when they had a greater measure of the Spirit poured upon them, then their troubles were increased and multiplied, and their former troubles, in comparison of the latter, were but as scratches of pins, compared to stabs at the heart, Acts 2:1-21. When the Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon them—then they were greatly afflicted, opposed, and persecuted; when they had a greater measure of the Spirit, to enable them to bear the hatred, frowns, strokes, and blows of the enraged world—then all of them had the honor to suffer a violent death for Christ, as histories do evidence.

That is a very remarkable scripture, Luke 24:49, "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven." The Lord Jesus would not have them go from Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high—the gifts and graces of the Spirit that are promised in Isaiah 44:3; Joel 2:28; John 14:16, and 15:26. Says Christ, "Stay here in the city, until you are completely armed and fitted for all encounters, until you be endued with power;" or, as the Greek carries it, "until you are clothed." They were as naked persons; they had but a little of the Spirit, so that they were not complete; they were not *clothed* with the Spirit, until after the ascension of Christ. Now says Christ, "Wait until such time as you are clothed with the Spirit." The Lord Jesus knew well enough that they would meet with bitter opposition, terrible afflictions, and dreadful persecution for his and the gospel's sake; therefore "stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven," that so

nothing may daunt you, nor sink you.

The *tenth* support is this:

***Support 10. That your persons stand not before God in your own righteousness—but in the perfect, spotless, and matchless righteousness of the Lord Jesus.***

Weak hearts are apt to sit down troubled and discouraged, when they look upon that body of sin that is in them, and those imperfections which attend their chief services; they are ready to say, We shall one day perish by the strength of our lusts, or by the defects of our services. Oh but weak souls should remember this, to strengthen them against all discouragements, that their persons stand before God, clothed with the righteousness of their Savior, and so God owns them and looks upon them as persons wrapped up in his royal robe. Hence it is that he is called, Jer. 23:6, "JEHOVAH TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness." And so in 1 Cor. 1:30, "He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." [The costly cloak of Alcisthenes, which Dionysius sold to the Carthaginians for a large sum, is a mean and beggarly rag, compared to that embroidered mantle which Christ puts upon the weakest saints.]

Though weak saints have nothing of their own—yet in Christ they have all, for in him is all fullness, Col. 1:19, both repletive and diffusive; both of abundance and of redundance; both of plenty and of bounty. Christ is made to weak saints **wisdom**, by his prophetic office; and he is made to weak saints **righteousness** and sanctification, by his priestly office; and he is made to weak saints **redemption**, by his kingly office. So in Col. 2:10, "And you are complete in him—who is the head of all principality and power."

Varro reports of two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions which were among the philosophers, as to what constituted *happiness*; but they were wrong in them all, one judging his happiness lay in this and another in that. They caught at the shadow of happiness—but could not come at the tree of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is weak saints' complete happiness. Rev. 14:5, "They were without fault before the throne of God."

Though men may accuse you, judge and condemn you—yet know for your support, that you are acquitted before the throne of God. However you may stand in the eyes of men, as full of nothing but faults, people made up of nothing but sin—yet are you clear in the eyes of God. So in Cant. 4:7, "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you." There is no spot in God's account. God looks upon weak saints in the Son of his love, and sees them all lovely; they are as the tree of Paradise, Gen. 3:6, "fair to his eye, and pleasant to his taste." Or as Absalom, in whom there was no blemish from head to foot. Ah, poor souls! you are apt to look upon your spots and blots, and to cry out with the leper not only "Unclean, unclean!" but "Undone, undone!" Well, forever remember this, that your persons stand before God in the righteousness of Christ; upon which account you always appear, before the throne of God, without fault; you are all fair, and there is no spot in you.

The *eleventh* support is this:

***Support 11. Your sins shall never provoke Christ, nor prevail with Christ so far, as to give you a bill of divorce.*** [Read Jer. 3. Out of the most poisonous drugs God distills his glory and our salvation. Galen speaks of a maid, called Nupella, who was nourished by poison. God can and will turn the very sins of his people, which are the worst poison in all the world, into his children's advantage.]

Oh there is much in it, if the Lord would set it home upon your hearts. Your sins shall never prevail so far with Christ, nor ever so far provoke him, as to work him to give you a bill of divorce. Your sins may provoke Christ to frown upon you, they may provoke Christ to chide with you, they may provoke him greatly to correct you—but they shall never provoke Christ to give you a bill of divorce: Psalm 89:30-34, "But if his sons forsake my law and fail to walk in my ways, if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands, then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their disobedience with beating. But I will never stop loving him, nor let my promise to him fail. No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said."

That is a great support to a weak saint—that his sin shall never separate him from God nor Christ. You are many times afraid that this deadness,

this dullness, this earthliness, and these wandering thoughts, etc., which attend you, will provoke the Lord Jesus to sue a bill of divorce against you. But remember this, your sins shall never so far prevail with Christ, as to work him to give you a bill of divorce.

Mark—There is nothing can provoke Christ to give you a bill of divorce but sin. Now sin is slain; *consequently*, I shall open this to you in three things:

[1.] *First, Sin is slain JUDICIALLY*; for it is condemned both by Christ and his people, and so it is dead according to law; which is and may be a singular comfort and support to weak saints, that their greatest and worst enemy, sin, is condemned to die, and shall not forever vex and torment their precious souls. It is dead judicially, it is under the sentence of condemnation: 1 Cor. 15:55, 56, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin," etc. The apostle here triumphs over it as a thief condemned to death. Sin is sentenced now; though not fully put to death, it is dead judicially. As when the sentence of death is passed upon a malefactor, you say he is a dead man; why? he is judicially dead; so is sin, sin is judicially dead. When a man who has robbed and wounded another is taken, and sentenced judicially—we say he is a dead man. Sin, O weak soul! is sentenced and judicially slain; and therefore that can never work the Lord Jesus to give you a bill of divorce. The thoughts of which should much refresh you and support you.

[2.] *Secondly, Sin is dead or slain CIVILLY, as well as judicially*. It is civilly dead, because the power of it is much abated, and its dominion and tyranny overpowered. As when a king or tyrant is whipped and stripped of his power to domineer, reign, and play the tyrant, he is civilly dead, even while he lives; so is sin in this sense dead even while it lives, Romans 6:14. [It is with sin in the saints as it was with those beasts, Dan. 7:12, which had their dominions taken away, though their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.]

Adam died civilly the same day that he sinned. The creatures that before lovingly obeyed him, as soon as he renounced obedience to his God, they renounced all obedience to him or his sovereignty, so that he civilly died the very same day that he sinned.

That is a sweet word that you have, Romans 6:11, "Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." Therefore Christ will never divorce you for sin. Oh what a support may this be to a weak saint, that sin, which he fears above all other things in the world, is slain judicially and civilly. The Lord has whipped and stripped it of all its ruling, reigning, domineering, tyrannizing power. Oh, therefore, Christians, look upon sin as dead, that is, as not to be obeyed, as not to be acknowledged, no more than a tyrant who is stripped of all his tyrannizing power. People who are wise, and understand their liberty, look not upon such a one as fit to be obeyed and served—but as one fit to be renounced and destroyed. You must so look upon your sins, and deal accordingly with them. [Where sin sits in the soul, as a king sits upon his throne, and commands the heart, as a king commands his subjects, there is reign of sin; but grace frees the soul from this.]

[3.] *Thirdly, Sin is slain NATURALLY*, as well as civilly. Christ has given it its death's wound by his death and resurrection. He has given sin such a wound, that it cannot be long-lived, though it may linger a while in a saint. As a tree that is cut at the root with a sore gash or two, must die within a year, perhaps a month, nay, it may be within a week; though for a time it may flourish, it may have leaves and fruit—yet it secretly dies, and will very shortly wither and perish. The Lord Jesus has given sin such a mortal wound, by his death and Spirit, and by the communication of his favor and grace to the soul, that sin shall never more recover its strength—but die a lingering death in the souls of the saints. Christ did not die all at once upon the cross—but little by little; to show us, that his death should extend to the slaying of sin gradually in the souls of the saints.

When our enemy has a mortal wound, we say he is a dead man, his wound is mortal; so when Jesus Christ has given sin such a deadly wound, such a mortal blow, that it shall never more recover its strength and power—we may truly say, it is dead, it is slain. Therefore cheer up, O weak souls, for certainly sin which is thus slain can never provoke Jesus Christ to give you a bill of divorce. Ah! that all weak Christians would, like the bee, abide upon these sweet flowers, and gather honey out of them, etc.

To proceed. The *twelfth* support is this:

**Support 12. Christ and you are sharers.** Know this, weak saints, for your support and comfort,

**1. That Christ shares with you—and you share with Christ.** I shall open this sweet truth to you a little.

[1.] *Christ shares with you in your NATURES.*

In Heb. 2:16, "For truly he took not on him the nature of angels—but he took on him the seed of Abraham." And by this he has advanced fallen man above the very angels. This is the great mystery spoken of, 1 Tim. 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifested in the flesh," etc.

[2.] *The Lord Jesus shares with you in your AFFLICTIONS.*

In Isaiah 63:9, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years." It is between Christ and his church as between two lute strings, no sooner one is struck but the other trembles.

The ancients use to say commonly, that Alexander and Hephastion had but one soul in two distinct bodies, because their joy and sorrow, glory and disgrace, was mutual to them both. It is so between Christ and his saints. *Their names, which are written in red letters of blood in the church's calendar, are written in golden letters in Christ's register in the book of life,* said Prudentius. *In my lifetime,* said a gracious soul, *I have been assaulted with temptations from Satan, and he has cast my sins into my teeth to drive me to despair; yet the Lord gave me strength to overcome all his temptations.*

[3.] *He shares with you in all SUFFERINGS and PERSECUTIONS.*

Acts 9:4-5, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" There is such a near union between the Lord Jesus Christ and the weakest saints, that a man cannot strike a saint but he must strike through the very heart of Christ. Their sufferings are held his, Col. 1:24; and their afflictions are his

afflictions, and their reproaches are his reproaches, Heb. 13:13; and their provocations are his provocations, Neh. 4:4-5; God is provoked more than Nehemiah. So Isaiah 8:18, compared with

Heb. 2:13. "Behold I, and the children whom the Lord has given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel." This the apostle applies to Christ, Heb. 2:13.

[4.] *The Lord Jesus Christ shares with you in all your TEMPTATIONS.* Heb. 2:17-18, and 4:15-16.

Christ was tempted, and he was afflicted as well as you, that he might be able so support you who are tempted. As a poor man who has been troubled with pain and grief, he will share with others who are troubled with pain or grief. Ah, friends! the Lord Jesus Christ has lost none of his affections by going to heaven; he is still full of compassion, though free from personal passion. When he was on earth, oh! how did he sympathize with his poor servants in all their temptations. "Satan," says Christ to Peter, "has desired to winnow you—but I have prayed for you who your faith fail not," Luke 22:32. Luther, in his preaching, addressed every man's temptation, and being once asked how he could do so? answered, *Because I have experienced manifold temptations and experiences myself.* Oh! the manifold temptations that the Lord Jesus has undergone, makes him sensible, as I may say, and willing to share with us in our temptations.

2. As Christ shares with weak saints, so ***weak saints share with Christ.*** And this I shall show you briefly in a few particulars.

[1.] Weak saints share with Christ *in his DIVINE NATURE.*

2 Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature." Not of the substance of the Godhead—for that is incommunicable; but by the divine nature we are to understand those divine qualities, called elsewhere, "the image of God," "the life of God," that whereby we are made like to God in wisdom and holiness, wherein the image of God, after which man was at first created, consists, Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10. [To be

made partakers of the divine nature notes two things: (1.) fellowship with God in his holiness; (2.) a fellowship with God in his blessedness.]

Saints do partake of this divine nature, that is, of those divine qualities before spoken of—they resemble God, not only as a picture does a man, in outward lineaments—but as a child does his father, in countenance and disposition. And well may grace be called "the divine nature," for as God brings light out of darkness, comfort out of sorrow, riches out of poverty, and glory out of shame; so does grace bring day out of night, and sweet out of bitter, and plenty out of poverty, and glory out of shame. Grace turns pennies into gold, pebbles into pearls, sickness into health, weakness into strength, and needs into abundance. "Having nothing—and yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. 6:10, etc.

[2.] Weak saints share with Christ *in his SPIRIT and GRACE*.

In Psalm 45:7, Christ is "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." They have the anointings of the Spirit, as well as he—though not so richly as he. They have their measure, though not that measure and proportion of the Spirit as the Lord Jesus has. So in John 1:16, "Of his fullness have all we received, grace for grace." There is in Christ not only a fullness of abundance—but also a fullness of redundance. There is an overflowing fullness in Christ, as a fountain overflows, and yet still remains full. "Grace for grace," or, "grace upon grace." Abundance of grace, and the increases of graces, one by another.

"Grace for grace," that is—as the paper from the press receives letter for letter; or as the wax from the seal receives print for print; or as the mirror from the image receives face for face—so does the weakest saint receive from Jesus Christ.

"Grace for grace," that is, for every grace that is in Christ, there is the same grace in us, in some measure. There is not the weakest saint who breathes—but has in him some *wisdom* that answers to the wisdom of Christ, and some *love* that answers to the love of Christ, and some *humility*, meekness, and faith, that answers to the humility, meekness, and faith of the Lord Jesus—in truth and reality—though not in degree or quantity, etc.

[3.] Weak saints share with Christ, *in the manifestations and discoveries of his FATHER.*

The Lord Jesus, who lies in the bosom of the Father, has the clearest and the fullest manifestations of the Father that can be, and he comes and opens the love and heart of the Father, he unbosoms God to the weakest saints, as in John 15:15, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." So in John 17:6-8.

[4.] Weak saints share with Christ *in his honorable TITLES.*

In the title of **sons**, 1 John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us—that we should be called the sons of God!" And in that of **heirs**, Romans 8:17. Yes, they are **priests**, and **prophets**, and **kings**, as well as he, as you may see by comparing Rev. 8:5-6, with 1 Peter 2:9, etc. [The wife shares with her husband in all his titles of honor; so does a Christian with his Christ.]

[5.] Weak saints share with Christ *in his CONQUESTS.*

In 1 Cor. 15:55-57, Romans 8:37, Christ has triumphed over sword, famine, death, and devils, etc., and so have they through him also. Over all these we are more than conquerors, we are over and above conquerors. Oh what a blessed thing is this! that weak saints should share with Christ in his conquests. The poor weak soldier shares with his general in all his noble and honorable conquests; so does a poor weak Christian share with his Christ in all his noble and honorable conquests. [See 1 Sam. 18:17-29; Col. 2:14, 15; Eph. 2:13-16; Heb. 2:14,15; Romans 8:37.]

[6.] Lastly, They share with Christ *in his HONOR and GLORY.*

And what would they have more? John 12:26, "If any man serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serves me—him will my Father honor." 1 Peter 5:1, Eph. 2:6, "And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in

Christ Jesus." Believers are already risen in Christ their head, and they do at this instant sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Christ, as a public person, does represent all believing souls, and they are set down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In Romans 8:17, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." And in John 14:2-3, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." So in Rev. 3:21, "To him who overcomes will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." [Christ is the believer's precursor, to prepare for them the best mansions, etc.]

Now, what would you have more, weak souls? Christ shares with you, and you share with Christ. You are apt to be discouraged because you do not share with Christ in such measures of grace, comfort, and holiness—as such and such strong saints do. Oh! but remember in how many weighty things Christ and you are sharers—and be dejected if you can! Ah, Christians! what though you do not share in the honors, profits, pleasures, and advantages of the world; yet this should be your joy and crown—that Christ and your souls are sharers in those things which are most eminent and excellent, most precious and glorious. The serious remembrance thereof, should bear up your heads, hopes, and hearts—above all the troubles, temptations, and afflictions that come upon you in this world, etc.

**III.** The third thing propounded, was *to show you the DUTY of weak saints.* **Who** these weak saints are, you have heard; and what their **supports** and **comforts** are, you have heard; and now I shall show you their **duty** in the following particulars.

And the *first* duty that I shall press upon weak saints is this:

**1. To be thankful for that little grace they have.** [The laws of Persia, Macedonia, and Athens, condemned the ungrateful person to death; and certainly unthankfulness may well be styled the epitome of all vices.]

Will you be thankful, O Christian, for the least courtesy showed you by men? And will you not be thankful for that little measure of grace that is bestowed upon you by God? Do you remember, O weak Christian! that the least measure of grace is more worth than a thousand worlds? that it is more worth than heaven itself? Do you remember, O weak Christian! that the greatest number of men have not the least measure or grain of saving grace? Does free grace knock at *your* door, when it passes by the doors of thousands? And does it cast the pearl of great price into *your* bosom, when others are left to wallow in their blood forever? And will you not be thankful? Oh do but consider, weak souls, how notoriously wicked you would have been if the Lord had not bestowed a little grace upon you! You look, O soul, one way, and there you hear some a-cursing, and a-blaspheming God to his very face. Had not the Lord given you a little grace, ten thousand to one but you had been one in wickedness among these monsters of mankind. And you look another way, and there you see persons dicing, carding, gambling and drunkenning, etc.; why, had not the Lord vouchsafed to you some tastes and sips of grace, you might have been as vile as the vilest among them! Ah, weak saints! you do not think what an awakened conscience would give for a little of that little grace that the Lord has given you. Were all the world a lump of gold, and in their hand to give—they would give it for the least spark of grace, for the least drop of mercy.

I have read of a man who, being in a burning fever, professed that if he had all the world at his dispose, he would give it all for one draught of beer. So would an awakened conscience give for one grain of grace. *Oh!* says such a soul, *when I look up and see God frowning, when I look inward and feel conscience gnawing and accusing, when I look downward and see hell open to receive me, and when I look on my right and left hand, and see devils standing ready to accuse me, oh! had I a thousand worlds I would give them all for a little drop of that grace that such and such souls have, whom I have formerly slighted and despised.* Oh! what would not a damned soul, that has been but an hour in hell, give for a drop of that grace that you have in your heart! Think seriously of this and be thankful. [One of the kings of England in his straits cried out, "A kingdom for a horse! a kingdom for a horse!" So do awakened consciences cry out, *A kingdom for a Christ! a kingdom for a Christ, or a*

*little grace!]*

Well! remember one thing more, and that is this, namely, that there is no such way to get much grace, as to be thankful for a little grace. He who opens his mouth wide in praises, shall have his heart filled with graces. Ingratitude stops the ear of God, and shuts the hand of God, and turns away the heart of the God of grace, and therefore you had need be thankful for a little grace. Unthankfulness is the greatest injustice that may be; it is a withholding from the great landlord of heaven and earth his due, his debt.

Philip branded his soldier who asked for the land of one that had relieved him and kindly entertained him, with *the ungrateful guest*. Lycurgus among all his laws, made none against the ungrateful; because that was thought a thing so wicked, as not to be committed by man. O weak saints! give not God an occasion by your ingratitude to brand you, and to write upon your foreheads, *ungrateful children*. Had it not been for unthankfulness, Adam had been in paradise, the lapsed angels in heaven, and the Jews in their own land of promise. You know how to apply it, Isaiah 1:3-4.

But that I may in good earnest stir up your souls to thankfulness—will you take home with you these things, that perhaps have never or seldom been thought of by you?

[1.] *First, Consider, **that there is more need of praises than there is of prayers.***

Two things do with open mouth proclaim this truth. And the first is this, our mercies greatly outweigh our needs. This is true in temporals—but infinitely more in spirituals and eternal. You lack this and that temporal mercy, and what is your lack, O soul! of this and that single mercy—compared to the multitudes of temporal mercies that you do enjoy? And as for spirituals, there is nothing more clear than this, that your spiritual mercies do infinitely outweigh your spiritual lacks. You lack this and that spiritual mercy—but what are those lacks to that God, that Christ, and all those spiritual blessings in heavenly places, with which you are blessed in Christ Jesus, Eph. 1:4. [God's favors and mercies seldom or never come

single; there is a series or chain of them, and every former draws on a future.]

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider this, ***That all your wants and miseries are deserved and procured by your sins.*** Jer. 4:18, "Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you: this is your wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reaches unto your heart." And chapter 5:25, "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you." But all your mercies are unmerited and undeserved; they all flow in upon you from the free love and favor of God; and therefore there is more need of praises than of prayers. And oh! that the high praises of God were more in your mouths, upon this very account! And oh that, with David, you would summon all the faculties of your souls to praise the Lord, who has filled you, and followed you with the riches of mercy all your days, Psalm 149:2, and 103:1-5. [God and Christ are the sole fountain from whence all these streams of living waters flow.] But,

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider this, ***Thankfulness is a surer and a better evidence of our sincerity, than praying or hearing, or such like services, are.***

Thanksgiving is a self-denying grace; it is an uncrowning ourselves and the creatures, to set the crown upon the head of our Creator; it is the making ourselves a footstool, that God may be lifted up upon his throne, and ride in a holy triumph over all; it is a grace that gives God the supremacy in all our hearts, thoughts, desires, words, and works. Self-love, flesh and blood, and many low and carnal considerations, may carry men to pray, and hear, and talk, etc. The whip may work a slave to work—but thankfulness is the free-will offering of a child. There is nothing that so clearly and so fully speaks out your sincerity, as thankfulness does. Therefore, weak saints, if you would have a substantial evidence of your sincerity—be thankful for a little grace. The little birds do not sip one drop of water—but they look up, as if they meant to give thanks, to show us what we should do for every drop of grace, etc. [It is much to be feared that that man is Christless and graceless, who is earnest in craving mercies—but slow and dull in returning praises. It is a sign that the dumb devil has possessed such a man.]

The fourth and last consideration to set this home is this:

[4.] ***A thankful soul holds consort with the music of heaven.***

By thankfulness you are like the angels, who are still a-singing hallelujahs to him who sits upon the throne, and is blessed forever, Rev. 4:6-9, and 5:12-14. **In heaven there are no prayers—but all praises.** I am apt to think, that there cannot be a clearer nor a greater argument of a man's right to heaven, and ripeness for heaven, than this, being much in the work of heaven here on earth. There is no grace but love, nor no duty but thankfulness, which goes with us to heaven. [Epictetus wished he were a nightingale, to be ever singing. And what then should a saint wish?]

Ay—but weak saints may say, Sir! we judge that there is weight in what you say, to provoke us to thankfulness; but did we know that we had true grace, though it were ever so little, though it were but as the grain of mustard seed, we would be thankful. But this is our condition, we live between fears and hopes; one day hoping we shall go to heaven, and be happy forever; another day we are fearing that we shall go to hell, and miscarry forever; and thus we are up and down, backward and forward. Sometimes we believe we have grace, and at other times we doubt we have none; sometimes we have a little light, and suddenly our sun is clouded; one day we are ready to say with David, "The Lord is our portion," and the next day we are ready to complain with Jonah, that we are "cast out" from the presence of the Lord.

Methinks I hear a weak saint saying thus to me, Sir, I would gladly have an end put to this controversy which has been so long in my soul, namely, whether I have grace or not, and if you please, I will tell you what I find, and so humbly desire your judgment and opinion upon the whole.

Well, speak on, poor soul, and let me hear what you have found in your own soul.

Why, sir, then thus:

[1.] I find, first, *a holy restlessness in my soul—until with old Simeon I*

*have gotten Christ in my arms, yes, until I have gotten Christ in my heart, Luke 2:25-33. I go from duty to duty, and from ordinance to ordinance, and yet I cannot rest, because "I cannot find him whom my soul loves," Cant. 5:10. I am like Noah's dove, which could not rest until he had gotten into the ark. Oh I cannot be quiet until I know that I am housed in Christ. My soul is like a ship in a storm, which is tossed hither and there, oh! where shall I find him? Oh! how shall I obtain him who is the chief of ten thousand? What Absalom said in another case, I can say in this, says the poor soul; in his banishment he could say, "What is all this to me, so long as I cannot see the king's face?" And truly the language of my soul is this, What is honor to me? and riches to me? and the favor of creatures to me? so long as I go mourning without my Christ, so long as I see not my saving interest in my Christ. [The child is restless until it be in the mother's arms.]*

Well, have you anything else to say, O weak Christian?

Yes sir, I have one thing more to say.

What is that?

Why, it is this:

[2.] *I can truly say, that the poorest, the most distressed and afflicted man in the world, is not fuller of desires, nor stronger in his desires than I am. The poor man desires bread to feed him, and the wounded man desires a plaster to heal him, and the sick man desires cordials to strengthen him, etc. But these are not fuller of desires after those things which are suitable to them, than I am of holy and heavenly desires. Oh that I had more of God! oh that I were filled with Christ! oh that I had his righteousness to cover me, his grace to pardon me, his power to support me, his wisdom to counsel me, his loving-kindness to refresh me, and his happiness to crown me, etc.*

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir, I have one thing more to tell you.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[3.] *Though I dare not say that Christ is mine—yet I can truly say, that Christ, his love, his works, his grace, his word, are the main objects of*

*my contemplation and meditation.* Oh, I am always best, when I am most a-meditating and contemplating Christ, his love, his grace, etc. Psalm 139:17, "How precious are your thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them!"

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir, I have one thing more to say.

What is that?

Why, it is this:

[4.] I can truly say, *That the lack of Christ's love is a greater grief and burden to my soul, than the lack of any outward thing in this world.* I am in a lacking condition, as to temporals; I lack health, and strength, and trading, friends, and money, "which is the answer to all things," as Solomon speaks, Eccles. 10:19. And yet all these lacks do not so grieve me, and so afflict and trouble me, as the lack of Christ, as the lack of grace, as the lack of the discoveries of that favor, which is better than life, Psalm 63:3-4.

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir, there is one thing more.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[5.] *That I would not willingly nor resolvedly sin against Christ, for a world.* It is true, I dare not say I have a saving interest in Christ—yet I dare say that I would not willingly and resolvedly sin against Christ for a world. [I will rather leap into a bonfire than willfully to commit wickedness, willfully to sin against God.] I can say, through grace, were I this moment to die, that my greatest fear is of sinning against Christ, and my greatest care is of pleasing Christ. I know there was a time, when my greatest care was to please myself and the creature, and my greatest fear was to displease myself and the creature. I can remember with sorrow and sadness of heart, how often I have displeased Christ to please myself, and displeased Christ to please the creature. But now it is quite otherwise with me, my greatest care is to please Christ, and my greatest fear is of offending Christ. [*And I, said Anselm, had rather go to hell pure from sin than to heaven polluted with that filth.* The primitive Christians chose

rather to be thrown to lions without, than left to lusts within.]

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir, I have one thing more.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[6.] Though I dare not say that Christ is mine, and that I have an interest in him—yet *I can truly say, I dearly love the people of Christ, for the image of Christ that I see stamped upon them.* It is true, I dare not say Christ is mine, and heaven is mine; I cannot say with such and such, "The Lord is my portion;" yet I can say that I dearly love those who have the Lord for their portion. I can truly say, that the poorest and the most neglected, and the most despised saint in the world, is more precious in my eye, and more dear to my soul, than the greatest and the richest sinner in the world, Psalm 16:3. [It is reported of Bucer and Calvin, that they loved all those in whom they could espy anything of Christ. It is just so with these poor hearts who question their present condition.]

Well, is this all, O weak saint, that you have to say?

No, sir, I have one thing more.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[7.] Though I dare not say that I have any interest in Christ, or that I love Christ—yet I dare say, *that my soul weeps and mourns in secret for the dishonor that is done to Christ, both by myself and by others also.* I can look the Lord in the face, were I now to die, and say, Lord! you who know all thoughts and hearts, you do know, that "my eyes run down with rivers of tears, because men keep not your law," Jer. 9:1-3; Psalm 119:136.

Well, is this all?

No, sir, I beg your patience to hear me in one thing more.

What is that, O weak Christian?

Why, that is this:

[8.] *That I prize people and things according to the spiritualness and holiness which is in them; and the more spiritual and holy any man or*

*thing is, the more is that man and thing prized by my soul.*

I have often thought of that sweet word, Psalm 119:104, "Your word is very pure, therefore does your servant love it." [Much in the word is wrapped up in a little; it is more to be admired than to have Homer's Illiads comprised in a nutshell. The word is like the stone, *garamantides*, which has golden drops within itself, enriching of the gracious soul.] Other men love it because of the profit they get by it, or because of a name, or this, or that; but I love it for the purity, for the holiness, and the cleanness of it. No preaching, says the weak saint, nor any praying, nor any talking, nor any society is sweet to me—but that which is most spiritual, most holy. It is not an exercise tricked and trimmed up with wit, learning, and eloquence; it is not the hanging of counterfeit pearls on truth's ears, which I prize; but the more plainness, spiritualness, and holiness, I see in an exercise, the more is my heart raised to prize it and love it.

And therefore, says the weak saint, because Christ is perfectly and infinitely holy above all other, I prize Christ above all. Ordinances are sweet—but Christ is more sweet to my soul. Saints are precious—but Christ is far more precious. Heaven is glorious—but Christ is infinitely more glorious. The first thing that I would ask, if I might have it, says the weak saint, is Christ. And the next thing that I would ask, if I might have it, is more of Christ. And the last thing that I would ask, if I might have it, is that I might be satiated and filled with the fullness of Christ. Let the ambitious man take the honors of the world, so I may but have Christ. Let the voluptuous man swim in all the pleasures of the world, so I may have Christ. And let the covetous man tumble up and down in all the gold and silver of the world, so I may have Christ—and it shall be enough to my soul. [None but Christ, none but Christ, said the martyr.]

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir; I have one thing more to say,

What is that?

Why, it is this:

[9.] *I find the same conflict in my soul that Paul found in his soul, after he was converted nearly fourteen years, after he was taken up into as*

clear and choice enjoyments of God, as any soul that ever I read of. The conflict that is mentioned, Romans 7:6, I find in my soul. The whole frame of my soul, understanding, will, and affections, are set against sin. I find that "I hate the evil that I do, and I find that the good which I would do—I do not; and the evil which I would not do—that do I. I find a law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and leading of me captive into the law of sin," and this makes me often to cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? Therefore I sometime hope, that those sins which are now my burden, shall never hereafter be my bane. [The best saints in this world are like the tribe of Manasseh, half on this side Jordan, in the land of the Amorites, and half on that side, in the Holy Land. And though to be kept from sin brings most comfort to a poor soul—yet for a poor soul to oppose sin, and God to pardon sin—that brings most glory to God, 2 Cor. 12:7-9.]

Well, and is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir; I have one thing more to say.

What is that?

Why that is this:

[10.] I can truly say, *when the Lord gives me any strength against sin, and any power to serve him, and walk close with him in his ways—it is a greater joy and comfort to my soul, than all the blessings of this life.* Though I have not yet seen, he has "set me as a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm;" though I have not yet the clear assurance of his love; though his spirit has not yet set up such a light in my soul, whereby I might run and read my right and title to himself and heaven; yet when he does give me but a little light through a crevice, when he does but begin to cause his love to dawn upon me, when he gives me but a little strength against sin, and a little power to walk close with himself, etc.; oh, this does administer more abiding joy, and more sweet peace, and more solid comfort to my soul, than all the riches, honors, friends, and favors of this world. [A gracious soul is as careful that he does not endanger another by a bad life, as he is careful to save his own life.]

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir; I have one thing more to say.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[11.] *Though my interest in Christ be not clear to me—yet I can truly say I would not change my condition with the men of this world, for a thousand worlds*, Psalm 101:3; 139:21-22; 120:6. It is true, I cannot say that I have "the seal and witness of the Spirit," that many talk and boast of, though I fear but a few enjoy; yet I can truly say, that I would not change my estate with men merely civil, nor with the profane men of this world, for ten thousand worlds, etc.

Well, is this all, O soul!

No, sir; I have but one thing more, and then I am done.

Well, what is that?

Why, that is this.

[12.] *I find my soul carried forth to a secret resting, relying, leaning, staying, and hanging upon Christ for life and happiness*. Though I know not how it shall go with me—yet I have thrown myself into his arms; I lean upon him; there I will hang, and there I will rest and stay: "if I must perish, I will perish there," Job 13:15; 2 Kings 7:3-5; Esther 4:16.

And thus, sir, I have opened my state and condition to you; and now I do earnestly desire your judgment upon the whole.

Well, then, this I shall say, as "I must answer it in the day of my appearing before God," that had I as many souls as I have hairs on my head, or as there be stars in heaven, I could freely adventure the loss of them all, if these things do not undeniably speak out, not only the truth—but also the strength of grace, etc. Nay, let me tell you, that he who finds but any of these things really in his soul, though the Lord has not given him a clear and full manifestation of his love and favor, etc.—yet, while breath is in his body, he has eminent cause to bless God, and to walk thankfully and humbly before him.

The second duty is this,

***2. Live up to that little grace you have.***

You say, O weak Christian, you have but a little light, a little love, a little zeal, a little faith, etc. Well, grant it—but know that it is your duty to live up to those measures of grace you have. And this is the second head that I shall press upon you—live up and live out that grace you have. [*To speak well*, says Isidore Pelusiota, *is to sound like a cymbal; but to live well, is to act like an angel*, etc.] And if ever there were a season to press this point home upon souls, this is the season in which we live. And considering that it is not a flood of words—but weight of argument, which convinces sincere people, I shall therefore propound these following things to their serious consideration.

[1.] *First*, Consider this, ***living up to your graces carries with it, the greatest evidence of the truth of grace.***

That man who lives not up to his grace, let him be strong or weak, lacks one of the best and strongest demonstrations that can be, to evidence the truth of his grace. If you would have a clear evidence that that little love, that little faith, that little zeal you have is true—then live up to that love, live up to that faith, live up to that zeal that you have, and this will evidence it beyond all contradiction, etc. [If Seneca said of his wise man, He is more in heaven than in earth; may not I say this is much more true of the godly? etc.]

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider this, ***God and your own souls will be very great losers, if you live not up to those measures of grace you have.***

God will lose many prayers and many praises; he will lose much honor, and glory, and service, which otherwise he might have; and you will lose much peace, much comfort, much rest, quietness, and content that otherwise your souls might enjoy, etc. [Of all losses, spiritual losses are the saddest and greatest; and re-gained with the greatest difficulty.]

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider this, ***your not living up to that little light and grace you have, will open the mouths of graceless souls against your gracious God, and against his gracious ones, and against his gracious ways.*** [1 Peter 2:15, "For it is God's will that by doing good you should *silence* the ignorant talk of foolish men."]

The Greek word signifies to muzzle, to halter up, or button up their mouths, as we say. Oh! there is nothing which will so muzzle and button up the mouths of vain men—as Christians living up to that light and grace they have.]

You think, because of the weakness of your grace—you must be borne with in this, and that, and what not. But remember, it is your duty to live up to the light and grace you have; and nothing below this will effectually stop the mouths of graceless wretches from barking against the ways of God, the truths of God, and the people of God. Vain men will be often a-reasoning thus: though such and such men and women have not such great knowledge, such clear light, such strong love, and such burning zeal as David, Paul, and other worthies—yet they have so much light and knowledge as tells them that they should not live thus and thus as they do. Their light and knowledge tells them that they should be just and righteous in their dealings, and in all their ways and designs, etc. Though they have not such great measures of spiritual enjoyments as such and such—yet that little grace they have, should lead them by the hand to do things worthy of that Christ and the gospel they profess, etc.

Let me a little expostulate the point with you, weak saints; you know that you should not be stirred and heated by every straw that is in your way. Why, then, do you not in this, live up to your light? You know that you should not "be overcome of evil—but overcome evil with good," Romans 12:21. Why, then, do you not in this, live up to your light? You know that you should "do good to those who do hurt to you," Mat. 5:44-48. Why, then, do you not in this, live up to your light? You know that you should do your duties to others, though they neglect their duties to you. It is not the neglect of a husband's duty—which frees the wife from the discharge of hers; nor the neglect of a wife's duty—which frees the husband from the discharge of his. You know this, don't you? Yes! Why don't you then live up to your light? Why do you by your bad lives—open the mouths of others against God and his ways? You know that you should be exemplary in your relations, in your callings, and in your conversations; you know that you should be examples of holiness, meekness, sweetness, patience, and contentedness—so why then, don't you live up to your knowledge in these things? You know that you should do to others as you would have

others to do to you—so why then, in this, don't you live up to your knowledge? Ah! that you who are weak did not cause the mouths of wicked men to be opened against God, his truths and ways—by your living below that light and knowledge which God has given you! I beseech you, as you desire the honor of God, and as you would stop the mouths of vain men—live up to those measures of grace that the Lord has given you! No way to comfort like this, no way to the crown like this. He will not be long a babe in grace—who lives out that little grace he has.

[4.] Fourthly, ***Living up to your light, is the readiest and the only way to recover all that has been lost by your living below your light.***

By your living below your light, God, your own souls, and the gospel have lost much, yes, and others also have lost much light, comfort, strength, and quickness, etc., which they might have had, had you but lived up to that little grace you had. Now, there is no way on earth to recover these losses—but by living up to that grace which you have. Ah, Christians! it is not your running from sermon to sermon—not that I speak against frequent hearing of the word—nor your crying up this man and that man, or this doctrine and that, or this way or that, which will recover and fetch up the honor that God has lost by your living below your graces.

It is only your living up to your graces, which will make up all the breaches that have been made upon his honor and the gospel, and upon the comfort and peace of your own souls and others. Well, remember this, all the honor that God has from you in this life—is from your living up to that light, knowledge, love, fear, and faith that he has given you. There is nothing that will make up all losses but this; therefore I beg of you, upon the knees of my soul, that you would take this one thing home with you, and go into your closets, and lay your hands upon your hearts, and say—Well, the Lord has lost much, and my own soul has lost much, and others have lost much—by my living below that little grace I have; and therefore I will now make it my business, by assisting grace, to live up to those measures of grace that I have received, more than yet I have done all my days. I will, by the strength of Christ, make it more my duty and my work to live out what God has given me, than ever yet I have done, that so the Lord and the gospel may, be no further losers, but gainers by me.

[5.] The *fifth* and last motive is this, ***the readiest and the surest way to get more grace—is to live up to that little grace you have.***

He who lives up to a little *light* shall have more light; he who lives up to a little *knowledge* shall have more knowledge; he who lives up to a little *faith* shall have more faith; and he who lives up to a little *love* shall have more love, etc. [Job 17:29; Cant. 6:10; Proverbs 4:18. There is a country in Africa where the people's industry has an abundant reward; for every bushel of seed they sow, they receive one hundred and fifty after. The application is easy.] There is no such way to attain to greater measures of grace as for a man to live up to that little grace he has. Truly, the main reason why many are such babes and shrubs in grace—is because they do not live up to their attainments. He who won't improve two talents, shall never have the honor to be trusted with five; but he who improves a little, shall be trusted with much: "The diligent hand makes rich," Proverbs 10:4. He who is active and agile, who works as well as wishes, who adds endeavors to his desires—will quickly be a *cedar* in grace.

Ah, Christians! you have a God who is great, a God who is good, a God who is gracious, and a God who is rich—who does not like to see his children to be always weaklings and striplings in grace. The very babe, by drawing the breasts, gets strength and nourishment. Oh you babes in grace, put out that little strength you have, be you still a-drawing at the breasts of Christ, at the breasts of the promises, and strength will come, nourishment will follow, etc. [Dionysius gave him his money back, after that he heard he employed a little well. And will God be worse than a heathen?]

The third duty that I would press upon weak saints is this:

***3. Be sure that you always reflect upon your graces, and whatever good is in you—with cautions.***

This is a weighty point, and does bespeak your most serious attention. There are six rules or cautions, which weak saints should always observe in their looking upon their graces.

And the *first* is this:

**[1.] *Look upon all your graces as gifts of grace—as favors given you from above—as gifts dropped out of heaven into your hearts—as flowers which are given you out of the garden of paradise.***

A man should never look upon his grace—but he should look upon it as a flower of paradise, as a gift which God has cast into his bosom from heaven. 1 Cor. 4:7, "Who makes you to differ from another? And what have you who you have not received?" etc. "Of your own," says David, "have we given you," 1 Chron. 29:14. You talk of light, of love, of fear, of faith, etc.—but what are all these but pearls of glory which are freely given to you, by the hand of grace? "Every good and perfect gift comes down from above." As all light flows from the sun, and all water from the sea—so all good flows from heaven. The greatest excellencies in us do as much depend upon God, as the light does upon the sun.

When you look upon your wisdom, you must say, Here is wisdom, ay—but it is from above; here is some weak love working towards Christ—but it is from above; here is joy, and comfort, and peace—but these are all the flowers of paradise; they never grew in nature's garden. When a soul looks thus upon all those costly diamonds with which his heart is decked—he keeps low, though his graces are high. Where this rule is neglected, the soul will be endangered of being swelled and puffed.

Mr Foxe used to say, that "as he got much good by his sins—so he also got much hurt by his graces." When you look upon the stream, remember the fountain; when you look upon the flower, remember the root; when you look upon the stars, remember the sun; and when you look upon your graces, remember the fountain of grace, else Satan will be too hard for you. Satan is so artful, so subtle and critical, that he can make your very graces to serve him against your graces; conquering joy by joy, sorrow by sorrow, humility by humility, fear by fear, and love by love—if you do not look upon all your graces as streams flowing from the fountain above, and as fruits growing upon the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Therefore, when one eye is fixed upon your graces—let the other be always fixed upon the God of grace.

[2.] Secondly, ***At that time when your eye is upon inherent grace and righteousness, let your heart be fixed upon Christ, and his imputed righteousness.*** [Let us say of Christ, as the heathen once said of his petty gods, *so long as he had Jupiter to friend, he regarded them not.* So, so long as we have our Jesus as our friend, we should not regard others, no, not our very graces, in comparison of Christ.]

Paul's eye was upon his grace: Romans 7:22, 25, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. And with my mind I serve the law of God." And yet at that very same time, his heart was set upon Christ, and taken up with Christ; ver. 25, "I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." So in Col. 2:2-3, you have one eye fixed upon grace, and at the same time the heart fixed upon Christ. "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." His eye is upon grace, his heart is upon Christ. So in Philip. 3:8, the apostle has his eye upon the excellent knowledge of Christ—but ver. 9, his heart is set upon the righteousness of Christ. "That I might be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law—but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Here you have his eye upon grace, and his heart upon Christ, in the very presence of his grace. This is your glory, Christians, in the presence and sight of all your graces—to see the free grace of Christ, and his infinite, spotless, matchless, and glorious righteousness—to be your surest, sweetest, highest, and choicest comfort and refuge.

Peter was not well skilled in this lesson, and that was the very reason that he fell foulest, when his confidence was highest. Grace is a ring of gold, and Christ is the diamond in that ring; and he who looks more upon the ring than the diamond which is in it—in the hour of temptation, he will certainly fall. When the wife's eye is upon her rings or jewels, then her heart must be set upon her husband. When grace is in my eye, Christ must at that time be in my arms, yes, he must lie between my breasts: Cant. 1:13, "My beloved is as a bundle of myrrh, he shall lie all night between my breasts." Christ, and not grace, must lie nearest to a Christian's heart.

[3.] A *third* thing is this, ***When you look upon your grace, you must look upon it as a beautiful creature—which is begotten in the soul by Christ, and which is strengthened, maintained, nourished, and upheld in your souls—by nothing below the spiritual, internal, and glorious operations of Christ.*** [Gal. 2:20, Philip. 1:6. When God crowns us, he does but crown his own gifts in us.—Augustine.]

Though grace is a beautiful creature—yet grace is but a creature—and your souls must look upon it only as a creature. Grace is a heavenly offspring, it is the first-born of God, as I may say, and does most represent him to the life. Grace is a bud of glory; it is of the blood royal; it is nobly descended, James 1:17. So in Heb. 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginner and ender. In all other things and arts, the same man cannot begin and finish—but Christ does both. Philip. 1:5, Our graces thrive and are upheld in life and power, in beauty and glory—only by the internal operation of Christ in our souls. So in Col. 1:27, "Christ in you the hope of glory," So ver. 29, "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working which works in me mightily."

So Philip. 4:13, "I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me;" I can be high and low, poor and rich, honorable and base, something or nothing, etc., through Christ who strengthens me. [The word *all things*, though it be an universal, is not to be taken in the utmost extent—but according to the use of the like phrases in all languages, wherein the universal sign affixed, either to persons, or times, or places, or things—signifies a great number—but not all without exception, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together: Psalm 14:4, 8-9; John 14:26; 1 Cor. 10:23. So those words are to be understood in Philip. 4:13.]

So in Cant. 4:16, "Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may send forth a fragrant smell." We may puff and blow our hearts out, and yet no savory smell will flow forth, if Christ does not blow.

So in Psalm 138:3, "In the day when I cried, you answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul." Your graces, Christians, are heavenly plants of God's own planting and watering; and certainly the

heavenly farmer will never allow such *plants of renown* to wither, for lack of heavenly sap; he will strengthen, support, and nourish the work of his own hand. He will cause the desires of his people to bud, and their graces to blossom, and their souls to be like a watered garden—green and flourishing: Isaiah 58:11, compared with Isaiah 35:6-7.

[4.] Fourthly, ***When you look upon your graces, you must look upon them as a pledge of more glorious and unspeakable measures of grace and glory—which your souls shall be filled with at last.***

In Eph. 1:13-14, "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory." That little light and knowledge you have, is a pledge to your soul, that you shall at last know, even as you are known. 1 Cor. 13:12, "For now we see through a glass darkly—but then face to face. Now I know in part—but then shall I know, even as I am known." Christians know but little of what they *should* know, they know but little of what they *might* know, they know but little of what *others* know, they know but little of what they *desire* to know, they know but little of what they *shall* know—when they shall come to know "even as they are known." And yet these weak and imperfect glimpses that they have of God and heaven here, are infallible pledges of that perfect knowledge and full prospect that they shall have of God and heaven hereafter.

So that that little spark of *joy* which you have, is a pledge of those everlasting joys which shall rest upon your head—when all sorrow and mourning shall fly away, Isaiah 35:10, etc. And those sips of *comfort* you have now, are a pledge of your swimming in those everlasting pleasures that are "at God's right hand," Psalm 16:11. The least measures of grace are a pledge of greater measures. God will not lose his pledge, though men often lose theirs. God will not despise "the day of small things;" he will make those who bring forth but thirty fold, to bring forth sixty fold; and those who bring forth sixty fold, to bring forth a hundred fold, etc.

God, his Son and Spirit, are all **eminently and fully engaged to carry on the work of grace in his children's souls.** Therefore do not sit

down and say, My *light* is but dim, and my *love* but weak, and my *joy* but a spark which will quickly go out, etc. But always remember, that those weak measures of grace which you have, are a sure evidence of greater measures which God will confer upon you in his own time and in his own ways.

[5.] Fifthly, ***When you look upon your graces, be sure that you look more at the quality of your graces, than at the quantity of your graces.***

You must rather bring your graces to the *touchstone*—to try their truth and reality; than to the *balance*—to weigh their measures. Many weak Christians are *weighing* their graces, when they should be *a-trying* the truth and reality of their graces—as if the *quantity* of grace were more considerable than the *essence* and *nature* of grace. And this is that which keeps many weak saints in a dark, doubting, questioning, and despairing condition; yes, this makes their lives a very hell. Weak saints, if you will not observe this rule, this caution, when you look upon your graces—you will go sighing and mourning to your graves. Ah! poor hearts, you should not be more cruel to your own souls than God is. When God comes to a judgment of your spiritual estates, he does not bring a pair of *scales* to weigh your graces—but a *touchstone* to try the truth and reality of your graces; and so should you deal by your own souls. If you deal otherwise, you are more cruel to your souls than God would have you. And if you are resolved that in this you will not imitate the Lord, then I dare prophesy that joy and peace shall be none of your guests, and he who should comfort you will "stand afar off," Lam. 1:16.

It is good to own and acknowledge a little grace—though it be mingled with very much corruptions; as that poor soul did, Mark 9:24, "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." He had but a little little faith, and this was mixed with abundance of unbelief, and yet notwithstanding he acknowledges that little faith he had, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." His faith was so weak, that he accounts it little better than unbelief; yet, says he, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." The least measure of true faith will make you blessed here, and happy hereafter. [Grace is one substance. Every twinkling of light is light; every drop of water is water;

every spark of fire is fire; every drop of honey is honey. So every drop of grace is grace; and if the least drop or spark of grace be not worth acknowledging, it is worth nothing.]

*Much* faith will give us a heaven here on earth. And *any* faith, if true, will give us heaven hereafter. So the church in Cant. 1. 5, "I am black—but lovely." She had nothing to say for her purity—yet she acknowledges her loveliness. "I am black—but lovely." Though she could not say she was fully pure—yet she could say she was lovely. As she was free to confess her blackness, so she was ingenuous to acknowledge her loveliness. "I am black—but lovely."

Ah, Christians! will you deal worse with your own souls, than you deal with your children? When you go to make a judgment of your child's affections, you look more to the *truth* of their affections, than you do to the *strength* of their affections; and will you be less sincere and favorable to your poor souls? If he deserves to be branded, who feasts his child and starves his wife; what do you deserve, who can acknowledge the least natural good that is in a child—and yet will acknowledge none of that spiritual and heavenly good that is in your souls?

[6 ] Sixthly, and lastly, ***When you look upon your graces, look that you do not renounce and reject your graces, seen in the light of the Spirit, as a weak and worthless evidence of your interest in Christ, and that happiness which comes by Christ.***

I know in these days many cry up revelations and visions—yes, the visions of their own hearts—and make slight of the graces of Christ in the hearts of his people. Yes, they look upon grace as a poor weak thing. Ah, Christians! take heed of this, else you will render null, in a very great measure, many precious scriptures, especially the Epistles of John—which were penned for the comfort and support of weak saints. [Grace, says one, is the foundation of all our felicity, and comprehends all blessings, as manna is said to have done all good tastes. John's epistles are a rich treasury for Christian assurance.]

But that this may stick and work, be pleased to carry home with you these three things.

(1.) *First*, Other precious saints who are now triumphing in heaven, have pleaded their interest in God's love, and hopes of a better life—from graces inherent.

I will only point at those scriptures that speak out this truth: 1 John 3:14, 2:3-4; Job 23:10-12; and the whole 31st chapter of Job; Psalm 119:6; Isaiah 38:2-3; 2 Cor. 1:12. All these scriptures, with many others which might be produced, do with open mouth proclaim this truth. And surely **to deny the fruit growing upon the tree to be an evidence that the tree is alive—is to me as unreasonable as it is absurd.** Certainly, it is one thing to *judge* by our graces, and another thing to *trust* in our graces, to make a Savior of our graces. There is a great deal of difference between *declaring* and *deserving*; and if this be not granted, it will follow, that the apostle has sent us to a covenant of works, when he exhorts us to "use all diligence to make our calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1:5-10. [Christians may doubtless look to their graces as *evidences* of their part in Christ and salvation; and the clearer and stronger they are, the greater will be their comfort; but not as *causes* of their salvation.]

(2.) *Secondly*, Carry home this with you, If justification and sanctification are both benefits of the covenant of grace—then to evidence the one by the other, is no ways unlawful; nor it this a turning aside to a covenant of works:

But our justification and sanctification are both benefits and blessings of the covenant of grace. *Consequently* in Jer. 33:8, "I will pardon all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me," there is your justification; "and I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me," there is your sanctification. And therefore to evidence the one by the other, can be no ways unlawful, nor it this a turning aside to a covenant of works.

(3.) *Thirdly*, Carry home this with you, Whatever gift of God in man brings him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy—that gift must be an infallible evidence of salvation and happiness. But such are those gifts mentioned in those scriptures that prove the first head. Therefore they are infallible evidences of our salvation and eternal happiness.

I confess a man may have many great gifts, and yet none of them bring him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy. But I say, whatever gift of God in man brings him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy—that gift must be an infallible evidence of his happiness and blessedness. [Covet rather *graces* than *gifts*; as to pray more fervently, though less notionally or eloquently. Stammering Moses must pray—rather than well-spoken Aaron. The Corinthians came behind in no gift, 1 Cor. 1:7; yet were babes and carnal, chapter 3:2-3.]

For the further clearing of this, I will instance in a gift of *waiting*. Where this gift is, it brings a man within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy. And had a man, as in a deserted state it often happens, nothing under heaven to show for his happiness—but only a waiting frame, this ought to bear him up from fainting and sinking. When the soul says, "My sun is set, my day is turned into night, my light into darkness, and my rejoicing into mourning, etc., oh, I have lost the *comforting* presence of God! I have lost the *quicken*ing presence of God! I have lost the *supporting* presence of God! I have lost the *encouraging* presence of God! etc., and when I shall recover these sad losses, I know not. All that I can say is this, that God keeps me in a waiting frame, weeping and knocking at the door of mercy." Now, I say, this waiting temper brings the soul within the compass of the promise of eternal mercy. And certainly such a soul shall not miscarry. Take three promises for this.

In Isaiah 40:31, "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." The mercy is the waiting man's—but the waiting man must give God leave to time his mercy for him. So in Isaiah 30:18, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all those who wait for him." So in Isaiah 64:4, "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what he has prepared for him who waits for him." So in Isaiah 49:23, "They shall not be ashamed, who wait for me."

Men are often ashamed—who wait upon other men. Men high and great often frustrate the expectation of waiting souls, and then they blush, and

are ashamed and confounded that they have waited, and been deceived; but "they shall not be ashamed, who wait for me," says God; I will not deceive their expectation, and after all their waiting turn them off, and say, I have no mercy for you. [That is, they shall be advanced by me to great happiness and glory, to great dignity and felicity; for in the Hebrew dialect, adverbs of *denying* signify the contrary to the import of that verb whereunto they are joined, as might be showed by many scriptures.] Now, I say, where this waiting temper is, which is all that many a poor soul has to show for everlasting happiness and blessedness, that soul shall never miscarry. That God who maintains and upholds the soul in this heavenly waiting frame—in the appointed season will speak life and love, mercy and glory, to the waiting soul.

And so I have done with the third use, which was to stir you up to look upon your graces with cautions.

The fourth duty is:

**4. *To persuade weak saints not to turn aside from the ways of God, nor from the service of God, because of any hardships or difficulties that they meet with in his ways or service.***

There is a very great aptness in weak saints to take offence almost at everything, and to be discouraged by the least opposition, affliction, and temptation—and so to turn aside from the good old way. Now that no difficulties nor hardships may turn you out of the way that is called holy, consider seriously of these few things.

[1.] *First*, Consider this, ***the Lord will sweeten more and more his services to you.***

He will make his work to be more and more easy to your souls; he will suit your burden to your back, and your work to your hand. O weak soul! you shall find that his grace will be sufficient to hold you up and carry you on, notwithstanding any difficulties or discouragements that are in the way. He will shed abroad that love that shall constrain your soul, both to keep close to his service, and to delight in his service, 2 Cor. 12:9; ver. 14. He will make all his services to be easy to you; he will give to you that assisting grace which shall keep up your head and heart from fainting and sinking under discouragements, as you may see in Ezek. 36:25-28, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them." So in Psalm 63:8, "My soul follows hard after you," (ay—but how comes this to pass?): "Your right hand upholds me!" I feel your hand under me, drawing of my soul off after you. Oh! were not your gracious hand under me, I would never follow hard after you.

The Lord will put under his everlasting arms, O weak Christian! and therefore though your feet be apt to slide—yet his everlasting arms shall bear you up. Therefore be not discouraged, do not turn aside from those paths that drop marrow and fatness, though there be a lion in the way. [The philosopher told his friends when they came into his little poor cottage, *The gods are here with me*. Surely God, and Christ, and the Spirit are, and will be, with weak saints, to aid and assist them in every gracious work.]

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider this, O weak saint! ***that there is less danger and hardship in the ways of Christ, than there is in the ways of sin, Satan, or the world.***

That soul does but leap out of the frying-pan into the fire, that thinks to mend himself by turning out of the way that is called holy. Oh! the horrid drudgery that is in the ways of sin, Satan, or the world. Your worst day in Christ's service—is better than your best days, if I may so speak, in sin or Satan's service, Proverbs 11:18-19, and 21:21. Satan will pay the sinner at last with the loss of God, Christ, heaven, and his soul forever. "But in the way of righteousness is life, joy, peace, honor, and in the pathway thereof there is no death," Proverbs 12:28. "His ways are ways of pleasantness,

and all his paths are peace," Proverbs 3:17.

[3.] *Thirdly*, Remember, O weak saint! ***that all those hardships that you meet with—do only reach the outward man.***

They only reach the ignoble, the baser part of man; they meddle not, they touch not, the noble part. "With my mind I serve the law of God, though with my flesh the law of sin," Romans 7:22. And verse 25, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." And indeed many of the heathen have encouraged themselves in this very consideration, against the troubles and dangers of this life. All the arrows which are shot at a Christian stick in his shield, they never reach his conscience, his soul. The raging waves beat sorely against Noah's ark—but they touched not him. The soul is of too noble a nature to be touched by troubles. Jacob's hard service under Laban, and his being nipped by the frost in winter, and scorched by the sun in summer, did only reach his outward man; his soul had high communion, and sweet fellowship with God, under all his hardships, Gen. 31:40. Ah, Christian! bear up bravely, for whatever hardships you meet with in the ways of God, shall only reach your outward man; and under all these hardships you may have as high and sweet communion with God, as if you had never known what hardships meant, Hosea 2:14.

[4.] *Fourthly*, Tell me, O weak saints! ***have not you formerly enjoyed such sweet refreshings while you have been in the very service of God, as has outweighed all the troubles and hardships that your souls have met with?*** I know you have, and you know that you have often found that scripture made good upon your hearts, Psalm 19:11, "Moreover, by them is your servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward." Mark, he does not say, "*for* keeping of them there is great reward," though that is a truth; but, "*in* keeping of them there is great reward. While the soul is at work, God throws in the reward. Do not you remember, O weak Christians! when you have been in the service and way of God, how he has cast in joy at one time, and peace at another? etc. Oh! the smiles, the kisses, the sweet discoveries that your souls have met with, while you have been in his ways. Ah, poor souls! do not you know that one hour's being in the bosom of Christ will make you forget all your hardships? Heaven at last will make amends for all; and the more hardships you find in the ways of God,

the more sweet will heaven be to you when you come there.

[Austin says, If a man should serve the Lord a thousand years, it would not deserve an hour of the reward in heaven, much less an eternity, etc.] Oh, how sweet is a harbor after a long storm, and a sunshine day after a dark and tempestuous night, and a warm spring after a sharp winter! The miseries and difficulties that a man meets with in this world, will exceedingly sweeten the glory of that other world.

[5.] ***Lastly, consider, What hardships and difficulties the men of this world run through, to get the world, and undo their own souls.***

They rise early, go to bed late; they go from one end of the world to another, and venture through all manner of dangers, deaths, and miseries—to gain those things which are vain, uncertain, vexing, and dangerous to their souls, Psalm 127:2, Mat. 16:16. And will not you, as "a good soldier of Christ," 2 Tim. 2:3-4, endure a little hardship for the honor of your Captain, and your own internal and eternal good? You are listed under Christ's colors, and therefore you must arm yourself against all difficulties and discouragements. The number of difficulties makes the Christian's conquest the more illustrious. A gracious man should be made up all of fire, overcoming and consuming all oppositions, as fire does the stubble. All difficulties should be but whetstones to his fortitude, as Chrysostom said of Peter.

The fifth duty is this:

***5. You who are weak saints should observe how Christ keeps your wills and affections.***

That man is kept indeed, whose will and affection is kept close to Christ; and that man is lost with a witness, whose will and affections are won away from Christ. Weak saints are more apt to observe their own actions than their wills and affections, and this proves a snare unto them; therefore observe your affections, how they are kept; for if they are kept close to Christ, if they are kept faithful to Christ, though your foot may slide from Christ, all is well. The apostle, Romans 7:17, *seq.*, observed,

that his will and affections were kept close to Christ even then, when he was tyrannically captivated and carried by the prevalency of sin from Christ: "With my mind I serve the law of God," says he, "and what I do I allow not; therefore it is no more I that does it—but sin that dwells in me." My will stands close to Christ, and my affections are faithful to Christ, though by the prevalency of corruption I am now and then carried captive from Christ. It is one thing to be taken up by an enemy, and another thing for a man to lay down his weapons at his enemy's feet. I am, says the apostle, a forced man, "I do what I hate;" I do what I never intended. The heart may be sound, when more external and inferior parts are not. The heart of a man may be sound God-ward and Christ-ward and holiness-ward, when yet there may be many defects and weaknesses in his conversation.

Now, a weak Christian should be very studious to observe how his heart stands God-wards; for the man is as his heart is; if that be right with Christ, then all is well; therefore, says Solomon, Proverbs 4:23, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The Hebrew runs more fully thus: "Before all," or, "Above all keepings, keep your heart; for out of it is the goings forth of lives." The heart is the spring and fountain of all natural and spiritual actions, it is the *primum mobile*—the great wheel which sets all other wheels a-going; it is the great monarch in the isle of man; therefore keep it with all custody and caution, or else bid farewell to all true joy, peace, and comfort. When the heart stands right towards Christ, Christ will pardon much, and pass by much. [The heart is the presence-chamber of the king of heaven.]

If the ravished virgin in the time of the law cried out, she was guiltless; so when a poor soul, ravished by the power of corruption, and strength of Satan's temptations, cries out, "Lord, I would not, for all the world, sin against you, I would not distrust you, I would not be impatient under your afflicting hand, I would not be proud under your merciful hand; but, Lord, these sons of Zeruah, 2 Sam. 3:39, these corruptions, are too hard for me; they commit a rape upon me; they ravish me of my Jesus, and of my joy, and of my peace; Lord, help me, Lord deliver me!" Now these weaknesses shall not be charged upon the soul. The ravished virgin under the law, if she cried out, was guiltless; and certainly God is not, nor will

not be, less merciful and gracious to his people under the gospel, who are still a-crying out against their sins and Satan's assaults. Surely those sins shall never be a Christian's bane—which are now his greatest burden. It is not falling into the water—but lying in the water, that drowns. It is not falling into sin—but lying in sin, that damns. If sin and your heart be two, Christ and your heart are one. If your heart is Christward, you are so happy that nothing can make you miserable.

6. *Sixthly, Take heed of making sense and feeling a judge of your condition.* Though there is nothing more dangerous—yet there is nothing more ordinary, than for weak saints to make their sense and feeling the judge of their condition. Ah, poor souls! this is dishonorable to God, and very disadvantageous to yourselves. Sense is sometimes opposite to reason—but always to faith; therefore do as those worthies did, 2 Cor. 5:8, 9, "We walk by faith—and not by sight." [Sense and reason in spiritual things, says Luther, is *noxia bestia*—a harmful beast, that will destroy and pull down what faith builds up.]

For a man to argue thus: Surely God is not my God, for I am not enlightened, I am not quickened, I am not melted, I am not raised, I am not enlarged as formerly. Oh! I have not those sweet answers and returns of prayer that once I had! Oh! I cannot find the Lord's quickening presence, nor his enlivening presence, nor his humbling presence, nor his encouraging presence, as once I have; therefore surely my condition is not good. Oh! I am more backward to good than formerly, and more prone to evil than formerly, therefore I am afraid that God is not my God, and that the work of grace is not thorough upon me. Oh! God does not look upon me as in the days of old, nor speak to me as in the days of old, nor behave towards me as in the days of old, and therefore I am afraid that all is naught.

Truly, if you will make sense and feeling the judge of your estate and condition, you will never have peace nor comfort all your days. Your estate, O Christian, may be very good, when sense and feeling says it is very bad. That child cannot but be perplexed, who thinks his father does not love him, because he does not always feel him smoothing and stroking of him. Christians, you must remember that it is one thing for God to love you—and another thing for God to tell you that he loves you.

Your happiness lies in the first—your comfort in the second. God has stopped his ear against the prayers of many a precious soul whom he has dearly loved. [Psalm 80:4; Lam. 3:34; Psalm 119:25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159; 42:5; Cant. 3:1-3; Isaiah 54:7-8.]

The best of men have at times lost that quickening, ravishing, and comforting presence of God, which once they have enjoyed. And truly, he who makes sense and carnal reason a judge of his condition, shall be happy and miserable, blessed and cursed, saved and lost, many times in a day, yes, in an hour! The counsel that I would give to such a soul that is apt to set up reason in the room of faith is this, Whatever your estate and condition be, never make sense and feeling the judge of it—but only the word of God. Did ever God appoint carnal reason, sense, and feeling, to be a judge of your spiritual estate? Surely not. And why, then, will you subject your soul to their judgments? God will judge you at last by his word: John 12:48, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day."

Carnal reason is an enemy to faith; it is still a-crossing and contradicting of faith; it fills the mind full of cavils and prejudices, full of pleas and arguments, to keep Christ and the soul asunder, and the soul and the promises asunder, and the soul and peace and comfort asunder. It will never be well with you so long as you are swayed by carnal reason, and rely more upon your five senses than the four evangelists. Remember Job was as famous for his confidence as for his patience: "Though he slays me—yet will I trust in him," Job 13:15. As the body lives by breathing, so the soul lives by believing, etc.

#### ***IV. The duties of strong saints to the weak.***

We come now to the last thing propounded, and that is, *the duties of strong saints to those who are weak*. I intend at this time to finish this point, and therefore shall not speak everything that might be spoken, being not of their minds, who think a man never speaks enough, who speaks not *all* that may be spoken to an argument. I shall, as near as I can, instance in those duties which are most weighty and worthy. And surely those souls who are serious and conscientious in the discharge of

these, cannot, nor will not, be negligent in the discharge of the rest. Now there are eleven duties that strong saints are to perform to those who are weak.

And the *first* is this.

**[1.] *Those who are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak.***

Romans 15:1, "We then who are strong," says the apostle, "ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." The word that is rendered to *bear* signifies to bear as pillars do bear the weight and burden of the house; to bear as porters do bear their burdens, or as the bones do bear the flesh, or rather as parents bear their babes in their arms.

"*Bear the infirmities.*" Mark, he does not say the enormities—but the infirmities; he does not say the wickedness—but the weakness. The strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak. The Lord bears with the weakness of his children. Peter is weak, and sinful through weakness; he will not let the Lord Jesus wash his feet, John 13; but the Lord Jesus knowing that this was from weakness, and not from wickedness, he passes it over, and notwithstanding his unkind refusal, he washes his feet. Thomas is very weak: "I will not believe," says he, "except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side," John 20:25. Now this Christ bears with much tenderness and sweetness, as you may see in ver. 27, "Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither your fingers, and behold my hands, and reach hither your hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless—but believing." The Lord Jesus does, as it were, open his wounds afresh; he overlooks his weakness. Well, says he, seeing it is so that you will not believe, I will rather bleed afresh than you shall die in your unbelief.

So the three disciples whom Christ had singled out to watch with him one hour, Mat. 26, they showed a great deal of weakness to be sleeping, when their Lord was a-sorrowing; to be snorting when their Savior was sighing, etc. Yet Christ bears this, and reacts sweetly towards them, and excuses their weakness: ver. 41, "The spirit is willing—but the flesh is weak." Oh

how sweetly does the Lord behave! Every new man is two men; he has a contrary principle in him, the flesh and the spirit. The spirit, the noble part, is willing—but the flesh, the ignoble part, is weak and wayward.

Now shall the Lord thus bear with his weak ones, and shall not strong saints bear also? Remember, strong Christians, there was a day when you were as weak as others, as apt to fall as others, as easily conquered as others; and if then the Lord behaved sweetly towards you, let the same spirit be in you towards those who are weak. It will be no grief of heart to you, if in this you act like your Lord and Savior.

If you do not bear with the infirmities of the weak, who shall? who will? This wicked world cannot, nor will not. The world will make them transgressors for a word, and watch for their halting; and therefore you had need to bear with them so much the more, Isaiah 29:21, Jer. 20:10. The world's cruelty should stir up your compassions.

**[2.] *Secondly, As it is your duty to bear with them, so it is your duty to receive them into communion with you.***

Romans 14:1, "*Receive* him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." That is, him who is not thoroughly persuaded of all things pertaining to Christian liberty, about things indifferent. He does not say, "Those who have *no* faith receive." For there is no rule for the saints or churches to receive them into communion, who have no faith, who have no fellowship with the Father and the Son. But "*Receive* him whose faith is *weak*."

The word that is here rendered *receive*, signifies to receive into our bosom with charitable affection. The Greek word signifies three things.

(1.) It signifies to receive weak saints into our heart; to receive them with the greatest tenderness, affection, pity, and compassion that possibly can be. So the same Greek word is used in the Epistle of Philemon, ver. 12, where Paul entreats Philemon "to receive Onesimus who is my very heart." The word there is the same word with this in the text. So must the strong receive the weak, even as their own heart; receive them with the greatest affection, with the greatest compassion that possibly can be.

(2.) The word signifies *patiently to bear with the weak when they are received*; and not to take them into your bosom, into your communion one day and cast them out the next—but patiently to bear with them, as well as affectionately to receive them.

It was the heathen prince Xerxes, who crowned his steersman in the morning—and beheaded him in the evening of the same day, etc.

(3.) The word signifies *by fatherly instruction to seek to restore him*. It is not the will of Christ that weak saints should be rejected, or that the door of entrance should be shut against them, until they are stronger, or until they have attained to such heights and such perfections of grace and divine enjoyments of God as others have attained. Remember this, as the weakest faith, if true, gives the soul a right to all that internal and eternal worth that is in Christ: so the weakest faith, if true, gives a man a real right unto all the external privileges and favors that come by Christ. In Romans 15:7, "Therefore receive one another—as Christ also received us to the glory of God." This is the standing rule for all the saints and churches in the world to go by. It is not their wills—but these two scriptures last cited, which are the standing rules by which all the churches on earth are to go by, in the admission of members.

"Those who are weak in the faith" are to be received by you, because the Lord Jesus has received them. Christ does not receive the strong—and cast off the weak. No; the Lord Jesus gathers the weak into his bosom, and tenderly dandles them upon his knee. He receives the weak—as well as the strong; therefore says the apostle, "As the Lord has received them—so do you."

Bucer rejected none in whom he saw *aliquid Christi*—anything of Christ—but gave them the right hand of fellowship. Such people and churches can never answer it to Christ—who keep the door of admission shut against souls truly gracious, though they are but weak in grace, though they have not attained to such a measure of light, or degrees of love, or to such perfections in holiness—as such and such have done. No; the standing rule is, "Him whom the Lord has received—receive."

If weak saints shall desire communion, and be willing to walk in the ways

that Jesus Christ has appointed his saints to walk in, the churches ought to give them the right hand of fellowship. And that is the second duty that lies upon the strong, namely, that they are to *receive* the weak into communion and fellowship with them, and that with the greatest affection, love, and compassion, that possibly can be.

A *third* duty that lies upon strong saints to the weak is this:

**[3.] *They must look more upon their graces—than upon their weaknesses.***

It is a sad thing when they shall borrow spectacles to behold their weak brethren's weaknesses, and refuse looking-glasses wherein they may see their weak brethren's graces. Saints who are strong ought to look more upon the virtues of weak saints than upon their miscarriages. When Christ saw but a little moral good in the young man, the text says that "He looked upon him, and loved him," Mark 10:12. And shall not we look upon a weak saint and love him, when we see the love of God and the image of God upon him. Shall moral virtue take the eye, and draw the love of Christ? And shall not supernatural grace in a weak Christian, take our eyes and draw our hearts? Shall we eye a little gold in much earth? And shall we not eye a little grace where there is much corruption? [If moral virtue could be seen with mortal eyes, it would soon draw all hearts to itself, says Plato. What, then, should grace do? the least grain of which is of more worth than all the moral virtues in the world.]

It is an unsufferable weakness, I had almost said, for people to allow their affections to run out only to such who are of their judgments; and to love, prize, and value people according as they suit their opinions—and not according to what of the image of God shines in them. But if this be not far from a gospel spirit, and from that God-like spirit which should be in saints, I know nothing. It speaks out much of Christ within, to own where Christ owns, and love where Christ loves, and embrace where Christ embraces, and to be one with everyone that is practically one with the Lord Jesus. Christ cannot but take it very unkindly at our hands—if we should disown any upon whom he has set his royal stamp. And I bless his grace that has drawn out my desires and endeavors to love, own, and honor the people of Christ, according to the appearances of Christ which I

see in them. And, if I am not much mistaken, this is the highway to that joy, peace, and comfort—the lack of which makes a man's life a hell. God looks more on the bright side of the cloud, than he does on the dark—and so should we.

It was the honor of Vespasian that "he was more ready to conceal the vices of his friends, than their virtues." Surely there is much of God in that soul, that is upon a gospel account more careful and skillful to conceal the vices of weak saints, than their virtues. Many in these days do justly incur the censure which that sour philosopher passed upon grammarians, that "they were better acquainted with the evil of Ulysses, than with their own."

**[4.] *Fourthly, it is the duty of strong saints, in things indifferent—to deny themselves, to please the weak.***

1 Cor. 8:13, "If what I eat is going to make another Christian sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don't want to make another Christian stumble." Strong saints must stand unchangeably resolved neither to *give* offence carelessly, nor to *take* offence causelessly. Says the apostle, I will not stand to dispute my Christian liberty—but will rather lay it down at my weak brother's feet, than I will by the use of it offend one for whom Christ has died. 1 Cor. 9:22, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." That is, I condescended and went to the uttermost that I possibly could, without sin—to win and gain upon the weak; I displeased myself in things which were of an indifferent nature, to please them.

You ought not, O strong Christian, by the use of your Christian liberty, to put a stumbling-block before your weak brother. Romans 15:2, "We then who are strong, ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let everyone of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." He does not say, Let everyone of us please the lust of his neighbor—but let everyone of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. Let us in things of an indifferent nature so yield as to please our neighbor. There were some who thought that they might observe days; others thought they might not. Some thought they might eat meat;

others thought they might only eat vegetables. Why, says the apostle, in these things which are of an indifferent nature, I will rather displease and deny myself, to profit my neighbor, than I will, by the use of my liberty, occasion my neighbor to offend. Ay, this is true Christian love indeed, for a man to cross himself to please his neighbor, so it may be for his soul's edification. But this heavenly love is driven almost out of the world, which causes men to dislike those things in others which they flatter in themselves.

A *fifth* duty incumbent upon strong saints is,

**[5.] To support the weak.**

1 Thes. 5:14, "*Support* the weak, be patient towards all men." Look, what the crutch is to the lame, and the beam of the house is to the ruined house—that ought strong saints to be to the weak. Strong saints are to be crutches to the weak, they are to be, as it were, beams to bear up the weak. Strong saints are to set to their shoulder, to shore up the weak by their counsels, prayers, tears, and examples. Strong saints must not deal with the weak, as the herd of deer do with the wounded deer; they forsake it and push it away. Oh no! When a poor weak saint is wounded by a temptation, or by the power of some corruption, then those who are strong ought to support and support such a one, lest he be swallowed up in sorrow. When you who are strong see a weak saint staggering and reeling under a temptation or affliction, Oh, know it is then your duty to put both your hands underneath, to support him so that he faints not, that he miscarries not in such an hour. Isaiah 35:3, "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." [Look, what the nurse is to the child, the oak to the ivy, the house to the vine; that should strong saints be to the weak, etc., 2 Cor. 2:7.]

"Strengthen the weak hands," that is, hands that hang down; "and confirm the feeble knees," that is, such knees that by reason of feebleness are ready to fall. Strengthen such, that is, encourage them, by casting in a promise, by casting in your experiences, or by casting in the experiences of other saints, that so they may be supported. It may be his case was once yours: if so, then tell him what promises did support you, what discoveries of God did uphold you; tell him what tastes, what sights, and

what in-comes you had, and how bravely you did bear up, by the strength of his everlasting arms which were under you, etc.

A *sixth* duty that is incumbent upon strong saints is,

**[6.] *To take heed of making weak saints halt and go lame in a way of holiness, or of keeping them off from the ways of God, or of turning them out of the ways of God.***

That is the meaning of that scripture, as I conceive, Luke 17:2. And of that, Mat. 18:10, "Beware that you don't despise a single one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." You are apt to slight them because they are weak in grace and holiness, and so you are apt to cause them to halt; but take heed of this, they have glistening courtiers which attend them; therefore take heed that you do not offend them, for their angels, as so many champions, stand ready to right them and fight for them. A man were better offend and anger all the devils in hell, and all the witches in the world, than to anger and offend the least of Christ's little ones. If Cain despises Abel, God will arraign him for it: "Why is your countenance cast down?" Gen. 4:6. If Miriam does but mutter against Moses, God will spit in her face for it, Num. 12:14.

That is a very dreadful word, Mat. 18:6, "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." You make nothing of it—but says Christ, take heed, "for it would be better that a millstone," a huge millstone, as the Greek word signifies, such a one as only a donkey can turn about; (this kind of punishment the greatest malefactors among the Jews were put to in those days, says Jerome), "and cast into the middle of the sea;" so it is word for word in the Greek, the middle being deepest and furthest off from the shore, rendering his condition most miserable and irrecoverable.

**[7.] *Seventhly, It is the duty of strong saints to suit all things to the capacity of the weak.***

To suit all their prayers and all their discourses to the capacity of the

weak. Paul was good at this: "To the weak became I as weak." Paul was a man as strong in natural and acquired parts as any living, and he knew how to word it, and to carry it in as lofty strains, as any who breathed—yet who more plain in his preaching than Paul? It has many a time made my heart sad, to think how those men will answer it in the day of Christ—who affect lofty strains, high notions, and cloudy expressions—who make the plain things of the gospel dark and obscure.

Many preachers in our days are like Heraclitus, who was called "*the dark doctor*;" they affect sublime notions, obscure expressions, uncouth phrases, making plain truths difficult, and easy truths hard. "They darken counsel with words without knowledge," Job 38:2. Studied expressions and high notions in a sermon, are like Asahel's carcass in the pathway, which did only stop men and make them gaze—but did no ways profit them or better them. It is better to present truth in her native plainness, than to hang her ears with counterfeit pearls.

That is a remarkable scripture, 1 Cor. 3:1-2, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual—but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able." The apostle did not soar aloft in the clouds, and express the mysteries of the gospel in such a dark obscure way as that poor creatures could not be able to understand the mind of God in it. No; but he suited all his discourses to their capacities; and so must you.

**[8.] *Eighthly, It is your duty to labor to strengthen weak saints against sin, and to draw them to holiness argumentatively.***

When a strong saint comes to deal with one that is weak, and would strengthen him against sin, he must do it argumentatively; and when he would draw to holiness, he must do it argumentatively. 1 John 2:1-2, compared with chapter 1:7, 9, "My little children, these things I write unto you—that you sin not." What things were those he wrote? Mark, chapter 1:7, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses from all sins." Here he fences them against sin, by one of the

strongest and choicest arguments that the whole book of God affords, by an argument which is drawn from the soul's communion with God. And then in verse 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father." Here the apostle labors to strengthen weak saints argumentatively, even by the strongest arguments that the whole book of God affords. So verses 12-13, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake," etc. So in verse 18, "Little children, it is the last times, and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." So verse 28, "And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does righteousness is born of him." You see in all these scriptures how the apostle labors to strengthen weak saints in a way of holiness, and to fence them against ways of wickedness argumentatively, and so must you; this being the ready way to convince them, and to make a conquest upon them, etc.

The *ninth* duty that lies upon strong saints is,

**[9.] *To cast a mantle over the infirmities of the weak.***

Now there is a three-fold mantle that should be cast over the infirmities of the weak. There is a mantle of *wisdom*, a mantle of *faithfulness*, and a mantle of *compassion*, which is to be cast over all the infirmities of weak saints.

*First*, Strong saints are to cast a mantle of **wisdom** over the infirmities of weak saints. They are not to present their sins in that ugliness, and with such aggravations, as may terrify, as may sink, as may make a weak saint to despair, or may drive him from the mercy-seat, or as may keep him and Christ asunder, or as may unfit him for the discharge of pious duties. It is more a weakness than a virtue in strong Christians, when a weak saint is fallen, to aggravate his fall to the uttermost, and to present his sins in such a dreadful dress, as shall amaze him, etc. It often proves very prejudicial and dangerous to weak saints, when their infirmities are aggravated beyond Scripture grounds, and beyond what they are able to

bear. He who shall lay the same strength to the rubbing of an glass dish, as he does to the rubbing of a pewter platter, instead of cleaning it, shall surely break it all to pieces. The application is easy, etc. [Parisiensis said sometimes concerning trifles: *It is, said he, as if a man should see a fly or a flea on a man's forehead, and for that should presently take a hammer to knock him on the head to kill the fly.*]

*Secondly*, There is a mantle of **faithfulness** which is to be cast over the infirmities of weak saints. A man should never reveal the infirmities of a weak saint, especially to such that have neither skill nor will to heal and bury them. The world will but blaspheme and blaze them abroad, to the dishonor of God, to the reproach of religion, and to the grief and scandal of the weak, etc. They will with Ham rather call upon others to scoff at them, than bring a mantle to cover them, etc. Ham was cursed because he revealed his father's nakedness to his brethren, when it was in his power to have covered it. He saw it, and might have drawn a curtain over it—but would not; and for this, by a spirit of prophecy, he was cursed by his father, Gen. 9:22. This age is full of such monsters, who rejoice to blaze abroad the infirmities of the saints, and these certainly justice has or will curse.

*Thirdly*, There is a mantle of **compassion** which must be cast over the weaknesses and infirmities of weak saints. When a weak man comes to see his sin, and the Lord gives him to lie down in the dust, and to take shame and confusion to himself, that he has dishonored God, and caused Christ to bleed afresh, and grieved the Spirit, etc.; oh now you must draw a covering, and cast a mantle of love and compassion over his soul, that he may not be swallowed up with sorrow. Now you must confirm your love to him, and carry it with as great tenderness and sweetness after his fall, as if he had never fallen. This the apostle presses, 2 Cor. 2:7, "Love," says the wise man, "covers all sin." Love's mantle is very large. Love claps a plaster upon every sore; love has two hands, and makes use of both, to hide the scars of weak saints.

Christ, O strong saints, casts the mantle of his righteousness over your weaknesses, and will not you cast the mantle of love over your brother's infirmities? [I have known a good old man, said Bernard, who, when he had heard of any that had committed some notorious offence, was

accustomed to say with himself, *He fell today—so may I tomorrow*, etc.]

**[10.] Tenthly, *It is the duty of strong saints to sympathize with the weak; to rejoice with them when they rejoice, and to mourn with them when they mourn.***

2 Cor. 11:29, "Who is weak, and I am weak? who is scandalized, offended—and I am not on fire, burn not?"

Thuanus reports of Lodovicus Marsacus, a knight of France, when he was led with other martyrs that were bound with cords, going to execution, and he for his dignity was not bound, he cried, Give me my chains too, let me be a knight of the same order.

It should be between a strong saint and a weak, as it is between two lute-strings, which are tuned one to another; no sooner one is struck—but the other trembles; no sooner should a weak saint be struck—but the strong should tremble. "Remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them," Heb. 13:3.

The Romans punished one that was seen looking out at his window with a crown of roses on his head, in a time of public calamity; and will not God punish those who do not sympathize with Joseph in his afflictions? Surely he will. Amos 6:1-14.

**[11.] *Lastly, It is the duty of the strong to give to the weak the honor which is due unto them.***

1 Peter 3:7: They have the same name, the same baptism, the same profession, the same faith, the same hope, the same Christ, the same promises, the same dignity, and the same glory with you; therefore speak honorably of them, and behave honorably towards them. Let not those be under your feet—whom Christ has laid near his heart, etc. And so much for this second doctrine, **that all saints are not of an equal size and growth in grace and holiness.**

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, **is this grace given**, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

I shall now proceed to the third doctrine, namely, **Christ gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones.**

We shall speak now to the word **grace**. The Greek word that is here rendered *grace*, has a twofold signification.

*First*, Sometimes it is taken for the gracious favor and good-will of God, whereby he is pleased of his own free love to accept and own poor sinners in the Son of his love, for his own. This is called the first grace, because it is the fountain of all other graces, and the spring from whence they flow. And it is therefore called grace, because it makes a man gracious with God.

*Secondly*, This word that is here rendered *grace*, is taken for the gifts of grace, and they are of two sorts, special or common. **Common grace** is that which hypocrites may have, and in which they may excel and go beyond the choicest saints, as in a gift of knowledge, a gift of utterance, a gift of prayer, a gift of tongues, etc. A man may have these, and many other excellent gifts, and yet eternally miscarry, yes, fall as low as hell; witness Judas, Demas, the scribes and pharisees, etc., Mat. 7:21-25.

Secondly, There is **special grace**, as faith, love, humility, meekness, which the apostle reckons up in Gal. 5:22-23.

Now here by grace you may either understand the gracious favor of God, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this choice favor given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," or else you may take it for the gifts of grace, both saving and common, which the apostle had given him, in order to the discharge of his ministerial office, which, by the special favor of God, he was advanced to.

The word grace being thus opened, we may from thence observe, **that**

***the Lord gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones.***

"Unto me," says the apostle, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given."

For the opening and clearing of this point, I shall premise these four things.

I. To show you what those best gifts are, which God bestows upon his best beloved ones.

II. I shall show you the manner of his giving the best gifts to his beloved ones, or the difference there is between Christ's giving and the world's giving.

III. And then the excellency of those gifts which Christ gives, above all other gifts which the world gives.

IV. And lastly, The reason why Christ gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones.

**I. For the *first*, What are those best gifts, which Christ bestows upon his best beloved ones?**

I shall not instance in those common gifts which they have in common with others—but rather show unto you those special gifts which God bestows upon them; and of those I shall single out those which are most choice, and which carry most in them of the glory, favor, and "good will of him who dwelt in the bush."

And the *first* is this:

**[1.] He gives LIGHT to his beloved ones.** "Light is a pleasant thing to behold," as the wise man speaks, Eccles. 11:7. He gives spiritual light, which is a mercy of mercies. Eph. 5:14, "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." [shine upon you. Life without light is but a lifeless life.] So John 1:7-9, "He was not that Light—

but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light—which enlightens every man who comes into the world." He gives that light whereby his people are enabled to see **sin** to be the greatest evil, and **himself** to be the chief good. He gives that light which melts the soul, which humbles the soul, which warms the soul, which quickens the soul, which quiets the soul, and which gladdens the soul. Man is not born with heavenly light in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. Until Christ comes and sets up a light in the soul, the soul lives in darkness, and lies in darkness, yes, is darkness in the very abstract: Eph. 5:8, "You were once darkness—but now are you light in the Lord." Saints are always in the sunshine, therefore they should be like a crystal glass, with a light in the midst, which appears in every part. "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings." Mal. 4:2. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

A Christian should be like the lamp in the story—which never went out. Were it not for the sun, it would be perpetual night in the world, notwithstanding all starlight, and torchlight, and moonlight. It is not the *torchlight* of natural parts and creature-comforts, nor the *starlight* of civil honesty and common gifts, nor yet the *moonlight* of temporary faith and formal profession—which can make *day* in the soul, until the Sun of righteousness rises and shines upon it. And that is the first thing he gives—light.

Now, the *second* thing he gives is,

**[2.] REPENTANCE.** Repentance is not a flower which grows in nature's garden. Acts 5:31, "Him has God the Father exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to *give* repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." So in 2 Tim. 2:25, "The servant of the Lord must in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves, if God perhaps will *give* them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." By these scriptures, it is clear that repentance is no flower that grows in nature's garden, though Arminians teach and print, that if men will put out their power and their strength they may repent, etc. [2 Cor. 3:5. If there be such a power in fallen man to repent and believe, etc., to what purpose was the coming of Christ into

the world? 1 John 2:9; 3:8. And why do natural men, when their consciences are awakened, so cry out, that they are as able to stop the sun in his course, to raise the dead, and to make a world, as they are able of themselves to repent? etc.] But several that have been of this opinion, have experienced the falseness of it when it has been too late: "The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots," Jer. 13:23. And certainly, if there were such a power in man to repent, as some would make the world believe, man would never miscarry everlastingly for his not repenting. Oh, is it good dwelling with everlasting burnings, with a burning fire? Is it good being forever shut out from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power? Certainly, if there were such a power in vain man to repent, no man would go to hell for not repenting; and many who have boasted much of their abilities to repent, when they have been upon a dying bed, would have given a thousand worlds, were there so many in their power, that they could but repent.

Luther confesses, that before his conversion, he met not with a more displeasing word in all the study of divinity than this word *repent*; but after the Lord had converted him, and manifested himself to him, he delighted in this work; then he could sorrow for his sins, and rejoice in his sorrow.

Repentance strips the soul stark naked of all the garments of the old Adam, and leaves not so much as the shirt behind. In this rotten building there is not one stone left upon another. As the flood drowned Noah's own friends and servants, as well as strangers, so true repentance drowns all darling lusts. True repentance is the cutting off the right hand, and the pulling out of the right eye; and is this such an easy thing? Surely not! True repentance is a gift that is from above, and if the Lord does not give it, man will eternally perish for the lack of it. You may read much more of this in my treatise called *Heaven on Earth*.

**[3.] Christ gives his SPIRIT.** Romans 5:5, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us." So in 1 John 3:24, "And hereby we know that he abides in us." How? "By the Spirit whom he has given us." So in chapter 4:13. The Spirit whom the Lord Christ gives—is an **enlightening** Spirit, it is the candle of the Lord set up in the hearts of the saints, to guide them in the way everlasting. It

is a **sanctifying** Spirit, a Spirit of burning, Isaiah 4:4. He is a fire to enlighten the soul, and a fire to enliven the soul, and a fire to warm the soul, etc. Whatever is of the Spirit is *spirit*. It is nimble, and lively, and active, and full of life and motion, as the Spirit is. A man without the Spirit of the Lord is a dull, dronish creature. As the Latins call a dull, dronish man, a fireless man, so we may call a man who has not the Spirit, a spiritless man. The Spirit that Christ gives is a **sealing** Spirit, Eph. 1:13; and a **leading** Spirit, "those who are *led* by the Spirit of God are sons of God." Romans 8:14. He leads from sin, he leads from wrath, he leads from the curse; he leads to God, he leads to Christ, he leads to the promises, he leads to glory, etc.

Again, this Spirit is a **comforting** Spirit, John 4:16; and a **pleading** Spirit, Romans 8:26. Every Christian has three advocates pleading for him: the first is, that divine love which is in the bosom of the Father; the second is, the Lord Jesus who is at the right hand of the Father; and the third is, the Holy Spirit who is one with the Father.

**[4.] He gives his BLOOD.** The blood of Christ is a gift of Christ to his beloved ones. Mat 20:28, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto—but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." So in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep." His blood was the purest blood, his human nature being most pure. His blood was the noblest blood, and therefore called in Scripture, "the blood of God," Romans 3:25 and Acts 20:28, by reason of the conjunction of the divine nature with the human. It was his life-blood, his heart-blood which he gave. It was not the blood of his *finger*—but the blood of his *heart*; it was precious blood. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers—but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." 1 Peter 1:18-19

Three things are called precious in the Scripture.

(1.) **Faith** is called precious faith, 2 Peter 1:1.

(2.) The **promises** are called precious promises, ver. 4.

(3.) The **blood of Christ** is called precious blood, 1 Peter 1:19.

All your precious mercies swim to you in precious blood, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Romans 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:7, 26, 10:19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5, etc.]

It was an excellent saying of Luther, speaking of this blood of Christ, *One little drop of this blood, is more worth than heaven and earth!* Your pardon swims to you in blood; your peace with God swims to you in blood; your reconciliation is made by blood; your acceptance is wrought by blood, etc. Christ's blood is heaven's key; Christ's blood is a preservative against the greatest evils. Christ's blood, as Pliny says of *polium*, is a preservative against serpents, etc.

**[5.] Christ gives *PARDON of sin*.** And do you know what a mercy that is? Ask the troubled soul, ask the soul who knows what it is to lie under the wrath of the Almighty, and he will tell you that pardon of sin is a gift more worth than a thousand worlds. Now that pardon of sin is a gift of God, you may see in Acts 5:31, "Him has God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." [To his right hand; that is, to honor and dignity, etc.] So in Acts 26:18. Ah, souls! of all mercies, *pardoning mercy* is the most necessary mercy. I may go to heaven without honors, and without riches, and without the smiles of creatures; but I can never to heaven without pardoning mercy. A man may be great and graceless, he may be rich and miserable, he may be honorable and damnable, etc., [As Ahab, Haman, Dives, etc.] But a pardoned soul must be a very blessed soul.

Psalm 32:1-2. "*Blessed* is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. *Blessed* is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him." [*Blessednesses*. In the plural, pardon of sin includes a plurality of mercies, a chain of pearls, a chain of blessings.] It entitles souls to all blessedness, it puts the royal crown upon their heads. Of all mercies, *pardoning mercy* is the most sweetening mercy; it is a choice jewel, and swims to the soul in blood, Heb. 9:22. It is a mercy which makes all other mercies to look like mercies, and taste like mercies, and work like mercies; and the lack of it takes off the glory and beauty of all a man's other mercies, and makes his life a very hell. Pardon of sin is a

voluminous mercy, a mercy which has many, many precious mercies in its womb! You may well call it *Gad*, Gen. 30:11, for it ushers in *troops* of mercy. When you can number the sands of the sea, and count the stars of heaven, then, and not until then, shall you be able to recount the mercies which attend pardoning mercy. He who has this mercy cannot be miserable, and he who lacks it cannot be happy: get this and get all, miss this and miss all. Pardoning mercy is a gift conferred only upon Christ's favorites: "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you," Mat. 9:2. No mercy will make a man everlastingly blissful—but pardoning mercy. He has no reason to be sad—who has his pardon in his bosom; nor has he any reason to be glad, who is upon the last step of the ladder, ready to be turned off without his pardon. And this is the fifth gift that Christ gives to his, namely, pardon of sin.

**[6.] Christ gives *precious PROMISES*.** 2 Peter 1:4, "He has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises," etc. The promises are a precious book; every leaf drops myrrh and mercy. The promises are golden vessels, which are laden with the choicest jewels which heaven can afford, or the soul can desire. All our spiritual, temporal, and eternal good is to be found in the belly of the promises. [The promises are precious beds of spices; they are bottles filled with those heavenly dews that will never fail, like that of Hagar's—but will uphold and nourish the soul to life eternal, etc.]

Promises are big-bellied mercies. There is nothing you can truly call a mercy—but you will find it in the belly of a promise. Under all changes they are the comfort, support, and relief of the soul: Psalm 119:49-50, "Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has quickened me." If the soul groans under the **power of sin**, then that promise relieves it: Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law—but under grace."

If the soul groans under the **guilt of sin**, then that promise relieves it: Jer. 33:8, "I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned against me," etc. And that promise, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I," whom you have offended; "I, even I," whom you

have provoked; "I, even I," whose glorious name you have profaned; "I, even I," whose righteous law you have violated; "I, even I," whose holy covenant you have transgressed; "I, even I," whose mercies you have despised; "I, even I, whose chastisements you have slighted," will blot out your transgressions for my own sake." "I, even I," is a passionate and emphatic expression. God's goodness runs over to sinful creatures; and "where sin abounds, there grace does superabound."

If the creditor himself blots out the debt, and crosses the book—surely it shall never more be remembered. [Mat. 6:12, 14-15, and 18:24, 27, 33; Luke 7:41-48.] Our sins are debts, which God, who has the power of life and death, of heaven and hell, of condemning and absolving—has engaged himself to blot out as a thick cloud: Isaiah 44:22, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins." An under-officer may blot out an indictment, and yet the offender may be never the better for it; but if the king, who is the supreme judge, shall blot it out, then the offender is safe. The application is easy.

If the soul is **deserted**, then that promise relieves it: Micah 7:18-19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us," etc. If the soul is **slipping and ready to fall**, then that promise supports and upholds it: Psalm 37:24, "Though he stumbles, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand." Deut. 33:26-27. The Hebrew particle notes a continued act of God. God has still his everlasting arms under his people, so that they shall never totally nor finally fall. And the root *samach*, from whence this word is derived, signifies to sustain or uphold, as the tender mother does the little babe. The safety and security of the child lies not so much in the child's hanging about the mother's neck, as in the mother's holding it fast in her arms. So our safety and security lies not so much in our weak holding upon Christ—but in Christ's holding of us fast in his everlasting arms. This is our glory and our safety, that Christ's "left hand is always under us, and his right hand does always embrace us," Cant. 2:6. "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." John 10:28

If the soul be forsaken by friends, then that promise relieves it, Heb. 13:5, 6, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." There are five negatives in the Greek to assure God's people that he will never forsake them. Five times

this precious promise is renewed in the Scripture, that we might have the stronger consolation, and that we may press and squeeze it until we have gotten all the sweetness out of it. And truly many precious souls have sucked much sweetness out of the breasts of this promise, when their nearest relations and their dearest friends have forsaken them and forgotten them. God loves that his people should plead his promises; and he who does shall find God near him, though friends should leave him, and the world be in arms against him, etc.

If the soul be **tempted**, then that word of promise relieves it, 1 Cor. 10:13, "But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able," etc. The promises are a Christian's *magna charta*; they are his chief evidences for heaven. Men highly prize their charters and privileges, and carefully keep the titles and deeds of their lands. Oh! how should saints then treasure up and keep these precious promises which the Lord has given them, and which are to them, for their protection, maintenance, deliverance, comfort, and everlasting happiness! And thus much for the sixth gift the Lord gives, viz, the promises.

**[7.] The Lord gives GRACE.** "Of his fullness we all have received grace for grace," John 1:16. The Lord gives that grace, the least grain of which is worth more than heaven and earth.

It was an excellent saying of one of Jerome, "I had rather have Paul's coat with his heavenly graces, than the purple robes of kings with their kingdoms." Grace is that which truly ennobles the soul; it raises the soul up to converse with the highest and with the noblest objects; and every man is, as the objects are, with which he converses. If the objects are noble—the man is so; if the objects are base with which a man converses—the man is base. [Not race or place—but grace, truly sets forth a man.] A man may better know what he is, by eyeing the objects with which his soul does mostly converse—than by observing his most glorious and pompous services: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor," Proverbs 12:26. Abraham was a prince of God among the Hittites, Gen. 23:6. The Jews say that those seventy people who went down with Jacob into Egypt were more worth than the seventy nations of the world. Indeed, it is only grace which makes a man truly noble.

When one heard the king of Persia styled "the Great King," says he, I acknowledge none more excellent than myself, unless more righteous; nor none greater, unless better. Grace, as it is bred by the noblest means, so it is preserved and maintained in the soul by the choicest means—union and communion with God, etc. Grace is glory in the bud—and glory is grace at the full. Grace makes a man all glorious within and without. Grace is a ring of gold, and Christ is the sparkling diamond in that ring.

**[8.] He gives PEACE.** John 14:27, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you." Christ gives peace with God, and peace with conscience, and peace with the creatures. *Dulce nomen pacis*—the very name of peace is sweet, Romans 5:1, Hosea 2:21-23, Job 5:19-25.

The Hebrews, when they wished all happiness to any, used but this one word, "*Peace* be with you!" And the ancients were accustomed to paint peace in the form of a woman, with a horn of plenty in her hand—all blessings. Ask a soul who has been under terrors of conscience, and he will tell you, that of all gifts, inward peace is the most princely gift, etc. [Martinus the emperor's motto was, *Give me peace, and let others quarrel.*]

**[9.] He gives GLORY.** John 10:28, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life." Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death—but the gift of God is eternal life."

Now the glory which Christ gives is **real** glory: 2 Tim. 4:7-8, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory." The Greek word signifies two things: 1, a designation of a crown; 2, a reservation and safe keeping of it for him until the coronation day.

Again, the glory which he gives is **soul-filling** glory; glory which fills the *understanding* with the clearest and the brightest light; glory which fills the *will* with the greatest freedom; glory which fills the *affections* with the choicest joy and delight, Psalm 16:11, and 17:15, 2 Cor. 12:1-6.

Again, the glory he gives is **incomparable** glory: Romans 8:18, "I

reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." The Greek word that is here rendered *I reckon*, is not a word of doubting—but a word of *concluding*. I conclude by arguments—that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to that illustrious and glorious glory "that is ready to be revealed on us," as it is in the Greek. I have cast up the account, says the apostle, as wise merchants cast up theirs, and I find in the balancing of the account—that there is nothing to be compared with that glory which shall be revealed in us.

Again, the glory he gives is **unmoveable** glory. All worldly glory is tottering and shaking. Princes' crowns hang now but upon one side of their heads. "The Lord Almighty has purposed to stain" (or pollute) "the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth," Isaiah 23:9. "The Lord has purposed it," and the counsel of the Lord shall stand! It is agreed upon in heaven, that the pride of all human glory shall be stained and polluted, or thrown down, as some polluted filthy thing that is trampled under foot. Oh! but this glory which Christ gives is unmoveable glory—it is permanent glory; it is glory which cannot be changed, stained, or polluted, Heb. 12:28.

Again, the glory he gives is **suitable** glory. It is glory which is suited to the backs, hearts, hopes, desires, and capacities of his servants, John 14:1-3.

Again, the glory he gives is **never-fading** glory; it is glory which fades not away. When a man has been in heaven as many millions of years as there are stars in heaven, his glory shall be as fresh and as green as it was at his first entrance into heaven. All worldly glory is like the flowers of the field; but the glory that Christ gives is lasting and durable like himself, etc. "And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." 1 Peter 5:4

**[10.] Lastly, He gives HIMSELF.** And truly this is a gift of gifts indeed, John 6:51, 63; so in Eph. 5:20. A saint may say, Methinks I hear Christ saying to me as Æschines said to Socrates, "Others," said he, "give you silver and gold, and precious jewels—but I give you myself." So the soul may say, One friend gives me bread, and another gives me clothes,

and another gives me house-room, etc. Oh! but you give me yourself! Christ put into the balance will outweigh all other gifts which he bestows upon men.

Christ is the **richest** gift. Oh! there are unsearchable riches in Christ, as hereafter I shall show you. [Austin prays: *Lord, whatever you have given, take all away; only give me yourself.*]

Jesus is the **choicest** and the **rarest** gift; he is a gift given but to a few. Rich and rare jewels are not commonly given—but more rarely given; so is Christ. Though Israel be "as the sand of the sea—yet a remnant only shall be saved," Romans 9:17. "A garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, is my well-beloved," Cant. 4:12. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom," Luke 12:32.

Christ is a **drawing** gift, a gift which brings all other gifts along with him. "If he has given us his Son, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. Christ is a drawing gift. When God the Father has cast this incomparable jewel into a man's bosom, he cannot deny him anything. Such a soul may well say, Has he given me a Christ? and will he not give me a crumb? Has he given me his Son, which is the greatest mercy? and will he stand with me for lesser mercies? Surely not!

In a word, Christ is of all gifts the **sweetest** gift. As the tree, Exod. 15:25, sweetened the bitter waters, so this gift, the Lord Jesus, of whom that tree was a type—sweetens all other gifts which are bestowed upon the sons of men. He turns every bitter into sweet, and makes every sweet more sweet.

And so I come to the second thing propounded, and that was,

**II. *The difference between Christ's giving and the world's giving.*** And this I shall show you in the following particulars:

[1.] **First, *The world gives—but they give grudgingly. But when Christ gives, he gives freely.*** Isa. 55:1, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, let him come, and buy wine and milk without money, and without price." So in Rev. 21:6, "I will give to everyone that is athirst of the water of life freely." To do good, and not to do it freely, handsomely, is nothing.

A benefit given with grudging is a stony loaf, only taken for necessity. [2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Peter 4:9. No offerings compared to free-will offerings.]

**[2.] Secondly, *The world gives—but they give poorly, niggardly. But Christ gives plenteously, richly.*** 1 Tim. 6:17, "Charge those who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches—but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." [Saul had but five-pence to give the seer; the seer, after much good cheer, gives him no less than the kingdom, 1 Sam. 9:8, 10. So God deals with his.]

When Caesar gave one a great reward, "This," says he, "is too great a gift for me to receive;" "But," says Caesar, "it is not too great a gift for me to give." So, though the least gift that Christ gives, in some sense, is too much for us to receive—yet the greatest gifts are not too great for Christ to give.

It is said of Araunah, that noble Jebusite, renowned for his bounty, that "he had but a subject's purse—but a king's heart." But the Lord Jesus has not only a king's heart—but he has also a king's purse, and gives accordingly.

**[3.] Thirdly, *The world give—but they give tauntingly, they give upbraidingly; they hit men in the teeth with the gifts they give. But the Lord Jesus Christ gives, and he gives willingly, he upbraids none with the gifts he gives.*** James 1:5, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids no man." Where Christ gives, there he won't upbraid, neither with present failings nor former infirmities. Christ is not accustomed to reproach those to whom he gives the best gifts; he will not cast it in their dish, that he has been thus and thus kind to them—but will always "rejoice over them to do them good." But the world gives, and then reproaches the receiver for receiving, and this turns all into gall and wormwood, etc. [Jer. 32:40, 41; Proverbs 1:20-26; 8:1-13; and 9:1-7.]

**[4.] Fourthly, *The world gives—but they give more rarely. But Christ gives, and he gives frequently.*** He is every day, every hour, yes, every moment, a-giving of royal favors to his people. Here is peace

for you who are in trouble, says Christ; and here is pardon for you who groan under guilt, says Christ; and here is comfort for you who are mourners in Zion, says Christ, etc. His hand is ever in his purse, he is still a-scattering pearls of glory, ay, the very jewels of his crown, among the beloved of his soul. [Augustus, in his solemn feasts, gave gold to some, and trifles to others. The Lord gives the gold, the best things, to his own; but the trifles of this world to the men of the world.]

**[5.] Fifthly, *The world gives—but they give the worst, and keep the best. But Christ gives the best, he gives the best of the best.*** He gives the best joy; the best comfort, the best peace, the best love, the best assistance, etc., he gives adoption, remission, justification, sanctification, acceptance, reconciliation, and glorification, etc. He gives the best. The world gives groats, ay—but Christ gives gold, 2 Cor. 9:15, 1 Peter 1:8, Philip. 4:7, Psalm 88:10-11.

**[6.] Sixthly, *The world gives a little, that they may give no more. But Christ gives—that he may give.*** He gives a little grace that he may give grace upon grace. He gives a little comfort—that he may give fullness of comfort, John 1:16. He gives some sips—that he may give full draughts, he gives pence—that he may give pounds, and he gives pounds—that he may give hundreds.

The third particular that I am to show you is,

**III. *The EXCELLENCY of those gifts which Christ gives, above all other gifts which the world gives.*** In this I shall mind brevity, and,

**[1.] First, *The gifts which Christ gives to his people, are SPIRITUAL and HEAVENLY gifts,*** as is most clear by what has been already said, and the spirituality of them does demonstrate the excellency of them. And doubtless the more spiritual any gift, any promise, any truth, any prayer, or any service is, the more excellent is that gift, etc. All Christ's gifts are like himself, spiritual and heavenly.

**[2.] Secondly, *They are pure gifts.*** Christ gives wine without water, light without darkness, gold without dross, and sweet without bitter, Rev.

22:1, James 3:17. There is much dross and poison in the gifts which the world gives—but there is none in the gifts which Christ gives. The streams are as the fountain is; the fountain is pure, and so are the streams. The branches are as the root is; the root is pure, and so are the branches.

**[3.] Thirdly, *The gifts which Christ gives are SOUL-SATISFYING gifts.*** They are such as are **suitable** to the soul, and therefore they **satisfy** the soul. Things satisfy as they suit. There is a good—and there is a suitable good. Now, it is only the suitable good which satisfies the soul of man. A pardon is most suitable to a condemned man—and therefore it best satisfies him. Health is most suitable to the sick—and therefore it satisfies when it is attained, etc. As bread satisfies the hungry soul, and drink the thirsty soul, and clothing the naked soul—so do the precious gifts which Christ bestows upon the soul satisfy the soul. The light, the love, the joy, the peace, the fellowship, etc., which Christ gives, does abundantly satisfy the soul, Jer. 31:15-16; Psalm 90:14, 36:8, 63:5, 65:4.

Oh—but the gifts which this world gives can never satisfy the soul: Eccles. 5:10, "He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with increase." A man may as soon fill a chest with grace, or a quart-pot with virtue, as a heart with wealth. If Alexander conquers one world, he will wish for another to conquer. [The creature is all shadow and vanity; it is like Jonah's gourd; it is now nourishing, and now dying, etc.]

**[4.] Fourthly, *The gifts which Christ gives are most PERMANENT and lasting gifts.*** The grace he gives is called "an immortal seed," 1 John 3:9; and the glory he gives is called "everlasting glory," Romans 2:7. The gifts of the world are fading, 2 Peter 1:11. A false oath, a spark of fire, a storm at sea, a treacherous friend—brings all to nothing in a moment. Sad experience does every day confirm this.

**[5.] Fifthly, and lastly, *The gifts which Christ gives are the most USEFUL gifts.*** They are useful to the strengthening of the soul against temptations, and to the supporting of the soul under afflictions, and to the sweetening of all changes; health and sickness, strength and weakness, plenty and poverty, honor or disgrace, life or death. Oh—but

worldly gifts cannot bear up the spirits of men from fainting and sinking when trials come, when troubles come. [The golden crown cannot cure the headache, nor the chain of pearl cannot cure the toothache. The monk rolled his hands up and down in a basin full of coins, thinking to cure his gout—but it would not do.]

The precious gifts which Christ gives his, will bear up their heads above all waters, etc. Of all gifts, they are the most useful for the producing of the most noble effects. There are no gifts which produce such effects—as the precious gifts which Christ gives. They raise men up to much life and activity; they make souls strong to do for God, to bear for God, to suffer for God; to be anything, to be nothing, that God may be "all in all." They raise the strongest joy, the most lasting comfort, and the purest peace. There are no gifts which draw out that thankfulness, and raise up to that fruitfulness, as the gifts which Jesus Christ gives. And so much for that third head, namely, the excellency of those gifts which Christ gives above all other gifts whatever.

I come now to the fourth head, and that is,

#### ***IV. The REASONS why God gives his best gifts to his dearest ones.***

I shall only give you these six:

***[1.] First, Because he loves them with the dearest, with the choicest, and with the strongest love; therefore he gives them the best gifts.***

Christ does not love believers with a low, flat, dull, common love, with such a love as most men love one another with—but with a love that is like himself. Now, men will give as they love: 1 Sam. 1:4-5, "And Elkanah gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all his sons and daughters, portions—but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion, for he loved her." In the Hebrew it is, "he gave her a gift of the face;" that is, a great, an honorable gift. Men look upon great and honorable gifts with a sweet and cheerful countenance; so the gifts which Jesus Christ gives to believers are the

gifts of the face, that is, they are the greatest gifts, the honorablest gifts, the choicest gifts—gifts fit for none but a king to give.

Augustus, in his solemn feasts, gave trifles to some—but gold to others. The Lord Jesus scatters the trifles of this world up and down; as Luther well speaks, "The whole Turkish empire is but a crust that God throws to a dog." God scatters *giftless gifts*, namely, the honors, riches, and favors of this world, up and down among the worst of men; [The world is a carcass, and those who hunt after it are dogs.] but as for his gold—his Spirit, his grace, his Son, his favor—these are jewels which only casts into the bosom of saints, and that because he dearly loves them.

**[2.] *Secondly, Christ gives the best gifts to his people, because they are best principled and fitted to make a divine improvement of them.***

There are no men on earth who are principled and fitted for the improvement of the special gifts which Christ gives, but his own people. [Wicked men are only principled to abuse mercy, which occasions God so often to rain hell out of heaven upon them, as he did once upon Sodom and Gomorrah for abusing of mercy.] None have such principles of wisdom, love, holiness, and faithfulness to make an improvement of the joy, the peace, the comfort, that the Lord gives as his people. Abraham gave unto "the sons of the concubines gifts, and sent them away; but unto Isaac he gave all that he had," Gen. 25:5. As Isaac was better beloved than the concubines' sons, so Isaac was better principled to improve love than they were. The application is easy.

**[3.] *Thirdly, He does it upon this account, that he may the more endear the hearts of his people to him.***

The greatest design of Christ in this world is mightily to endear the hearts of his people; and indeed it was that which was in his eye and upon his heart from all eternity. It was this design which caused him to lay down his crown—and to take up our cross, to put off his robes—and to put on our rags, to be condemned—that we might be justified, to undergo the wrath of the Almighty—that we might forever be in the arms of his mercy. He gives his Spirit, his grace, yes, and his very self—and all to endear the

hearts of his people to himself.

When Isaac would endear the heart of Rebekah, then the bracelets, the jewels, and the earrings are cast into her lap, Gen. 24:53. So the Lord Jesus casts his heavenly bracelets, jewels, and earrings into the laps of his people, out of a design to endear himself unto them. Proverbs 17:8, "A gift is a precious stone in the eyes of him who has it; whithersoever it turns, it prospers." In the Hebrew it is thus, "a gift is as a stone of grace," that is, it makes a man very acceptable and gracious in the eyes of others. A gift is like that precious stone *pantarbe*, which has a marvelous conciliating property in it; or like the wonder-working loadstone, which, as some writers observe, has among other properties this—that it makes these that have it well-spoken men and well accepted of princes. Certainly the gifts which Jesus Christ gives to his do render him very acceptable and precious in their eyes.

Christ to them is the crown of crowns, the heaven of heavens, the glory of glories; he is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory! Proverbs 18:16, "A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men." The gifts which Jesus Christ gives widen the heart and enlarge the soul of a believer to take in more of himself. Naturally we are narrow-mouthed heavenward, and wide-mouthed earthward; but the Lord Jesus, by casting in his jewels, his pearls, his precious gifts, into the soul, does widen the soul, and enlarge the soul, and make it more capacious to entertain himself. Christ by his gifts causes all doors to stand open, that "the King of glory may enter in," Psalm 24:7-10.

**[4.] Now the *fourth* reason of the point is, *because Christ expects more from his people, than he does from all the world besides, therefore he gives them the best gifts.***

Where the Lord expects and looks for most, there he gives most. Though believers are but "a little flock," though they are but "a remnant," though they are but "a fountain sealed, a spring shut up, a garden enclosed," yet Christ looks for more from them, than from all the world besides. He looks for more **love** from them, than from all the world besides; and he expects more **service** from them, than from all the world besides; and he looks for more **honor** from them than from all the world besides: Mal.

1:6, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am your father, where is my honor? and if I am your master, where is my fear?" He looks for more **fear** from them than from all the world besides, and for more **prayers** and **praises** from them than from all the world besides.

**[5.] Fifthly, *The Lord Jesus gives the best gifts to his own people, that he may fence and strengthen them against the worst temptations.***

There are no men on earth who lie so open to temptations, as saints. The best men have been always the most tempted. The more excellent any man is in grace and holiness, the more shall that man be followed with temptations, as you may see in David, who was tempted by Satan to number the people; and Job, to curse God and die; and Peter, to deny Christ; and so Paul was buffeted, yes, and Christ himself most grievously assaulted. The Lord knows well enough that Satan has a cruel eye, an envious eye, a malicious eye upon his beloved ones; and therefore he is pleased, by his precious gifts, to strengthen them against his assaults. What Paul once said concerning bonds and afflictions, that they attended him "in every place," that may believers say concerning temptations—that they attend them in "every place," in every calling, in every condition, in every company, in every service, etc. As now, **that the hearts of his people and temptations may not meet**—the Lord is pleased to give them the best and choicest gifts.

Austin thanked God for this, that his heart and the temptations did not meet. The Lord has on purpose given these glorious gifts into the hearts of his saints, that their souls and temptations may be kept asunder; that though they be tempted—yet they may not be conquered; though they be assaulted—yet they may not be vanquished. Basil, Luther, Vincentius, and that famous marquis Carraciolus, etc., met with very strange and strong temptations—but the precious gifts which the Lord had cast into their bosoms made them triumph over all. Oh that grace, that peace, that life, that love, that communion with which the Lord had crowned them, made them too great, too noble, and too glorious to yield to any temptations with which they were beset. It was their pleasure to overcome offered pleasure; their honor to overcome offered honor; their greatness to

overcome offered greatness. When one of them was tempted with money and preferment, he scorned the offers, saying, *Give me money that may last forever, and glory that may eternally flourish.*

Jerome tells a story of a Christian soldier, whom when the praetor could not by any torments remove from Christianity, he commanded him to be laid on a bed in a pleasant garden, among the flourishing and fragrant flowers; which done, all others withdrawing, a most beautiful harlot came to him, and used all art to destroy his soul; but the Christian soldier being filled with the royal gifts of the Spirit, bit off his tongue with his teeth, and spat it in her face as she was tempting him, and so got victory over all her temptations.

The precious favors God confers upon his, make them temptation-proof; they make believers trample upon the most amiable baits. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God," says Joseph. Joseph's sense of Potiphar's favors heaped upon him, strengthened him against the impudent solicitations of his wanton mistress, Gen. 39. And shall not the singular favors which God confers upon his dearest ones strengthen them against Satan's assaults? Surely gracious hearts are wrought more upon, and bettered and strengthened more by spirituals than by temporals; by eternal than by externals; and if Satan does not find it so, I am much mistaken.

Well, remember this, Satan's overcoming the saints gives him the greatest advantage to boast and triumph over Christ. [The devil marches well-armed and in good array, says Luther.]

Ambrose brings in the devil boasting against Christ, and challenging Judas as his own; *He is not yours, Lord Jesus—he is mine; his thoughts beat for me; he eats with you—but he is fed by me; he takes bread from you—but money from me; he drinks with you—but sells your blood to me.* So when Satan prevails over the saints, *look, O Christ, says he, are these the price of your blood? are these the objects of your love? are these the delight of your soul? what, are these your jewels? are these the apple of your eye? are these your pleasant portion? Why, how I lead them! how I triumph over them! they seem rather to be mine than yours.* Ah, Christians! resist as for life, that Satan may never have occasion thus

to insult and triumph over Christ, etc.

**[6.] Sixthly and lastly, *Christ gives the best gifts to his dearest ones, that they may be an honor and a praise unto him in the glorious day of his owning of them, and marriage to them before all the world.***

Believers in this life are but betrothed to Christ: "I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness," Hosea 2:19-20. Their marriage-day is put off until the glorious day of Christ's appearing; the great day of his glory will be the marriage-day; Rev. 21:2, 9-10, compared. [The good things of eternal life are so **many**, that they exceed number; so **great**, that they exceed measure; so **precious**, that they are above all estimation. *Augustine.*] It would not be for the honor and glory of Christ, that his spouse in that day should be clothed with rags; therefore he has given them the bracelets, the ear-rings, and the jewels before-hand, that they may be a praise and an honor to him in the marriage day. Oh! when the saints shall appear with all those glorious jewels about them, that Christ has bequeathed to them, how will their splendid glory darken all other glory, and make the very sun to hide its face. This is our betrothing day, that will be our marriage day.

Ridley, the night before his martyrdom, invited his hostess and the rest at table to his marriage, "for," said he, "tomorrow I must be married." So several other martyrs went as merrily to die—as to dine; knowing that their dying day did but make way for their marriage day. The Lord does by his rich and royal favors, trim up his bride beforehand, that she may be an honor and a praise to him in the day coronation, in the day of marriage—when he will own her before devils, angels, and all reprobates; when he will say, "Lo, here am I, and the bride, O Father! that you have given me."

And thus you have a brief account of the reasons of the point, why the Lord gives the best gifts to his own people.

**We shall make some short but sweet USES of this point.**

And, *first*,

[1.] Does the Lord give the best and greatest gifts to his people? ***Then you who are his people, sit down and wonder at this matchless love of God.***

Oh! what is in you or I—that should cause the Lord to give such gifts to us as he has given? We were all equal in sin and misery; nay, doubtless, we have actually outsinced thousands, to whom these precious gifts are denied. Let us therefore sit down and wonder at this condescending love of God. Oh! we were once poor wretches sitting upon the ash-heap, yes, wallowing in our blood—and yet behold the King of kings, the Lord of lords, has so far condescended in his love, as to bestow himself, his Spirit, his grace, and all the jewels of his royal crown upon us! Oh! what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, this matchless love!

"I will be yours forever," says Christ, "and my Spirit shall be yours forever, and my grace yours forever, and my glory yours forever, and my righteousness yours forever; all I am and all I have, shall be yours forever!" O what matchless love is this! Oh! what a Christ is this! [*O Lord Jesus, says Bernard, breaking forth into an admiration of Christ's love, I love you more than all my goods, more than all my friends, yes, more than my very self, etc.*]

[2.] But then, *secondly*, ***Be greatly thankful, oh be greatly thankful—for the great gifts which Christ has bestowed upon you.***

It is not a little thankfulness which will answer and suit to the great gifts which the Lord Jesus has bestowed upon you. Oh say with the psalmist, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his favors, and great benefits. I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord," Psalm 116:13-14. Yes, say again with the psalmist, "I will praise you more and more." Or as it is in the Hebrew, "I will add to your praise," Psalm 71:14. Oh when you look upon the jewels, the pearls that Christ has given you, say, Lord, I will praise you more and more, I will rise higher and higher in your praises, I will be still adding to your praise. The very law of **nature** bespeaks great thankfulness, where great favors are given; and

the law of **custom** bespeaks it, and does not the law of **grace** bespeak it much more? [Injuries shall be writ in the dust—but our mercies on marble, that our hearts may be the better provoked to praise and thankfulness.]

When Tamerlane had taken Bajazet, among other questions he asked him "if ever he had given God thanks for making him so great an emperor?" He confessed immediately, that "he never thought of that;" to whom Tamerlane replied, "It is no wonder so ungrateful a man should be made a spectacle of misery." Oh! what do they then deserve who are unthankful for spiritual favors!

Tell me, O Christians, are not the gifts which Christ has conferred upon you, **special** gifts? And will you not be thankful for them? Were they but common gifts, you ought to be thankful for them; how much more then for special gifts, for right-handed favors?

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." Jeremiah 31:3. There are but few upon whom God bestows His saving love. Tell me, are not the gifts which Christ has given you, **rare** gifts? What would you have been--if Christ had not made a difference between you and others--by those glorious gifts which He has conferred upon you? You look upon some, and see they are very ignorant of spiritual truth. O! What would you have been--if God had not bestowed that saving knowledge upon you? You look upon others who are unclean, profane, and filthy. Why! such a wretch you would have been--if the Lord had not made a difference between you and them, by bestowing Himself, His grace, and Spirit upon you. "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. **Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath!** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:3-6.

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor

the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And that is what some of you were!** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

[It was always a principle in morality, that sweet and intimate friendship cannot be extended to many. Friends usually go by pairs.]

It was long since determined in the schools, that "penitents had more reason to be thankful than innocent; sin giving an advantage to mercy to be doubly free in giving and in pardoning;" and so the greater obligation is left upon us to thankfulness.

Luther has a very famous story, in his writing upon the fourth commandment, in the time of the council of Constance. He tells you of two cardinals, that as they were riding to the council, they saw a shepherd in the field weeping. One of them being affected with his weeping, rode to him to comfort him; and coming near to him he desired to know the reason of his weeping. The shepherd was unwilling to tell him at first—but at last he told him, saying, "I, looking upon this toad, considered that I never praised God as I ought, for making me such an excellent creature as a man, lovely and reasonable. I have not blessed him, that he made me not such a deformed toad as this." The cardinal hearing this, and considering that God had done far greater things for him than for this poor shepherd, he fell down dead from his mule; his servants lifting him up, and bringing him to the city, he came to life again, and then cried out, "O! how truly did you say, the unlearned rise and take heaven by force, and we with all our learning wallow in flesh and blood." The application is easy.

*Thirdly*, The next use is,

[3.] *If the Lord has given the best gifts to his people, then **oh that his people would not give God the worst—but the best of everything.** [It is the most wicked avarice to defraud God of the oblation of ourselves, says Chrysostom.]*

Oh! give the Lord the best of your **strength**, the best of your **time**, the

best of your **mercies**, and the best of your **services**—who has given to your souls the best of gifts! Num. 18:29, "You must present as the Lord's portion the **best** and holiest part of everything given to you." So I say, of all your offerings offer God the **best**, who has given to you the best and greatest gifts. So in Exod. 35:22, "Some brought to the Lord their offerings of gold—medallions, earrings, rings from their fingers, and necklaces. They presented gold objects of every kind to the Lord." They gave the best of the best, and so must we.

Oh do not offer to God the worst of your **time**, the worst of your **strength**, the worst of your **mercies**, the worst of your **services**. That same is a very dreadful text: Mal. 1:8, 13-14, compared, "When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!" says the Lord Almighty." Says God, Will men be put off thus? No, I know they won't; and why then should you deal worse with me than with men? Your governors will have the best, yes, the best of the best; and will you deal worse with me, says God, than with your governors? [If a man should serve the Lord a thousand years, says Austin, it would not deserve an hour of the reward in heaven; no, not a moment, much less an eternity. And therefore, says he, we had need do as **much** as we can, and do all that we do as **well** as we can, etc.]

Will you thus requite me for all my favors, O foolish people and unwise? is this your kindness to your friend? Ver. 13-14, "You say, 'It's too hard to serve the Lord,' and you turn up your noses at his commands," says the Lord Almighty. "Think of it! Animals that are stolen and mutilated, crippled and sick—presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these?" asks the Lord." Oh! that God had not cause to complain thus of many of your souls, to whom he has shown much love. But mark what follows: ver. 14, "Cursed is the cheat who promises to give a fine ram from his flock but then sacrifices a defective one to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the Lord Almighty, "and my name is feared among the nations!" If you have better in your hands, and yet shall go to put off God with the worst—the curse will follow. Think of it and tremble, all you who deal fraudulently and false-heartedly with God!

Ah, Christians! you must say, *World, stand behind! Sin and Satan, get*

*you behind us—for the best gifts, the choicest favors that ever were given, we have received from the Father of lights; and therefore by his gifts he has obliged our souls to give him the best of our time, strength, and services; and therefore we will not be at your call or beck any longer!* Oh, say, the Lord has given us the best gifts, and "Cursed is the cheat who promises to give a fine ram from his flock but then sacrifices a defective one to the Lord."

[4.] Fourthly, ***This should bespeak the people of God to trust and lean upon God for lesser gifts.***

Has God given you a crown—and will you not trust him for a crumb? 2 Tim. 4:8. Has he given you a house which has "foundations, whose builder and maker is God?" Heb. 11:15. Has he given you "a kingdom that shakes not"? Heb. 12:28. And will you not trust him for a cottage, for a little house-room in this world? Has he given you himself, his Son, his Spirit, his grace—and will you not trust him to give you bread, and friends, and clothes, and other necessary mercies that he knows you need? Romans 8:32, Mat. 6:32. Has he given you the greater—and will deny you for the lesser? Surely not! Will you trust that man for much—who has given you but a little? And will you not trust that God for a little—who has given you much? Will you not trust him for pence—who has given you pounds? O sirs! has the Lord given you himself, the best of favors—and will not you trust him for the least favors? Has he given you pearls—and will not you trust him for pins? etc.

Does not the apostle argue sweetly in Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" What! says the apostle, has God given us his Son, his only Son, his bosom Son, his beloved Son, the Son of his joy, the Son of his delights? Oh how can he then but cast in all other things into the bargain—such as wrapping paper and packing thread? Oh! that Christians would learn to reason themselves out of their fears, and out of their distrusts, as the apostle does. Oh! that Christians would no longer rend and rack their precious souls with fears and cares—but rest satisfied in this, that he who has been so kind to them in spirituals, will not be lacking to them in temporals, Proverbs 8:23-32.

[5.] Fifthly, *If the Lord has given the best gifts to his people, this should then bespeak his people, **not to envy the men of the world for those lesser favors which God has conferred upon them.***

It was horrid wickedness in Ahab to envy poor Naboth, because of his vineyard; and is it a virtue in you who are Christians to envy others, because their outward mercies are greater or sweeter than yours? Should the prince upon whose head the royal crown is set, and about whose neck the golden chain is put—envy those whose hands are full of sugar-plums, and whose laps are full of rosemary, etc. Has not God, O Christians! put a royal crown of glory upon your heads, and a golden chain of grace about your necks, and his Son's glorious robe upon your backs? and why then should your hearts rise in envy against others' mercies? O! reason yourselves out of this sinful temper! [David three different times gave himself this counsel—not to envy at others. Psalm 37:1, 7-8, compared. So Psalm 73:21.]

I would have every Christian thus to argue: Has not the Lord given me himself? Is not one grain of that grace which God has given me, more worth than ten thousand worlds? and why then should I be envious of others' mercies?

There was a soldier who, for breaking his rank in reaching after a bunch of grapes, was condemned to die by martial law, and as he went to execution, he went eating of his grapes; upon which, some of his fellow-soldiers were somewhat troubled, saying, "He ought then to mind somewhat else!" To whom he replied, "I beseech you, sirs, do not envy me my grapes, they will cost me dear; you would be loath to have them at the rate that I must pay for them." So say I, O saints! do not envy the men of this world because of their honors, riches, etc., for you would be loath to have them at that rate which they must pay for them!

Oh! there is a day of reckoning a-coming, a day wherein all the nobles and brave gallants in the world must be brought to the bar, and give an account of how they have improved and employed all the favors which God has conferred upon them; therefore envy them not! Is it madness and folly in a great favorite at court—to envy those who have only the scraps which come from the prince's table? Oh! then, what madness and

folly is it that the favorites of heaven should envy the men of the world—who at best do but feed upon the scraps which come from God's table! Spirituals are the delicacies, temporals are but the scraps. Temporals are the bones, spirituals are the choice meat.

Is it below a man to envy the dogs because of the bones? And is it not much more below a Christian to envy others for temporals—when himself enjoys spirituals?

[6.] Sixthly, ***Be not troubled for the lack of lesser gifts.***

It is to me a sad thing to see gracious souls, who have some comfortable satisfaction in their own hearts that the Lord has given Christ and grace to them, John 14:1-3, etc., go up and down whining and weeping because they have not health, or wealth, or child, or trade, etc., when the Lord has bestowed upon them such choice, spiritual blessings—the least of which will outweigh all temporal blessings. Well, Christians, remember this, you act below your spiritual birth, your holy calling—when you allow your hearts to be troubled and perplexed for the lack of temporal things. Can you read God's special love in these temporal things? Does your happiness lie in the enjoyment of them? Are not the angels happy without them? Was not Lazarus more happy than Dives? Yes! Oh! then, let not the lack of those things trouble you, the enjoyment of which can never make you happy. Should one be troubled for lack of a rattle or a doll—who is proclaimed heir of a crown? And why then should a Christian, who is heir-apparent to a heavenly crown, be troubled for the lack of worldly toys? etc.

Jerome tells us of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, coming to him, asked him whether he was not sorely troubled and afflicted for lack of his sight? "Oh yes," said Didymus, "it is a great affliction and trouble to me." Then Alexander chid him, saying, "Has God given you the excellency of an angel, of an apostle—and are you troubled for that which rats and mice and brute beasts have."

It is great folly, it is double iniquity for a Christian to be troubled for the lack of those things that God ordinarily bestows upon the worst of men. Oh the mercies which a Christian has in **hand**, oh the mercies which a

Christian has in the **promises**, oh the mercies which a Christian has in **hope**—are so many, so precious, and so glorious, that they should bear up his head and heart from fainting and sinking under all outward needs.

There goes a story among scholars of Aesop's deceiving Mercury, he having promised him one part of his nuts, keeps all the kernels to himself, and gives to Mercury only the shells. Ah, Christians! God has given you the kernels—but the world the shells; why then should you be troubled for lack of the shells—when God has given you the kernel? etc. [Cyprian reports of some who, forsaking the Lord, were given over to evil spirits, and died fearfully. A backslider may say, All my pains and charge is lost.]

[7.] Seventhly, *If the Lord has given his people the best gifts, oh then, **let not them leave off that God, who has bestowed such choice and noble favors on them.***

Jer. 2:11-13, "Has any nation ever exchanged its gods for another god, even though its gods are nothing? Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols! The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay, says the Lord." Why? "For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters," etc. This was that which aggravated the Israelites' sin, Psalm 105. and 106—that they forsook that God who had conferred upon them many rich and royal favors. But oh! then, what madness and folly is it in you—that you should forsake that God who has done such mighty things for your souls?

I may say, to keep you close to God—as Saul said to his servants, to keep them close to him, 1 Sam. 22:7, "Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, you Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give everyone of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?" Ah, Christians! can the world give you spiritual life? Can the world give you peace of conscience, pardon of sin, the favor of God, the hopes of glory? No! Oh then! never leave nor forsake that God who has given you all these royal favors, which none can give nor take—but himself. He who forsakes God forsakes his own mercies; he forsakes his life, his joy, his crown, his all in all.

There is no evil compared to this—of forsaking the greatest good. It makes a man's life a very hell. "Such shall be written in the dust," Jer. 17:13.

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, ***Be not impatient nor angry—when God shall take away some lesser mercies from you.*** Did an impatient soul but see himself in a glass, he would loathe himself; for, says Homer, his eyes sparkle like fire, his heart swells, his pulse beats, etc. In a word, an impatient soul is a bedlam, a monster, a devil, etc.

Has God given you the best and the greatest gifts which your souls can ask—or he himself can give? And will you be angry or impatient when he shall come to take away lesser mercies? What? will you be an impatient soul, when God comes and writes death upon such a near mercy, and passes the sentence of death upon such and such desirable mercies? Truly this is the way to provoke God to strip you naked of your choicest ornaments, and to put you in chains—or else to turn you a grazing among the beasts of the field, as he did Nebuchadnezzar.

God gives the best—and takes away the worst; he gives the greatest—and takes away the least; the sense of which made Job bless God when stripped of all. If a man should give you a pearl—and take away a pin; if he should give you a bag of gold—and take away a bag of pennies, would it not be a madness in you to be impatient, and angry? Does God take away a pin—and has he not given you a pearl for it? He has given you a *pound*, O Christian! for every *penny* that he has taken from you; therefore be not angry, nor impatient. Remember, Christians, how many in the world there are, who sit sighing and mourning under the lack of those very favors that you do enjoy. "Why does the living man complain?" What! out of the grave—and complain! What! out of hell—and complain! This is man's sin—and God's wonder!

But now some poor unsaved sinners may say—Here is good news for saints—but what is all this to us all this while?

Why, I will tell you; I have something to say for the comfort and encouragement of poor unsaved sinners. Ah, sinners! Christ is willing to bestow the best gifts upon the worst sinners. Take one text for all; it is a

sweet one, and full to the point in hand: Psalm 68:18, "You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive, you have received gifts for men, yes, for the *rebellious* also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." [Read also Proverbs 1:20-29, chapter 8:1-8, and chapter 9:1-7; Isaiah 43:22-25; Jer. 51:5. None so faithful as Christ, Heb. 3:5-6.]

Christ has received gifts, as a steward, from the hand of the Father, to dispense them among men, yes, among the *rebellious*—the worst of men. If there is here at this time any rebellious sinner, or rebellious drunkard, or rebellious curser, etc., let such rebellious sinners know that Christ has received gifts "even for the *rebellious*."

"That the Lord God might dwell among them." [Rev. 3:20, 2 Cor. 6:16, "I will dwell in them." The words are very significant in the original: I will *indwell in* them. There are two *ins* in the original, as if God could never have enough communion with them.] That is, that the Lord God might have sweet fellowship and communion with them: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

"Behold I stand at the door and knock." I, who have heaven to give, and peace to give, and pardon to give, and grace to give, and myself to give! I, who has pure gold to enrich you, and white raiment to clothe you, and eye-salve to anoint you! "I stand at the door and knock; if *any man* will open the door," let him be ever so guilty, ever so filthy, ever so unworthy, etc., "I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."

Lord, at whose door do you stand knocking? Is it at the rich man's door, or at the righteous man's door, or at the humbled man's door, or at the weary and heavy-laden man's door, or at the mourner's door, or at the qualified or prepared man's door? No! says Christ, it is at none of these doors. At whose door, then, O blessed Lord? At the lukewarm Laodicean's door; at their door who are neither hot nor cold, who are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." These, says Christ, are the worst of the worst; and yet if any of these wretches, these monsters of mankind, will open the door, "I will come in, and will sup with them, and they with me."

I have read a remarkable story of a great rebel who had raised a mighty party against a Roman emperor. The emperor upon his being much provoked and stirred in spirit, made a proclamation, that whoever brought in the rebel, dead or alive, would have a great sum of money. The rebel, hearing of this, comes and presents himself unto the emperor, and demanded of him the sum of money; whereupon the emperor reasons thus, "If I would now kill him, the world would say I did it to save my money;" and so he pardoned him, and gave him the great sum of money, notwithstanding all his former rebellion.

Oh! shall a heathen emperor do thus to a rebel who was in arms against him, and will not God do as much for poor rebellious sinners? Surely he will. What though you have been in arms against God, and mustered up all the strength and force you could, even all the members of your body, and faculties of your soul, against God, and Christ, and holiness—yet know that the glorious King is a merciful king; he is a God of pardons; he delights to make his grace glorious, and therefore is very willing to show mercy to the greatest rebels, to the worst of sinners. Witness Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, the thief, Paul, and others. [Romans 5:10; Col. 1:21; Romans 6:13, 16, 19-20.] **The greatness of man's sins do but set off the riches of free grace.** Sins are debts, and God can as easily blot out a debt of many thousands as he can a lesser debt; therefore let not the greatest rebel despair but believe, and he shall find that "where sin has abounded, there grace shall superabound," etc.

And thus much for this observation. We shall now proceed to the next words, namely, "*That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" Ephesians 3:8.

I shall now proceed to the fourth doctrine, namely, **that the gifts and graces which God bestows upon his people should be improved, employed, and exercised by his people.**

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, **that**

**I should preach among the Gentiles** the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

A little to open and explain the words.

"That I should **preach**." That is, declare good news, or the glad tidings of salvation that is brought by Jesus Christ to sinners. The Greek word in the New Testament, answers to the Hebrew word *Bessorah* in the Old Testament—both signifying good news, glad tidings, or a joyful message.

"That I should preach among the **Gentiles**." The word that is here rendered Gentiles, is sometimes used generally for all men, or all nations. So it is used in Mat. 25:32, and 28:19. Sometimes this Greek word is used more especially for the people of the Jews; so in John 11:48, 50-52, and Acts 10:22; and sometimes it is used for the Gentiles, distinguished from the Jews; so in Mat. 6:32.

By the Gentiles here you are to understand those poor heathen who were without God in the world, who never had heard of Christ, nor those unsearchable riches that are in him; as you may clearly see by comparing this text with that, Gal. 1:15-16, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach among the heathen," says he, "immediately I consulted not with flesh and blood."

The first observation that I shall speak to, from these words thus opened, is this: **That the gifts and graces that God bestows upon his people should be improved, employed, and exercised by his people.**

The Greek word that is here rendered **grace**, we showed you, has a three-fold signification in the Scripture. Sometimes it denotes the favor of God, sometimes the common gifts of the Spirit, and sometimes the saving graces of the Spirit. Now, says Paul, that singular favor that God has conferred upon me, and all those common gifts and special graces with which he has enriched me, they are all to be employed and exercised. "Unto me is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

So that there is nothing more clear than this, namely: That the gifts and graces that God bestows upon his people, should be employed, improved, and exercised by his people.

**"To me is this grace given."** Not that I should be idle—but active; not that I should be negligent—but diligent; not that I should hide my talents—but improve them.

I shall touch upon a few scriptures that speak out this truth, and then open it to you. 2 Tim. 1:6, "Therefore I put you in remembrance, that you stir up the gift of God which is in you." As the fire is increased and preserved by blowing, so are our graces. Some think that it is a metaphor taken from a spark kept in ashes, which, by gentle blowing, is stirred up, until it becomes a flame. Others say, it is an allusion to the fire in the temple, which was always to be kept burning. [Calvin and others.] We get nothing by dead and useless habits. Talents hidden in a napkin gather rust. The noblest faculties are imbrued, when not improved, when not exercised.

Philip. 2:12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The Greek is, "Work until you get the work through." The reason why many men's hearts tremble, and are so full of fears and doubts, is because their salvation is not wrought out; they do not make thorough work in their souls, they put not that question home—Whether they have grace or not? Whether they have an interest in Christ or not? They do not rise with all their strength against sin, nor with all their power to serve the Lord; and therefore fears and doubts do compass them round about.

So in 1 Cor. 15:58, "Be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

"Be steadfast." It is a metaphor taken from a foundation, on which a thing stands firmly; or a seat or chair, wherein one sits fast.

"Unmoveable" signifies one that will not easily move his place or opinion.

"Abounding," or excelling "in the work of the Lord."

"Knowing that your labor is not in vain." The Greek is "labors unto weariness." The apostle would have them labor unto weariness; "For," says he, "it is not in vain." It will turn to a good account; it will yield you much of heaven here, and make you high in heaven hereafter. [Grace is bettered and made more perfect by acting. Neglect of our graces is the ground of their decrease and decay. Wells are the sweeter for drawing.]

There are only two things that I shall endeavor to do, for the opening of the point.

I. To show you **why** persons must improve, employ, and exercise the graces and gifts which God has bestowed upon them. And then,

II. The **end** to which they are to exercise those graces and gifts.

I. For the *first*, There are these **twelve reasons why gracious souls should exercise and improve their gifts and graces**. Friends, this point is a point of as singular use and of as great concernment to you, as any that I know the Scripture speaks of, and therefore I desire you to lend your most serious and solemn attentions.

[1.] *First*, They must exercise and improve their graces, ***Because the exercise and improvement of their graces is the ready way to be rich in grace.***

As sin is increased in the soul by the frequent actings of it, so grace is nourished and strengthened in the soul by its frequent actings. The *exercise* of grace is always attended with the *increase* of grace. Proverbs 10:4, "The diligent hand makes rich;" or, the nimble hand; the hand which is active and agile—that hand makes rich. Ruth 2, how did Boaz follow the business himself! his eyes were in every corner, on the servants and on the reapers, yes, on the gleaners too. [Our graces are like Gideon's army—but a handful in comparison; but our sins are like the Midianites, innumerable as grasshoppers.]

It is recorded of Severus, that his care was not to look what men said of him, or how they censured him—but to look what was to be done by him.

He will rise in judgment against those professors who look more what this man and the other man says of them, than what is to be done by them. The heart of a Christian is to be taken up with what is to be done by him, and not with what this man thinks, or the other judges of him.

Pacunius has an elegant saying; "I hate," says he, "the men who are idle in deed, and philosophic in word." God loves, says Luther, the runner, not the questioner. **Grace grows by exercise and decays by disuse.** Though both arms grow—yet that arm which a man most uses is the stronger and the bigger; so it is both in gifts and graces. In birds, their wings which have been used most are sweetest; the application is easy. Such men as are contented with so much grace as will bring them to glory, with so much grace as will keep hell and their souls asunder—will never be rich in grace, nor high in comfort or assurance. Such souls usually go to heaven in a storm. Oh, how weather-beaten are they before they can reach the heavenly harbor!

[2.] *Secondly*, They must exercise their gifts and graces, ***because it is the main end of God's giving gifts and graces to them.***

Grace is given to trade with; it is given to lay out, not to lay up. [The reason, say some, why Christ cursed the fig tree, though the time of bearing fruit was not come, was because it made a glorious show with leaves, and promised much—but brought forth nothing.] Grace is a candle that must not be put under a bushel—but set upon a candlestick. Grace is a golden treasure that must be improved, not hoarded up, as men do their gold. Grace is a talent, and it is given for this very end, that it should be employed and improved for the honor and advantage of him who gave it. The *slothful* servant, in God's account, is an *evil* servant, and accordingly God has denoted him, and doomed him for his ill husbandry, to destruction, Mat. 25:24-31.

"What a shame is it," says Jerome, "that faith should not be able to do that which infidelity has done! What! not better fruit in the vineyard, in the garden of God, than in the wilderness? What! not better fruit grow upon the tree of life, than upon the root of nature?" etc.

[3.] And then thirdly, ***Because grace, exercised and improved,***

***will do that for us, which all the means in the world can never do for us.*** [No Israelite who was bitten or stung with the fiery serpent could be healed but by looking up to the brazen serpent. **Those spots which a Christian finds in his own heart can only, by a hand of faith, be washed out in the blood of the Lamb.**]

I shall evidence this truth in some remarkable instances.

Suppose the **guilt of sin** to be upon a man's soul, even as a heavy mountain, there is nothing but the exercise of grace which can remove this guilt. The man prays, and yet guilt sticks upon him; he hears, and yet guilt as a mountain lies heavy upon him; he mourns, he sighs, he groans, and yet guilt sticks upon him; he runs from ordinance to ordinance, and from ordinary service to extraordinary, and yet guilt follows him; he runs from man to man, 'Sir, was ever any man's case like mine? I have prayed thus long, I have heard thus long, I have mourned thus long, etc., and yet guilt lies as a mountain upon my soul!'

There is nothing below the exercise of grace which will remove this. It is only faith in the promises of remission that will remove the guilt of sin which lies so heavy upon the soul. It is only faith's application of the righteousness of Christ which can take off this burden that sinks the soul, even as low as hell. Faith must make a plaster of the blood of Christ, and apply it to the soul, or the soul will die under its guilt. There is nothing below this can do it. Faith's application of the blood of Christ takes off the guilt, and turns the storm to a calm: Romans 5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Again, suppose that the power and **prevalency of sin** hinders the soul's sweet communion with God, so that the soul cannot sport itself, and joy and delight itself in God, as in the days of old; it cannot see God smiling, stroking, and speaking kindly, as in former days. Now, there is nothing in all the world which can ease the soul of this burden of sin, but the exercise of grace. Oh, says such a poor soul, I pray, sir—and yet I sin; I resolve against sin—and yet I sin; I combat against sin—and yet I am carried captive by sin; I have left no outward means unattempted—and yet after all, my sins are too hard for me; after all my sweating, striving, and weeping—I am carried down the stream. There is nothing now but

the actings of faith upon a crucified Christ that will take off this burden from the soul of man. [Much less, then, can the papists' purgatories, watchings, whippings, etc., or Saint Francis' kissing or licking of lepers' sores, cleanse the fretting leprosy of sin, etc.]

Now, you must make use of your graces to draw virtue from Christ; now faith must touch the hem of Christ's garment, or you will never be healed. It is just with a soul in this case as it was with the poor widow, Luke 8:43-49, that had the issue of blood; she leaves no means unattempted whereby she might be cured; she runs from one physician to another, until she had spent all she was worth, and now says she, "If I could but touch the hem of his garment, I would be whole." Hereupon she crowds through the crowd to come to Christ, and being got behind him, she touches the hem of his garment, "and immediately she was made whole." The cure being thus wrought, Christ uncrowns himself to crown her faith: "And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort, your *faith* has made you whole; go in peace." He does not say, Woman, your trembling has made you whole; or, Woman, your sweating and struggling in a crowd to come to me, has made you whole; or, Woman, your falling down and abasing yourself, though she did all this; but, "Woman, your *faith* has made you whole." Ah, Christians! it is not your trembling, or your falling down, or your sweating in this and that service—which will stop the bloody issue of your sins—but believing in Christ. [A touch of faith cured the woman, as well as a full hold. It is the exercise of the graces of the Spirit by which we mortify the deeds of the flesh, Romans 8:13. **It is not our strong resolutions or purposes which will be able to overmaster these enemies.** A foul sore will run until it be indeed healed, though we say it shall not.]

It is sad to consider how few professors in these days have attained the right way of mortifying of sin. They usually go out against their sins in the strength of their own purposes, prayers, and resolutions, etc., and scarcely look so high as a crucified Christ; they mind not the exercise of their faith upon Christ; and therefore it is a righteous thing with Christ that after all, that they should be carried captive by their sins. Nothing eats out sin like the actings of grace; nothing weakens and wastes the strength of sin like the exercise of grace. Oh! did men believe more in

Christ, sin would die more; did they believe the threatenings more, sin would die more; did they believe the promises more, sin would die more; did they believe reigning with Christ more, sin would die more: "He who has this hope purifies himself, even as Christ is pure," 1 John 3:3.

Again, Suppose that the soul be followed with black, dismal, fiery **temptations**, there is nothing now in all the world that can divinely strengthen and fence the soul against these temptations but the exercise of grace, the improvement of grace. It is true you are to hear, read, pray, meditate, etc.; but all these without the exercise of grace in them, will never make you victorious over Satan's temptations. Nothing puts Satan to it like the exercise of grace. [Luther said, *I am without set upon by all the world, and within by the devil and all his angels. And yet, by the exercise of grace, he became victorious over them all, etc.*]

It is said of Satan, that he would say to a holy man who was much in the exercise of grace, *You do always overcome me.* Eph. 6:16. "Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby you may be able to quench the fiery darts of the devil." Whatever piece of armor you neglect, be sure that you neglect not the shield of faith. The Greek word that is here rendered *a shield*, comes from another word that signifies a door or a gate, to note that as a door or a gate does secure our bodies, so will the shield of faith secure our souls against the fiery darts of the devil: "Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil." The apostle alludes to the custom of the Scythians, who used to dip the heads of their arrows or darts in the gall of asps and vipers, the venom of which, like a fire in their flesh, killed the wounded with torments—most like hell of any other. But the soldiers then had generally shields of leather, as several writers testify, and when the fiery darts landed upon them, they were presently quenched. So these fiery darts of Satan, when they land upon the shield of faith, they are presently quenched; and there is no other way to do it. Until the Lord draws out a man's faith to act upon the promises and upon Christ, these fiery darts will not be quenched.

Suppose that the **world**, the *smiling* world or the *frowning* world, the *tempting* world or the *persecuting* world--should lie as a heavy stone or burden upon your hearts, as it does upon the hearts of thousands in these

days; (witness their attempting anything to get the favors, honors and riches of this world! Ah! how many have turned their backs upon God, and Christ, and truth, etc., to gain the world!) **How will you get this burden off?** Only by exercise and actings of grace. Many men hear sermons much--and yet remain worldly. They pray like angels--and yet live as if there were no heaven nor hell. They will talk much of heaven--and yet those who are spiritual and wise do smell their breath to stink strong of earth. All the arts, and parts, and gifts in the world can never cure them of this soul-killing disease; but only the exercise of grace, until faith breaks forth in its glorious actings. A man may hear sermons and pray many years--and yet remain as carnal, base, and worldly as ever! There is no way under heaven to remove this stone, this burden--but the exercise of faith! "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." 1 John 5:4-5

[Faith is a better engineer than Daedalus, and yet he made wings with which he made an escape over the high walls within which he was imprisoned. This world is the soul's prison—yet faith is such an engineer that it can make wings for the soul to fly out, etc.]

Not that the habit of faith overcomes the world—but faith in the exercise of it conquers the world, and that it does these three ways.

(1.) First, *Faith, in the exercise of it, presents the world to the soul under all those notions that the Scripture holds forth the world unto us by.*

The Scripture holds forth the world as an impotent thing, as a mixed thing, as a mutable thing, as a momentary thing. [Earthly riches are full of poverty, says Austin.] Now faith comes and sets this home with power upon the soul, and this takes the soul off from the world.

(2.) Secondly, *Faith does it by causing the soul to converse with more glorious, soul-satisfying, soul-delighting, and soul-contenting objects.*

2 Cor. 4:16-18, "Though our outward man perish—yet our inward man is renewed day by day." How comes this to pass? "While we look not at the

things which are seen—but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal." [While we look upon eternal things as a man looks upon the mark that he aims to hit.] Now when faith is busied and exercised about soul-ennobling, soul-greatening, soul-raising, and soul-cheering objects, a Christian tramples the world under his feet; and now heavy afflictions are light, and long afflictions short, and bitter afflictions sweet, unto him, etc. Now, stand by world! welcome Christ! etc.

So in Heb. 11. It was the exercise of faith and hope upon noble and glorious objects which carried them above the world, above the smiling world, and above the frowning world, above the tempting world, and above the persecuting world, as you may see by comparing several verses of that chapter together: ver. 9-10, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Ver. 24-26, "And by faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense of reward." Ver. 27, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." And in ver. 35, "They refused deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." [Every man is as the objects are about which his soul is most conversant, etc.]

So in Heb. 10:34, "They took joyfully the confiscation of their goods," (Why?) "knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance."

(3.) Thirdly and lastly, *Faith does it by assuring the soul of enjoying of better things.* For my part I must confess, so far as I understand anything of the things of God, I cannot see how a soul under the power of a well-grounded assurance can be a servant to his slave, I mean the world. I confess men may talk much of heaven, and of Christ, and religion, etc.; but give me a man who does really and clearly live under the power of divine assurance, and I cannot see how such a one can be carried out in

an inordinate love to these poor transitory things. I know not one instance in all the Scripture that can be produced to prove that ever any precious saint that has lived in the assurance of divine love, and that has walked up and down this world with his pardon in his bosom, have ever been charged with an inordinate love of the world. [In my treatise called "*Heaven on Earth*," you may find many considerations to evince this, and to that I refer you, etc.] That is a sad word, 1 John 2:15.

[4.] Now a fourth reason of this point, why persons are to exercise their graces, is, *because it is the best way to preserve their souls from apostasy and backsliding from God.* 2 Pet. 1:5-11, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, etc.; for if you do these things you shall never fall." "Add to your faith virtue." The Greek word that is here rendered *add*, has a great emphasis in it. It is taken from dancing round. Link them, says the apostle, hand in hand, as in dancing, people join hands; so we must join hand to hand in these measures of graces, lead up the dance of graces, as in the *galliard* [French dance] everyone takes his turn.

So in chapter 3:17-18, "You therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things, beware lest you also, being led aside with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." There are many who turn aside, and part with God, and Christ, and truth, and the words of righteousness; and therefore you had need to take heed that you fall not, as others have fallen before you.

But how shall we be kept from apostatising? Why, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It is a growth in grace, it is the exercise of grace—which will make a man stand when others fall, yes, when cedars fall, etc.

[5.] Fifthly, ***All other exercises without the exercise of grace will profit nothing.*** Or if you will, take it thus:

*All other exercises will be loss to us, without the exercise of grace; therefore we had need to improve our graces. When the house is on fire, if a man should only pray, and cry, etc., he may be burnt for all that;*

therefore he must be active and stirring; he must run from place to place, and call out for help, and must work even in the fire, and bestir himself as for his life, in the use of all means, whereby the fire may be quenched. So if grace be not acted upon, it is not all a man's praying and crying, etc., which will profit him or better him. Grace must be exercised—or all will be lost; prayers lost, tears lost, time lost, strength lost, soul lost, etc.

1 Tim. 4:7-8, "But *refuse* profane and old wives' fables." [Make a fair excuse.] Shift them off, as the word is, set them aside. Tell them that you are not at leisure to attend them, make a fair excuse, as the word notes; tell them you have business of an eternal concernment to look after, and "exercise yourself rather unto godliness;" or lay aside your upper garments, as runners and wrestlers do, to which the apostle alludes, and bestir yourself lustily; for says he, verse 8, "Bodily exercise *profits little*—but godliness is profitable unto all things, and has the promise of this life, and of that which is to come." [Let the patient take such or such a potion that in itself is good—yet, if it lacks such or such a particular ingredient, it works not; it does no good. It is so here.]

The Babylonians are said to make three hundred and sixty different commodities from the palm tree; but what are those commodities, compared to those thousands which attend holiness, which attend the exercise of grace? "The word did not profit those who heard it, because it was not mixed with faith." Hebrews 4:2. He does not speak there of unbelievers--but of those who had faith in the soul--but not in the exercise; and therefore the word did not profit them. They heard, and were never the better. And what was the ground of it? Why, it was because they did not exercise faith upon the word. The words which fell from the preacher's lips into their ears, were a sweet potion--but they did not work effectually, because they lacked the ingredient of faith. Faith is one of those glorious ingredients, which makes every sermon, every truth, work for their souls' advantage. Nothing will work for a believer's good, for his gain--if it is not mixed with faith. Nothing makes a man rich in spirituals, like the frequent and constant actings of faith.

[6.] Sixthly, ***Because it is the end of all the dignity and glory which God has conferred upon his people;*** therefore they must exercise and improve their grace.

In 1 Pet. 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people—that you may show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

"You are a chosen generation." That is, a picked people; the dearly beloved of his soul; such as he first chose for his love, and then loves for his choice.

"A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." The Greek is, "a people of purchase," such as comprehends, as it were, all God's gettings, his whole stock, that he makes any reckoning of.

"That you may show forth," or, as it is in the Greek, "that you may preach forth," that you may publicly declare the virtues of him who has "called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;" that you may so hold forth the virtues of him who has conferred all this dignity and glory upon you, as to excite others, to "glorify your Father who is in heaven." You know the picture of a dear friend is not to be thrust in a corner—but in some conspicuous place of the house. Why, our graces are the very image of Christ, they are his picture; and therefore to be held forth to open view. These candles must not be put under a bushel—but set up in a candlestick. Jewels are to wear—not to hide; so are our graces. [God himself is wronged by the injury that is done to his image. The contempt is done to the king himself—which is done to his image or coin.]

It was a capital crime in Tiberius's days, to carry the image of the emperor upon a ring or coin, into any sordid place. And shall not Christians be more mindful and careful, that their graces, which are Christ's image, be in no way obscured—but that they be kept always sparkling and shining? Christ's glory and your comfort, O Christian! lies much in the sparkling of your graces. Pearls are not to be thrust in mud walls, or hung in swines snouts—but to be hung around the neck.

[7.] Seventhly, *Gracious souls must exercise their grace, **because the more grace is exercised and improved, with the more ease and delight will all pious services be performed,*** Psalm 40:7-8; 119:97-112. When grace is improved and exercised, gracious services are

easily performed. As the more natural strength is exercised and improved, with the more ease and pleasure are all bodily services performed; so the more grace is acted and improved, with the more ease and delight all Christian services are performed. Such souls find wages in their very work, they find not only *for* keeping—but also "*in* keeping of his commands there is great reward." "All the ways of the Lord are ways of pleasantness to them," and they find "that all his paths drop marrow and fatness," Romans 6:22; Psalm 19:11; Proverbs 3:17; Psalm 65:11. Ah, Christians! as ever you would have the services of God to be easy and delightful to your souls, look to the exercise and improvement of your graces—and then your work will be a joy.

[8.] Eighthly, *You must exercise and improve your gifts and graces, because the more grace is improved, the more God will be honored.* Romans 4:19-21, "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was **strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God**, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." [Abraham's faith made him rejoice and obey, Heb. 11. Faith is as the spring in the watch, which moves all the wheels. Not a grace stirs until faith sets it to work, Romans 4:3, etc.]

"He gave glory to God." But how did he give glory to God? Was it a dead habit of faith, which set the crown of honor upon the head of God? No! It was the lively actings of his faith upon the promise and the promiser, which gave glory to God. All the honor and glory that God has from believers in this life, is from the actings of their grace. It was Abraham's acting of faith that was his high honoring of God. Christians! I would entreat this favor of you, that you would be often in the meditation of this truth, namely: That all the honor which God has from believers in this life, is from the actings and exercise of their graces.

When you go to prayer, then think thus with yourself: Is it so, that all the honor which God shall have from my soul in prayer, will be from the actings of grace in prayer? Oh then, what cause have I to stir up myself to lay hold on God, and to blow up all those sparks of grace that are in me!

As a body without a soul, much wood without fire, a bullet in a gun without powder—so are words in prayer without the Spirit, without the exercise of the graces of the Spirit. Jonah acted his faith when he was in the belly of hell; and Daniel acted faith when he was in the lions' den; and the thief acted faith when he was on the cross; and Jeremiah acted faith when he was in the dungeon; and Job acted faith when he was on the ash-heap; and David acted faith when he was in his greatest distress; and so did Moses in Exod. 14. And you know the outcome of all was—much glory to God, and much good to them. His heart will never be long a stranger to joy and peace, who is much in the exercise and actings of grace. [So did the publican; he prayed much, though he spoke little; the hottest springs send forth their waters by *ebullitions*. Augustine cries out against those who did not profit by afflictions.]

[9.] Ninthly, ***Because the more grace is improved, the more afflictions and tribulations will be lessened and sweetened to us.*** 2 Cor. 4:16-17, "Though our outward man decreases—yet our inward man is renewed day by day," or day and day.

When Peter Martyr was dying, he said, "My body is weak—but my mind is well—well for the present, and will be better forever hereafter." This is the godly man's motto, "For afflictions there is glory—for light afflictions a weight of glory—for momentary afflictions eternal glory." So in Heb. 10 and 11. O friends! if your graces were more exercised and improved, afflictions would be more sweet. This would turn the cross into a crown; this would turn bitter into sweet, and long winter nights into summer days. It would make every condition to be a paradise to you, etc.

[10.] Tenthly, ***If grace be not exercised and improved—the soul may be easily surprised, conquered, and vanquished by a tempting devil and an enticing world.*** When the sword is in the scabbard, the traveler is easily surprised; and when the guard is asleep, the city is quickly conquered. The strongest creature, the lion, and the wisest creature, the serpent—if they are dormant, are as easily conquered as the weakest worms. So the strongest and wisest saints, if their graces are asleep, and not in the exercise—they may be as easily surprised and vanquished as the weakest Christians in all the world, as you may see in David, Solomon, Samson, Peter. Every enemy insults over him who has

lost the use of his weapons, etc. [Saints should be like the seraphim—beset all over with eyes and lights. The fearful hare, they say, sleeps with her eyes open. Oh, how watchful, then, should a Christian be!]

[11.] Eleventhly, ***We must improve our graces, because decays in grace are very great losses to us.*** By decaying in grace, we come to lose our strength, our best strength, our spiritual strength; our strength to do for God; our strength to wait on God, and walk with God; our strength to bear for God; our strength to suffer for God. [Spiritual losses are recovered with great difficulty. A man may easily run *down* the hill—but he cannot so easily run *up*. A man may soon put an instrument out of tune—but not so soon put it in again.]

By decaying in grace, we come to lose that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory," and that comfort and "peace which passes understanding," and to lose the sense of that "favor that is better than life." Now our faith will be turned into fear, our dancing into mourning, our rejoicing into sighing. And when, O Christian! you begin to fall, and to decay—who knows how far you may fall, how much your graces may be impaired, and how long it may be before your sun rises when once it is set; therefore you had need to exercise and improve your graces.

[12.] Twelfthly, and lastly, ***You are to improve your graces, because souls truly gracious have a power to do good.*** I do not say that a man in his natural estate—though Arminians do—has power in himself to do supernatural acts, as to believe in God, to love God, and the like, etc., for I think a toad may as well spit cordials as a natural man do supernatural actions, 1 Cor. 2:14; Jer. 13:23; James 1:17; Eph. 2:1-3. No! I say that all the grace we have is from God; and that man in his natural estate is dead God-ward, and Christ-ward, and holiness-ward, and heaven-ward. Yet this I say—that souls truly gracious have a power to do good. It is sad to think how many professors excuse their negligence by pretending an inability to do good, or by sitting down discouraged, as having in their hands no power at all. *What can we do, say they, if the Lord does not breathe upon us, as at first conversion? We can do nothing.*

I think in my very conscience, that this is one reason of much of that

slightness, neglect, and omission of duties, that is among professors in these days, so that God may complain, as he does, Isaiah 64:7, "There is no man who stirs up himself to take hold of me—they are as men asleep," who sit still and do nothing. But certainly those who are truly united to Christ, do not act as dead stocks, as if every time and moment of their acting God-wards and holiness-ward they received new life from the Spirit of Christ, as at first conversion they did. And I am confident, for lack of the knowledge and due consideration of this truth, many professors take such liberty to themselves, as to live in the neglect of many precious duties of godliness, for which, sooner or later, they will pay dear. But remembering that it is not a flood of words—but weighty arguments, that convince and persuade the souls and consciences of men, I shall give you **four reasons to demonstrate, that believers have a power to do good**; and the first is this.

First, ***because they have life; and all life is a power to act by.*** Natural life is a power to act by; spiritual life is a power to act by; eternal life is a power to act by. The philosopher says, "That a fly is more excellent than the heavens, because the fly has life, which the heavens have not," etc.

Secondly, ***Else there is no just ground for Christ to charge the guilt of sins upon them;*** as neglect of prayer, repentance, mortification; nor the guilt of carelessness and slothfulness, etc., which he does. If they can act no further, nor any longer than the Holy Spirit acts them, as at their first conversion, notwithstanding their union with Christ, and that spiritual principle of life which at first they received from Christ—certainly if it is so, it will not stand with the unspotted justice of God to charge the guilt of sins of omission upon believing souls, if they have no power to act—but are as stocks and stones, etc., as some dream. [Omission of *diet* breeds diseases; so does omission of *duty*—and makes work either for repentance, hell, or the physician of souls.]

A third ground is this: if there is not some power in believers to do good, ***then we should not have as much benefit by the second Adam as we had by the first.*** The first Adam, if he had stood, would have communicated a power to all his sons and daughters to have done good, as being corrupted he does communicate power to sin, as all his children

find by sad and woeful experience; and shall not Christ much more communicate a power to us to do good in our measure? Surely he does, though few mind it, and fewer improve it as they should. If there is not such a power in believers, how have they gained more by the second Adam than they lost by the first? and wherein lies the excellency of the second above the first?

Fourthly and lastly, ***All those exhortations are void, and of no effect—if there is not some power in souls truly gracious to do good***; as all those exhortations to watchfulness, to stir up "the grace of God that is in us," and to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," and that also, "give all dilligence to make your calling and election sure." To what purpose are all these precious exhortations, if the regenerate man has no power at all to act anything that is good? Nay, then, believers under the covenant of grace should be in no better a condition than unregenerate men who are under a covenant of works, who see their duties discovered—but have no power to perform; which is contrary, as to other scriptures, so to that Psalm 40:7-9, "Then said I, Lo I come: in the volume of your book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God: yes, your law is within my heart," or, "your law is in the midst of my heart," as the Hebrew reads it; and to that of Ezek. 36:25-27, etc. A soul truly gracious can sincerely say, "Your law, O Lord, is in the midst of my heart, and I delight to do your will, O Lord." I confess I cannot do as I should, nor shall I ever do it as I would, until I come to heaven; but this I can say in much uprightness, that "Your law is in my heart, and I delight to do your will, O Father." And so Paul, "With my mind I serve the law of God, though with my flesh the law of sin," Romans 7:25.

And we have many **promises** concerning divine assistance, and if we did but stir up the grace of God that is in us, we would find the assistance of God, and the glorious breakings forth of his power and love, according to his promise, and the work which he requires of us, Isaiah 26:12; 64:5, etc. Though no believer does what he should do—yet doubtless every believer might do more than he does do, in order to God's glory, and his own and others' internal and eternal good, Isaiah 41:10; Heb. 13:5-6, etc. Affection without endeavor is like Rachel—beautiful but barren. They are truly

blessed—who do what they can, though they cannot but underdo.

When Demosthenes was asked what was the first part of an orator, what the second, what the third, he answered, *Action!* The same may I say, if any should ask me what is the first, the second, the third part of a Christian, I must answer, *Action!* Luther says, "He had rather obey—than work miracles." "Obedience is better than sacrifice."

But, sir, you will say, what is the meaning of that text, that is so often in the mouths of professors, "Without me, you can do nothing"? John 15:5.

I answer, All that that text holds forth is this, that if a man has not union with Christ, if he be not implanted into Christ, he can do nothing. "Without me," that is—separate from me, or apart from me—as the words may be read, "you can do nothing." If you are not implanted into me, if by the Spirit and faith you are not united unto me, you can do nothing. The *arm* may do much by virtue of its union with the *head*; but if you separate the arm from the head, from the body, what can it do? Certainly the soul, by virtue of its union with Christ, may do much; while those who as are separated from Christ can do nothing—at least as they should. Ah, Christians! if you would but put out yourselves to the utmost, you would find the Lord both ready and willing to assist you, to meet with you, and to do for you above what you are able to ask or think. **Union with Christ is that wherein the strength, comfort, and happiness of the soul does consist.**

Caesar, by continual employment, overcame two constant diseases, the headache and dizziness. Oh the spiritual diseases that the active Christian overcomes! Among the Egyptians, idleness was a capital crime. Among the Lucani, he who lent money to an idle person was to forfeit it. Among the Corinthians, the slothful were to be flogged. Oh! the deadly sins, the deadly temptations, the deadly judgments—which idle and slothful Christians are given up to! Therefore be active, be diligent, be abundant in the work of the Lord. Idleness is the source of much sin. Standing pools gather mud, and nourish and breed venomous creatures; and so do the hearts of idle and slothful Christians, etc.

**II.** Now the second thing that we are to do for the further opening of this point is, to show you *The special ENDS that the gifts and graces which God has bestowed upon believers, should be exercised and improved to.*

And they are these that follow:

[1.] *First, They are to be improved and exercised to the honor of God, to the lifting up of God, and to the keeping up of his name and glory in the world.* 1 Cor. 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do—do it all for the glory of God."

He who does not use his gifts and graces to this end, crosses the grand end of God's bestowing such royal favors on him. Graces and gifts are talents that God has given you to trade with, and not to hide in a napkin, Mat. 25. The *idle* servant, in Christ's account, was an *evil* servant. The idle soul, in Christ's account, is an evil soul, and accordingly Christ will deal with him.

Seneca calls sloth "the nurse of beggary, the mother of misery;" and slothful Christians find it so. Christians, God has given you grace—that you should give him glory. His honor should be dearer to you than your jewels, than your crowns, than your lives, ay, than your very souls. You live no further, than you live to his praise.

It is recorded of Epaminondas, the commander-in-chief of the Thebans, that he did not glory in anything but this, "That his father, whom he dearly loved and honored, was living when he won three famous battles against the Lacedaemonians," who were then renowned for their valor to be invincible; regarding more the honor and contentment which his father would receive of it, than his own. Shall a heathen thus strive to honor his earthly father? And shall not Christians strive more to honor their heavenly Father with all the gifts and graces which he has conferred upon them.

But you will say, **HOW should we honor the Lord?** I answer,

**(1.) You must honor God by a free and frequent**

**acknowledgment that all your graces flow from the Lord Jesus, the fountain of grace.** John 1:16, "Of his fullness we all receive grace for grace." James 1:17, "Every good and perfect gift comes down from above," etc. You must say, O Christian, *I have nothing but what I have received; I have no light, no life, no love, no joy, no peace—but from above!* 1 Cor. 4:7. *The jewels which hang about my breasts, and the chains of pearl which are around my neck, and the golden crown which is upon my head, and all the sparkling diamonds in that crown—are all from above!* Ezek. 16:11-15, Psalm 45:8, seq. *All those princely ornaments by which I am made more beautiful and lovely than others; and all those beds of spices and sweet flowers, by which I am made more desirable and delectable—are from above! I am nothing. I have nothing of my own; all I am, and all I have, is from on high.*

"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand," says David, 1 Chron. 29:14. So you say, "Lord, the **love** with which I love you—comes from you; and the **faith** by which I hang upon you—comes from you; and the **fear** by which I fear before you—comes from you; and the **joy** which I rejoice before you with—comes from you; and the **patience** with which I wait upon you—comes from you." And therefore say, as David did, upon the receipt of mercy, "Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name." 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

**(2.) You must honor him, by acknowledging the dependency of your graces, upon the fountain of grace.** And that your strength to stand lies not so much in your graces, as in their dependency upon the fountain of grace—from their reception from the God of grace. A man by his arm may do much—but it is mainly by reason of its union and conjunction with the head. It is so between a Christian's graces and

Christ. The stream does not more depend upon the fountain, nor the branch upon the root, nor the moon upon the sun, nor the child upon the mother, nor the effect upon the cause—than our graces depend upon the fountain of grace, Psalm 138:3, Philip. 4:12-13.

Now that our very graces do thus depend upon the fountain of grace; and that our strength to stand lies not so much in our graces as in Christ, is clear by this—that the graces of the saints may and do most fail them when they have most need of them: Mark 4:40, "And he said, Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" When the wind was high, their faith was low; when the storm was great, their faith was little; so Luke 8:25, "And he said unto them, Where is your faith?" Have you now to *seek* it—when you should be *using* it? **Peter** denied Christ—when he had need by faith to have confessed Christ. **Moses'** faith failed him—when it should have been most serviceable to him, Num. 20:12. And **David's** courage failed him—when it should have been a shield to him, 1 Sam. 21:13-14. And the **disciples'** love failed them—when it should have been most useful to them, John 14:28. And **Job's** wisdom and patience failed him—when they should have been his greatest supporters. By all which it is most clear, that not only ourselves, but also our very graces—must be supported by the God of grace, the fountain of grace—or else they will be lacking, when we most need them.

Though our graces be our best jewels—yet they are imperfect; and as the moon shines by a borrowed light, so do our graces. If it were not for the Sun of righteousness all our graces would give no light. Though grace is a glorious creature, it is but a creature, and therefore must be upheld by its Creator. Though grace be a beautiful child—yet it is but a child, that must be upheld by the Father's arms. This, Christians, you must remember—and give glory to God!

**(3.) You must honor him *by uncrowning your graces—to crown the God of your graces.*** By taking the crown off from your own heads, and putting it upon his, or by laying it down at his feet, as they did theirs, in Rev. 4:10, Acts 3:11-12, 16, and 4:7-10. These scriptures are wells of living waters; they are bee-hives of living honey; see and taste. [True it is that *we* do what we do—but it is as true that Christ empowers us to do what we do.] The Lord has often uncrowned himself,

to crown his people's graces, as you may see in these following scriptures, Mat. 9:22, and 15:28, Mark 10:52, Luke 7:50. And why, then, should not his people uncrown their graces to crown him? Cant. 5:10, *seq.* That which others attribute to your graces—you must attribute to the God of grace. You must say, Though our graces are precious—yet Christ is more precious; though they are sweet—yet Christ is most sweet; though they are lovely—yet Christ is altogether lovely.

Your graces are but Christ's picture, Christ's image; and therefore do not worship his *image*, and in the mean while neglect his *person*. Make much of his picture—but make more of himself. Let his picture have your eye—but let himself have your heart, John 1:39, *seq.* Your graces are but Christ's hands, by which he works; be therefore careful that you do not more mind the workman's hands—than the workman himself. Your graces are but Christ's servants; therefore do not smile upon the servant—and look asquint upon the Master. Your graces are but Christ's favorites; therefore do not so stare upon them, and be taken with them, as to forget the Prince on whom they wait, etc. All I drive at is this—that not your graces, but Christ, may be all in all unto you, etc.

[2.] The *second* end to which you must improve your gifts and graces, **isto the good of others**. Psalm 66:16, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul;" Psalm 34:8, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man who trusts in him;" Isaiah 2:3; Acts 5:26-29. God has given you gifts and grace—to that end that you should improve them for others' good. It is the very nature of grace to be diffusive and communicative. Grace cannot be long concealed. The better anything is, the more communicative it will be. Grace is as fire in the bones, as new wine in the bottles; you cannot hide it, you must give vent to it: Acts 4:28, "We cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen." Can the fire cease to turn all combustible matter into fire? can the candle, once thoroughly lighted, cease to spend itself for the enlightening of others? Then may the precious sons of Zion cease to give light to others, by their examples, counsels, and communicating their experiences.

There is no way to honor God, no way to win souls, nor any way to increase your own gifts and graces—than to exercise them for the good of

others. Grace is not like to worldly vanities, which diminish by distribution—but like candles which keep the same light, though a thousand are lighted by them. Grace is like the widow's oil—which multiplied by pouring out, 2 Kings 4; and like those talents—which doubled by employment, Mat. 25.

Again, by how much more we pour out our spiritual things to others—by so much is the abundance the greater to us. Those who give their money to their neighbor, diminish their own substance; and by how much he gives—by so much the less is the money which he possesses; but in spirituals it is quite otherwise.

No way to advance the kingdom of Christ like this—of improving your gifts and graces to the advantage and profit of others. There is no love nor pity to the precious souls of men like this. There is no way to abound in grace, to be rich in grace like this. There is no way to be high in heaven like this. [Romans 1:11-12; 2 Cor. 9:6.] Are you, O Christian, bound to do good to others, by communicating *earthly* things? And are you not much more bound to do them good by communicating of *spiritual* things? Surely you are. Why are Christians so often in Scripture compared to trees—but because of their fruitfulness and usefulness to others? And why are they called "stewards of the manifold gifts of God," but to note to us, that their gifts are not to be kept for themselves—but employed for the good of others? And why has Christ put a box of precious ointment into every Christian's hand—but that it should be opened for the benefit of others?

Certainly, he who is good is bound to do good; for gifts and graces are given, not only to make us good, and keep us good—but also to make us, yes, to provoke us to do good. "We therefore learn—that we may teach," is a proverb among the Rabbis. "And I do therefore lay in, and lay up," says the heathen, "that I may lay out for the good of many." I think they are not good Christians who scorn to learn this good lesson, though from a heathen. And oh, that all who write themselves Christians, were so good as to imitate the good which shined in many heathens! To me it is very sad, that Christians that live and act below the very heathens; that they should be offended to hear now and then of those excellencies which sparkled in the very heathens. I think that is a very evil spirit—which

cannot endure to hear of those excellencies in others that he lacks himself. Certainly he is a brave Christian, and has much of Christ within—who accounts nothing his own that he does not communicate to others. The bee does store her hive out of all sorts of flowers for the common benefit; and why then in this should not every Christian be like a bee?

Synesius speaks of some, who having a treasure of rare abilities in them, would as soon part with their hearts as their abilities. I think they are rather monsters than real Christians, who are of such a spirit.

[3.] The *third* and last thing to which you are to improve your gifts and graces is, ***to the benefit and profit of your own souls***. Not to improve them to your own internal and eternal good, is with a high hand to cross the main end of God's conferring them upon you. Ah, Christians! you must improve them—to the strengthening of yourself against temptations—to the supporting of yourself under afflictions—to the keeping under of your strong corruptions—to the sweetening of all your difficulties—and to the preparing and fitting yourself for the days of your death. The good of the soul is specially to be minded:

(1.) because it is the most notable part of man;

(2.) because the image of God is most fairly stamped upon it;

(3.) because it is first converted;

(4.) because it shall be first glorified.

I shall content myself with giving you this hint, because I have before spoken more fully to this head. And thus we have done with the doctrinal part.

We shall come now to make some **USE** and **APPLICATION** of this point to ourselves.

If this be so, that it is the duty of Christians to improve and exercise the gifts and graces that the Lord has given them,

Then, in the *first* place, ***this looks very sourly and badly upon all lazy, idle, negligent Christians, who do not stir up themselves to lay hold on God, who do not stir up the grace of the Lord in them.*** It is sad to consider how many Christians can stir up themselves to lay held on all opportunities to make themselves great and rich in the world—and yet allow their golden gifts and graces even to grow rusty for lack of exercise. No Christians are so free from Satan's assaults—as active Christians are; nor are any so tempted—as idle Christians. The Jewish Rabbis report, that the same night that Israel departed out of Egypt towards Canaan, all the idols and idolatrous temples in Egypt, by lightning and earthquakes, were broken down. So when grace and holiness is set up in the heart, all the idols of Satan, which are men's lusts, are thrown down.

It is sad to see how busy many men are to exercise and improve a talent of riches—who yet bind up their talents of gifts and grace in a napkin. By these—God loses much honor and praise—and they themselves lose much comfort and contentment—and others lose much profit and benefit—and the gospel loses much credit and glory.

But the main use that I shall make of this point, shall be to exhort and stir you all up, to make a blessed improvement of your graces. And indeed it

is a point of most singular use to us all our days, a truth that is every day of very great concernment to our souls.

**Now there are seven considerations or motives, to stir up your souls to make a blessed improvement of the grace and gifts you have received.**

[1.] And the *first* is this: ***Seriously consider that the exercise and improvement of grace in your souls—will be more and more the death and ruin of sin in your souls.***

Take it from experience; there is not a choicer way than this for a man to bring the power of his sin under control—than to keep up the exercise of his grace. Sin and grace are like two buckets at a well—when one is up the other is down. Certainly, the readiest and the surest way to bring under the power of sin, is to be much in the exercise of grace: Romans 8:10, "But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness." The life and activity of Christ and grace in the soul—is the death and destruction of sin in the soul. **The more grace acts in the soul—the more sin withers and dies in the soul.** The stronger the house of David grew, 2 Sam. 3, the weaker the house of Saul grew. As the house of David grew every day stronger and stronger, so the house of Saul every day grew weaker and weaker. So the activity of the new man—is the death of the old man.

When Christ began to bestir himself in the temple—the money-changers quickly fled out, Mat. 21:12-14. So when grace is active and stirring in the soul—corruption quickly flies. A man may find out many ways to **hide** his sin—but he will never find out any way to **subdue** his sin—but by the exercise of grace. Of all Christians, none so mortified as those in whom grace is most exercised. Sin is a viper that must be killed—or it will kill you forever; and there is no way to kill it but by the exercise of grace.

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider this by way of motive to provoke you to exercise and improve your graces. ***The exercise and improvement of your graces will provoke others to bless and admire the God of grace.*** "Let your light so shine before men—that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven," Mat. 5:16—the light of

your conversation, and the light of your graces. Oh how many thousand souls are now triumphing in heaven—whose gifts and graces shined gloriously when they were on earth. And ah! how many thousands are there now on earth, who bless and admire the Lord for the shining of the graces of those who are now in heaven; who bless the Lord for the faith of Abraham, and the zeal of David, and the meekness of Moses, and the patience of Job, and the courage of Joshua, etc.

Ah, Christians! as you would stir up others to exalt the God of grace, look to the exercise and improvement of your graces. When poor servants shall live in a family, and see the faith of a master, and the love of a master, and the wisdom of a master, and the patience of a master, and the humility of a master, etc., shining like so many stars of heaven—oh how does it draw forth their hearts to bless the Lord, that ever they came into such a family! It is not a mere *profession* of religion—but the exercise and improvement of grace, which contributes so much to the lifting up the glory of the Lord, and to the greatening of his praise in the world. Many saints have had their hearts warmed and heated by sitting by other saints' fires, by eyeing and dwelling upon other saints' graces. Ah! when men's graces shine as Moses his face did, when their lives, as one speaks of Joseph's life, is a very heaven, sparkling with variety of virtues, as with so many bright stars; ah! how are others stirred up to glorify God, and to cry out—These are Christians indeed! These are an honor to their God, a crown to their Christ, and a credit to their gospel. Oh! if they were all such, we would become Christians too. It is a very great stumbling-block to many poor sinners, to see men who make a very great and large profession of Christ, never to exercise and show forth the virtues or graces of Christ. They profess they know him, and yet by the non-exercise of his virtues—they deny him.

It was one of Machiavel's principles, that the *external appearance of virtue* was only to be sought. I am afraid that this cursed soul-damning principle is the best flower that grows in many men's gardens in these days. Though there is no virtue but is as a bright stone in a dark night, it shines and shows its clearness and beauty; it is as pure gold, the brighter for passing through the fire; yet how do most covet rather the *name* of virtue, than to be really virtuous! Such, I believe, shall have the hottest

and the lowest place in hell. [*There is not a more cruel creature, more impatient and vindictive, than a hypocrite,* says Luther, who had the experience of it; therefore trust not to the Machiavels of the times.] Well, Christians, remember this, it is not a *mere show* of grace—but the *exercise* of grace—which will provoke others to glorify the fountain of grace.

That is a very remarkable scripture, 1 Thes. 1:2-3, 8, compared, "We give thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, and our Father. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia—but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." In this eighth verse you have an elegant metaphor, which signifies, that their faith was so lively, that with its sound, as it were, it stirred up other nations. The Greek word is to sound as with the sound of a trumpet, to make to sound afar off. Says the apostle, *your graces made a noise like a trumpet; they stirred up others to be gracious and active, as the trumpet stirs up men to war.*

So in 2 Thes. 1:3-4, "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring." This is the character of the angelical nature, to rejoice in the graces and gracious actings of others. He who acts otherwise holds forth the image of the devil, and declares himself a native of hell. [Pliny tells of some in the remote parts of India, that they have no mouths. We have many such monsters among us—who have no mouths to bless God for the good that shines in others.]

[3.] *Thirdly, Consider that **the exercise and improvement of grace, may be a special means to stir up the exercise of grace in others.***

Your improvement of grace may be a special means to stir up others to improve their graces also. 1 Thes. 1:7, "You became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia." Or as the Greek is, "you were types,

moulds," patterns of piety to those who were in Christ long before you. So in 2 Cor. 9:2, "For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action." I knew you were eager, and this I boasted of; I made it my glory to tell how grace shined in your souls. "And," says he, "your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action." When they saw how warm and lively, and active, how open-handed and open-hearted you were to the poor saints—their hearts were stirred up to acts of charity also. Stories speak of some who could not sleep when they thought of the trophies of other worthies who went before them. The highest examples are very quickening and provoking. [Precepts may instruct—but examples do persuade.]

That this may stick upon your souls, I beseech you bed and board, rise and walk with this one consideration, namely—**that all the good you provoke others to by counsel or example, shall be put down to your account.** It shall certainly turn to your internal and eternal advantage. In the great day, Christ will make honorable mention of all the good that you have stirred and provoked others to, and will reward you for it before angels and men. The faith, the love, the hope, the charity, the patience, etc., that you have provoked others to, shall be put down to your account, as if you had been the only actor of them, etc.

As all the sins which men provoke or stir up others to by their counsel or example, shall be put down to their accounts, as you may see in David. David did but send a letter concerning the death of Uriah, and yet the charge comes, "You have slain Uriah with the sword," 2 Sam. 12:9. As whatever is done by letter, counsel, or example, to provoke others to sin, shall certainly be charged upon men's accounts at last; just so, whatever good you stir up others to, that shall be set upon your score, and shall turn to your eternal account in the day of Christ. Oh! who would not then labor with all their might, even day and night, to stir up the grace of the Lord in themselves and others, seeing it shall turn to such a glorious account in that day wherein Christ shall say to his Father, "Lo, here am I, and the children that you have given me," etc. [They shall shine as so many suns in heaven, who are much in stirring and provoking of others

to the exercise of grace and holiness, Dan. 12:3, 6:1-2.]

[4.] *Fourthly*, consider this, ***the exercise and improvement of grace, contributes very much both to the stopping the mouths of your enemies, and to the rendering of you lovely in the very eyes of your enemies.*** Oh! there is nothing in all the world that contributes so much to the stopping of the mouths of your enemies, and to the rendering of your souls lovely in the eyes of your enemies, as the exercise and improvement of your graces. As you may see in David, David improved his grace to a glorious height, and says Saul, "You are more righteous than I," 1 Sam. 24:17. John improved his grace to a glorious height, and was much in the exercise of it, and what follows? "Herod feared and revered him, knowing that he was a just and a holy man," Mark 6:20.

Oh! how did the wisdom, faith, and holiness of Joseph, Daniel, and the three children, silence their most enraged adversaries! yes, what a deal of honor did the exercise of their graces cause those heathen princes to put upon them? [So what a deal of respect and honor did Alexander the Great put upon Judas the high priest; Theodosius upon Ambrose; and Constantine upon Paphnutius, kissing that eye of his that was bored out for the cause of Christ, etc.] 1 Peter 2:15, "For so is the will of God, that by well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." It is not all the talking and profession in the world that can stop the mouths of foolish men; it must be well-doings, grace improved, grace exercised and manifested in ways of holiness—which must work so great a wonder as to stop the mouths of wicked men.

The Greek word that is here translated *well-doing*, denotes the continual custom of well-doing. And indeed, nothing but a continual course of well-doing will be able to stop the mouths of wicked people. It is not a *fit* of holiness—but a course of holiness—which can produce so great a miracle as to stop the mouths of wicked men: "That you might stop the mouths of ungodly men."

The Greek is, "that you may muzzle," or, "halter up." There is no way in the world to button, muzzle, or halter up the mouths of wicked men—but by the exercise of your graces in ways of well-doing. Oh! this will cause

you to be well thought of, and well spoken of; this is that which will make even wicked men to say, "These are Christians indeed! these are those who have not only a *name* to live—but are alive; who have not only a *form* of godliness—but the *power*!" A Christian's exercise of **faith** in times of need, and of **patience** in times of affliction, and of **courage** in times of temptation, and of **boldness** in times of opposition, etc., does mightily silence and stop the mouths of the worst of men.

Henry the Second of France, being present at the martyrdom of a certain tailor burnt by him for his piety, was so terrified by beholding the wisdom, courage, faith, and constancy of the martyr, that he swore at his going away, "that he would never be any more present at such a martyrdom."

[5.] Fifthly, ***Dwell much upon the sweet nature of grace—if you would have your souls carried out to the exercise and improvement of grace.***

The name of grace and the nature of grace is very sweet. The Hebrew word that is rendered *grace* signifies favor and mercy; and it answers to the Greek word that signifies favor and mercy; and some derive the Greek word from a word that signifies *joy*, because grace begets the greatest joy and sweetness in the hearts of men, that possibly can be. **Grace is a panoply against all troubles—and a paradise of all pleasures.**

Grace is compared to the sweetest things; to sweet spices, to wine and milk. Grace is a beam of the Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is a sweet flower of paradise, a spark of glory, etc. It is nourished and maintained by that sweet word, which is sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb, and by sweet union and communion with the Father and the Son. [Cant. 4:10, 14, 16, 6:2; Isaiah 55:1-2; Psalm 119:103; 1 John 1:3-4.] Grace is exercised about the sweetest objects, namely—God, Christ, promises, and future glory. Grace sweetens all your services and duties. Your best religious performances are but stinking sacrifices—if they are not attended with the exercise of grace. Grace is that heavenly salt which makes all our services savory and sweet in the nostrils of God.

Grace is of the greatest and sweetest **use** to the soul; it is an anchor at

sea, and a shield at land; it is a staff to uphold the soul, and a sword to defend the soul; it is bread to strengthen the soul, and wine to cheer the soul; it is medicine to cure all diseases, and a plaster to heal all wounds, and a cordial to strengthen the soul under all faintings, etc. Grace is your eye to see for Christ, your ear to hear for Christ, your head to design for Christ, your tongue to speak for Christ, your hand to do for Christ, and your feet to walk with Christ.

Grace makes men of the harshest, sourest, crabbedest natures, to be of a sweet, lovely, amiable, pleasing temper, Isaiah 11:7-9. It turns lions into lambs, wolves into sheep, monsters into men, and men into angels, as you may see in Manasseh, Paul, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, and others. Yet sometimes grace, in a rugged unhewn nature, is like a gold ring on a leprous hand, or a diamond set in iron, or a jewel in a swine's snout, etc.

[6.] *Sixthly*, By way of motive, consider this, ***that wicked men do exercise and improve to the uttermost, all those principles of wickedness that are in them—against the ways of God, the honor of God, and the comforts of the saints.***

Now shall wicked men improve all their principles to the uttermost against God, his truth, and saints, etc.; and shall not saints improve their graces to the honor of God, the advancement of truth, and the joy and benefit one of another? You may see the activity of wicked men's spirits in Proverbs 4:16, "They sleep not unless they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." Oh, they cannot rest! "The wicked are like the troubled sea," as Isaiah speaks, "when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Isaiah 57:20, 21. [The Hebrew word signifies properly a laborious sinner, a practitioner in sin. The verb signifies to make a stir, to be exceeding busy, unquiet, or troublesome, etc.]

So in 2 Pet. 2:14, "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls." A heart they have, exercised with covetous practices; cursed children—they break all promises and covenants with God and man, as Samson did the new ropes. So in Proverbs 19:19, "A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment, for if you deliver him—yet you must do it again." The Hebrew word signifies to add. Says he, You must

add deliverance to deliverance, for he will still be a-adding sin to sin. Ahab, after he was threatened with utter rooting out, begat fifty sons, as it were, to cross God, and to battle it out with him. Let God thunder in his judgments—yet he will add sin to sin, he will proceed from evil to evil, until he comes to the very top of evil, namely, to be hardened in sin, and to scoff at holiness, etc., Jer. 9:3.

The old Italians were accustomed, in time of thunder, to ring their loudest bells, to drown the noise of the heavens. So let God thunder from heaven—yet wicked men will so increase their wicked principles, that their consciences may not hear the noise of the thunder-claps of divine displeasure. [Witness Ahab, Haman, Jehu, Jeroboam, the fool in the Gospel, and those in Mat. 23:14-16.] The covetous man will increase his earthly principles, and the ambitious man will increase his ambitious principles, and the voluptuous man will increase his voluptuous principles, and the unchaste man will increase his unclean principles, and the erroneous man will increase his erroneous principles, and the blasphemous man will increase his blasphemous principles, etc. Ah sirs! shall wicked men thus increase their wicked principles to the uttermost against God, Christ, and piety, and against the prosperity, peace, joy, and happiness of the saints? And shall not saints improve their graces to the uttermost for the honor of the Lord, the advancement of religion, and the mutual profit and benefit of each other?

[7.] *Seventhly, **The more high and excellent any man is in grace—the more highly he shall be exalted in glory.*** Oh! therefore, exercise your grace, improve your grace. As you would be high in heaven, labor to improve your graces much while you are here on earth; for glory will be given out at last, according to the exercise and improvement of your grace.

The more high and improved a man's graces are—**the more that man will do for God**; and the more any man does for God—the more at last shall he receive from God: 1 Cor. 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." So Gal. 6:7, *seq.*, "He who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; but he who sows liberally shall reap liberally." [Darius, before he came to the kingdom,

received a garment as a gift from Syloson; and when he became king, he rewarded Syloson with the command of his country.]

The more any man has improved his grace—**the more that man will be able to bear and suffer for God**; and the more any man bears and suffers for God, the more glory shall that man have at last from God: Mat. 5:11-12, "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad," or "leap and dance for joy, leap and skip for joy," etc. Why so? "For great is your reward in heaven!" God is a liberal paymaster, and no *small* payments can fall from so great and so gracious a hand as his.

The more excellent any man is in grace—**the more he is the delight of God**. Psalm 16:2-3, "My goodness extends not to you—but to the saints who are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." Now this is spoken in the person of Christ, for the apostle applies these words to Christ, Acts. 2:25. Now says Christ, "My goodness reaches not to you," O Father! "but to the saints, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." And doubtless, those who are his greatest delight on earth—shall be possessed of the greatest glory in heaven. If fathers give the greatest portions to those children in whom they delight, why should not Christ? Is it equity in the one, and iniquity in the other? Surely not. Christ may do with his own as he pleases. [The father delights in all his children—yet sometimes he delights more in one than in another, etc.]

Again, the more any man improves his grace—**the clearer, sweeter, fuller, and richer is his enjoyments of God here**. There is no man in all the world who has such enjoyments of God, as that man has that most improves his graces. It is not he who *knows* most, nor him who *hears* most, nor yet he who *talks* most—but he who exercises grace most—who has most communion with God, who has the clearest visions of God, who has the sweetest discoveries and manifestations of God. Now certainly if those who improve their graces most, have most of God here, then without controversy, they shall have most of God hereafter. A man may as well plead for equal degrees of grace in this world—as for equal degrees of glory in the other world.

Again, if those who are most graceless and wicked shall be most tormented—then certainly those who are most gracious shall be most exalted in the day of Christ. The more wicked any man is, the more shall he be tormented in the day of vengeance: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shall receive the *greater damnation*," Mat. 23:14, Luke 12:47-48. The darkest, the lowest, the hottest place in hell is provided for you; therefore it soundly follows, that those who are most gracious—shall at last be most glorious.

And thus much for the motives that tend to provoke all the precious sons of Zion, to make a thorough improvement of the gifts and graces that the Lord has bestowed upon them.

I shall now come to the resolution of a weighty question, and so conclude this point, which I have been the longer upon, by reason of its very great usefulness in these days, wherein men strive to exercise anything, yes, everything—but grace and holiness, etc.

Now this question is this: ***When may a soul be said to be excellent in grace—or to have highly improved grace?***

Now to this question I shall give these following answers:

[1.] *First*, A soul that is high and excellent in grace, that has improved his graces to a considerable height, ***will keep humble and unspotted under great outward enjoyments***. It is said of Daniel, that he had "an excellent spirit;" and herein did his excellent spirit appear—in that he was holy and humble in heart, though high in place and worth, etc., Dan. 6:3-7. Daniel keeps humble and holy when he is lifted high, yes, made the second man in the kingdom. Malice itself could not find anything against him—except "in connection with the requirements of his religion." [Many are seemingly good until they come to be great, and then they prove stark nothing.] It is much to be very gracious when a man is very great—and to be high in holiness when advanced to high places. Usually men's pride rises with their outward good. Certainly, they are worthy ones, and shall walk with Christ in white, whose garments are not defiled with greatness or riches, etc., Rev. 3:4.

[2.] *Secondly*, Those who have highly improved their graces, ***will comply with those commands of God which cross nature, which are contrary to nature.*** And doubtless that man has improved his graces to a very high rate, whose heart complies with those commands of God which are cross and contrary to his nature; as for a man to love those who loathe him, to bless those who curse him, to pray for those who persecute him, etc., Mat. 5:44. It is nothing to love those who love us, and to speak well of those who speak well of us; and to do well, and behave well towards those who behave well towards us. Oh—but for a man to love those who hate him, to be courteous to those who are currish to him, to be sweet to those who are bitter to him, etc., this strongly demonstrates a high improvement of grace. [They use to say, If any man would have Mr. Foxe do him a good turn, let him do him an injury.]

Certainly that man is very, very godly, who has learned that holy lesson of "overcoming evil with good," Romans 12:21. Such a one was Stephen, Acts 7:55, 60. He was a man full of the Holy Spirit, that is, of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; he was much in the exercise of grace, he can pray and sigh for them, yes, even weep tears of blood for them—who rejoiced to shed his blood. So did Christ weep over Jerusalem. Christ shed tears for those who were to shed his blood.

So Abraham "being strong in faith gave glory to God," Romans 4:20. How? Why, by complying with those commands of God that were contrary to flesh and blood, as the offering up of his son, his only son, his beloved son, his son of the promise; and by leaving his own country, and his near and dear relations, upon a word of command. The commands of God so change the whole man and make him new, that you can hardly know him to be the same man. Well, sirs, remember this—it is a dangerous thing to neglect one of God's commands, though it be ever so cross to flesh and blood; who by another of his commands, is able to command you into nothing or into hell. "Let Luther hate me, and in his wrath call me a devil a thousand times —yet I will love him, and acknowledge him to be a most precious servant of God," says Calvin.

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider this, ***such souls will follow the Lord fully, who have made an improvement of their graces.*** Oh, this was the

glorious commendations of Caleb and Joshua in Numb. 14:24, that they "followed the Lord fully," in the face of all difficulties and discouragements. "They had another spirit in them," says the text, they would go up and possess the land; though the walls were as high as heaven, and the sons of Anak were there, they made no more of it than to go, see, and conquer.

"They followed the Lord fully." In the Hebrew it is, "They fulfilled after me." The Hebrew word is a metaphor taken from a ship under sail, that is carried with a strong wind, as fearing neither sands, nor rocks, nor shelves, etc. Such have little if anything of Christ within—who follow him by halves or haltingly.

Cyprian brings in the devil triumphing over Christ thus: "As for my followers, I never died for them as Christ did for his; I never promised them so great reward as Christ has done to his; and yet I have more followers than he, and they do more for me than his do for him."

[4.] Fourthly, ***Such souls that have improved their graces to a considerable height, will bless God as well when he frowns—as when he smiles.***

As well when he *takes* as when he *gives*—when he *strikes* as when he *strokes*—as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Job 1:21; Lev. 10:3; 2 Sam. 15:25-26; Isaiah 63:14-15.] When the Lord had stripped Job of all, and had set him naked upon the ash-heap, then says Job, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Where grace is improved to a considerable height—it will work a soul to sit down satisfied with the naked enjoyment of God, without other things: John 14:8, "Show us the Father, and it suffices us." The sight of the Father, without honors; the sight of the Father, without riches; the sight of the Father, without men's favour—will suffice the soul. As Jacob said, "It is enough that Joseph is alive;" so says the soul that is high in grace, *It is enough that Jesus is alive*, etc.

[5.] Fifthly, ***Souls that have improved their graces to a considerable height, will be good in bad times and in bad places.***

Such souls will bear up against the stream of evil examples, in the worst of times and in the worst of places. [Though the fish live in the salt sea—yet they are fresh. So though souls eminently gracious live among the wicked—yet they retain their spiritualness, freshness, and life.] **Abraham** was righteous in Chaldea; **Lot** was just in Sodom; **Daniel** holy in Babylon; **Job** upright and fearing God in the land of Uz, which was a profane and most abominable superstitious place; **Nehemiah** zealous in Damascus. Oh, give me a man who has improved his grace, and the worse the times are—the better that man will be; he will bear up bravely against the stream of evil examples, he will be very good when times and all round about him are very bad.

Some say that roses grow the sweeter when they are planted by garlic. Truly, Christians that have gloriously improved their graces are like those roses—they grow sweeter and sweeter, holier and holier, by wicked men. The best diamonds shine most in the dark, and so do the best Christians shine most in the worst times.

[6.] Sixthly, ***Such turn their principles into practice.*** They turn their speculations into power, their notions into spirit, their glorious inside into a golden outside, Psalm 45:13.

[7.] Seventhly, ***Such as have made a considerable improvement of their gifts and graces, have hearts as large as their heads;*** whereas most men's heads have outgrown their hearts, etc.

[8.] Eighthly, ***Such are always most busied about the highest things,*** namely, God, Christ, heaven, etc., Philip. 3; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Cor. 4:18; Romans 8:18.

[9.] Ninthly, ***Such are always a-doing or receiving good.*** As Christ went up and down doing good, Mat. 4:23; chapter 9:35; Mark 6:6.

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, ***Such will mourn for wicked men's sins, as well as their own.*** Oh the tears, the sighs, the groans, that others' sins fetch from these men's heart! Iambus wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost, partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell, and partly because he had not been so careful to please God, as she

had been to please a wanton lover, Jer. 9:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:7-9.

I have at this time only given you some short hints, whereby you may know whether you have made any considerable improvement of that grace the Lord has given you. I do intend, by divine permission, in a convenient time, to declare much more of this to the world. I shall follow all what has been said with my prayers, that it may help on your internal and eternal welfare.

I shall now proceed to the fifth doctrine, namely—***That the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich.***

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ!**" Ephesians 3:8

For the opening of this point, we shall attempt these three things:

I. To demonstrate this to be a truth—that the Lord Jesus is very rich.

II. The grounds why he is thus held forth in the word, to be one full of unsearchable riches.

III. To show you the excellency of the riches of Christ, above all other riches in the world.

IV. And then the use and application of the point.

**I. To demonstrate this to be a truth—that the Lord Jesus is very rich.**

[1.] First, **Express scripture speaks out this truth.** He is rich in **goodness**: Romans 2:4, "the riches of his goodness," his "native goodness," etc., that is ready to be employed for your internal and eternal good, etc.

Again, He is rich in **wisdom** and **knowledge**: Col. 2:3, "In whom," speaking of Christ, "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Christ was content that his riches should be hid from the world; therefore do not be angry that yours is no more known to the world. What is your one mite to Christ's many millions? etc. [As man is an epitome of the whole world, so is Christ the epitome of all wisdom and knowledge etc.]

Again, He is rich in **grace**: Eph. 1:7, "By whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Again, He is rich in **glory**: Eph. 1:18, "That you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." So in chapter 3:16, "That he would grant unto you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." So in Philip. 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." The riches of glory are unconceivable riches. Search is made through all the depths of the earth for something to picture it by. The riches of this glory is fitter to be believed than to be discoursed of, as some of the very heathens have acknowledged. [Neither Christ nor heaven can be exaggerated.—Augustine.]

[2.]. But, *secondly*, as express scripture speaks out this truth, that Christ is very rich, so ***there are eight things more that do with open mouth speak out Christ to be very rich.***

(1.) ***First, You may judge of his riches, by the dowry and portion that his Father has given him.*** In Psalm 2:7, "You are my Son, this day have I begotten you; ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." He is the heir of all things. All things above and below, in heaven and earth, are his. Heb. 1:2, "God has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things." Christ is the richest heir in heaven and earth. Men cry up this man to be a good match and that; and why so—but because they are great heirs. Ah! but what are all the great heirs of the world to this heir, the Lord Jesus? Joseph gave

portions to all his brethren—but to Benjamin a portion five times as good as what he gave the others. So the Lord scatters portions among the sons of men. He gives brass to some, gold to others; temporals to some, spirituals to others; but the greatest portion of all he has given into the hands of Christ, whom he has made the heir of all things; Rev. 11:15, "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." So in chapter 19:11-12, "Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. And the one sitting on the horse was named Faithful and True. For he judges fairly and then goes to war. His eyes were bright like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him, and only he knew what it meant." Mark that! What are princes' single crowns, and the pope's triple crown, compared to Christ's many crowns? Certainly he must be very rich, that has so many kingdoms and crowns. Wait but a while, and you shall see these scriptures made good, etc.

***(2.) Secondly, You may judge of his riches, by his keeping open house for the relief and supply of all created creatures, both in heaven and in earth.***

You look upon those as very rich that keep open house for all comers and goers. Why, such a one is the Lord Jesus Christ; he keeps open house for all comers and goers, for all created creatures both in heaven and earth. Psalm 104:24, "The earth is full of your riches. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small." "When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing." says the Psalmist, Psalm 145:16. So Isaiah 55:1, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, let him come and buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Why do you lay out your money for that which is not bread, and your strength for that which does not profit?" [King Croesus was so rich, that he maintained a whole army with his own revenues. But what is this to what Jesus does? etc.] All creatures, high and low, honorable and base, noble and ignoble, blessed and cursed—are fed at the cost and charge of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are all fed at his table, and maintained by what comes out of his treasury, his purse. All angels and saints above, and all saints and sinners below, are indebted to

Christ for what they enjoy. Oh! the multitudes, the numberless number of those who live upon the cost and charge of Christ. Can you number the stars of heaven? can you number the sands upon the sea-shore? then may you number the multitudes, the millions of angels and men who are maintained upon the cost and charge of the Lord Jesus.

In Col. 1:16-17, "For by Him everything was created, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together."

(3.) *Thirdly, You may judge of the riches of Christ by the time that he has fed and clothed, cherished and maintained, so many innumerable millions of angels and men.*

He has maintained his court above and below, upon his own cost and charge, for some six thousand years. Oh, to keep such a multitude, if it were but for a day, would speak him out to be richer than all the princes in the world; but to keep so many millions, and to keep them so long, what does this speak out—but that Christ is infinitely rich, rich in goodness and mercy? It would beggar all the princes on earth, to keep but one day the least part of those who Christ maintains every day, etc.

(4.) But, *fourthly, you may judge of the riches of Christ by this, that he does not only enrich all the saints—but every aspect of the saints.*

That is, he enriches all the faculties of their souls; he enriches their **understandings** with glorious light; their **consciences** with quickness, pureness, tenderness and quietness; and their **wills** with holy intentions and heavenly resolutions; and their **affections** of love, joy, fear, etc.—with life, heat, and warmth, and with the beauty and glory of the most soul-enriching, soul-delighting, soul-ravishing, and soul-contenting objects etc. All saints' experiences seal to this truth, and therefore a touch shall suffice, etc.

(5.) *Fifthly, Judge of the riches of Christ by this, that notwithstanding all the vast expense and charge that he is at, and has been at*

***for so many millions of thousands of creatures, and that for some six thousand years—yet he is never the poorer; his purse is never the emptier.***

There is still in Christ a fullness of abundance, and a fullness of redundancy, notwithstanding all that he has expended. It were blasphemy to think that Christ should be a penny the poorer by all that he has laid out for the relief of all those who have their dependence upon him. Col. 1:19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness *dwell*." Not stay or abide a night or a day and then be gone—but should dwell. The sun has not the less light for filling the world with light. A fountain has not the less for filling the lesser vessels. There is in Christ the fullness of a fountain. The overflowing fountain pours out water abundantly, and yet remains full. Why, the Lord Jesus is such an overflowing fountain; he fills all, and yet remains full. Christ has the greatest worth and wealth in him. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is concentrated in one piece of gold, so all the petty excellencies scattered abroad in the creature are united to Christ; yes, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth, is epitomized in him, etc. [They say it is true of the oil at Rhemes that, though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France—yet it never runs dry. I am sure, though all creatures spend continually, on Christ's stock—yet it never wastes.]

(6.) ***Sixthly, The Lord Jesus is universally rich, and that speaks him out to be rich indeed.*** He is universally rich. You have few people who are universally rich. That is a rich man indeed, who is universally rich; that is, he is rich in money and rich in land, and rich in commodities, and rich in jewels, etc. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is one who is universally rich; he is rich in all spirituals; he is rich in goodness, rich in wisdom and knowledge; he is rich in grace, and rich in glory. Yes, he is universally rich in respect of temporals. "He is the heir of all things." He is the heir of all the gold in the world, and of all the silver, and of all the jewels, and of all the land, and of all the cattle in the world—as you may see by comparing some scriptures together. Hos. 2:5, 8, 9, "Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said—I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool

and my linen, my oil and my drink." But mark what follows: verses 8-9, "She doesn't realize that it was **I** who gave her everything she has—the grain, the wine, the olive oil. Even the gold and silver she used in worshipping the god Baal were gifts from me!"

So in Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him." All others are either usurpers or stewards; it is the Lord Jesus who is the great landlord of heaven and earth. "For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills. Every bird of the mountains and all the animals of the field belong to me. Psalm 50:10-11. *It is all mine!* says the Lord.

Thus you see that the Lord is universally rich—rich in houses, in lands, in gold, in silver, in cattle, etc., in all temporals as well as in spirituals; but where will you find a man who is universally rich either in spirituals or temporals? It is true, you may find one Christian rich in one grace, and another Christian rich in another; but where will you find a Christian who is universally rich—who is rich in every grace—who is rich in knowledge, in faith, in love, in wisdom, in humility, in meekness, in patience, in self-denial? *Abraham* was rich in faith, and *Moses* was rich in meekness, and *Job* was rich in patience, and *Joshua* was rich in courage, and *David* was rich in uprightness, etc. But where will you find a saint that is rich in all these graces?

Or where will you find a man who is universally rich, in respect of temporals, as to be rich in lands, and rich in moneys, and rich in wares, and rich in jewels, etc. But now the Lord Jesus Christ is universally rich, both in respect of spirituals and temporals. "In having nothing I have all things," says one, "because I have Christ; having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward," etc. [Gregory the Great was accustomed to say that he was poor whose soul was void of grace—not whose coffers were empty of money.]

**(7.) *Seventhly, You may judge of the riches of Christ, by the tribute which is due to him.***

He is the great landlord and owner of all that angels and men possess above and below. All created creatures are but tenants-at-will to this rich

landlord, the Lord Jesus. He puts out and puts in as he pleases; he lifts up one, and casts down another; he throws down the mighty, and sets up the needy—according to the pleasure of his own will. "Whom he will—he destroys, and whom he will—he saves alive," Psalm 113:7; 148:14; Luke 1:52. Whom he will—he binds, and whom he will—he sets at liberty; whom he will—he exalts, and whom he will—he abases; whom he will he makes happy, and whom he will he makes miserable, etc. The psalmist, Psalm 148, upon this account, calls upon all celestial and terrestrial creatures, to pay their tribute of praise to the Lord. He has given them all their beings, and he maintains them all in the beings that he has given them.

The ancient Hebrews, as Josephus relates, set marks and tokens sometimes on their arms, sometimes at their gates—to declare to all the world the tribute and praise that was due to the Lord, for all his benefits and favors shown unto them. Bernard says, "We must imitate the birds, who morning and evening, at the rising and setting of the sun, omit not to pay the debt of praise that is due to their creator."

(8.) *Eighthly* and lastly, **judge of the riches of Christ by the multiplicity and variety of temporal and spiritual gifts and rewards that he scatters among men.** Christ says to the believer, as the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, "I am yours—and all that I have," 1 Kings 20:4. This is a hive which is full of divine comfort.

He gives honors to thousands, and riches to thousands, and peace to thousands, and pardon to thousands, and the joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit to thousands. There is not a moment that passes over our head—but he is a-scattering of his jewels up and down the world; he throws some into one bosom, and others into others—but the best into the bosom of his saints. Oh, the abundance of peace, the abundance of joy and comfort! Oh, the fear, the faith, the love, the kindness, the goodness and sweetness—which the Lord Jesus Christ scatters up and down among the precious sons and daughters of Zion, besides all temporal favors. There is not a saint that receives so much as a cup of cold water—but Christ rewards it abundantly into the bosom of the giver, Mat. 10:42. By all which you may well judge, that certainly the Lord Jesus is very rich, for if he were not, he could never hold out in scattering of rich rewards

among so many millions, and for so many thousand years, as he has done. [The Duke of Burgundy gave a poor man a great reward for offering him a plant root, being the best present the poor man had. And surely so will God bountifully reward the least favors showed to his.]

And so much for the proof of the point, namely, that the Lord Jesus is very rich. We come now in the second place to discover to you,

## **II. The grounds and reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ is held forth in the word to be so very rich.**

And they are these that follow:

[1.] First, ***To encourage poor sinners to look after, and to be willing to match with him.*** [Abraham's servant, to win over the heart of Rebekah to Isaac, brings forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and acquaints her what a rich match she would have by matching with Isaac, and so overcame her, Gen. 24. And so does God deal with poor sinners, etc.]

Poverty hinders many a match. The Lord did foresee from eternity, that fallen man would never look after Christ, if there were not something to be gotten by Christ. The Lord has therefore in his wisdom and goodness to fallen man, thus presented him as one exceeding rich, that so poor sinners might fall in love with him, and be willing to give up themselves to him: Proverbs 8:34-35, "Blessed is the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors;" as guards do at princes' gates and doors. Now, the arguments to draw out the soul thus to wait upon the Lord, lie in the next words, "For whoever finds me finds life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord." The Hebrew runs thus, "For finding me he shall find lives, and shall draw forth the favor of the Lord." Divine favor is as it were a jewel locked up; ay—but by finding Christ, by getting Christ, the soul gets this jewel, that is more worth than a world; yes, by gaining him, the soul gains lives; namely—a life of grace, and a life of glory—and what more would the soul desire?

A *second* ground of this is,

**[2.] *Because he is ordained by the Father to convey all riches of grace to his chosen and beloved ones.***

John 1:16, "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another;" and this we receive by divine ordination. John 6:27, "Labor not," says Christ, "for the food that perishes—but for that which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him has God the Father sealed." God the Father has sealed Christ; [*Sealed*, that is, made his commission authentic, as men do their deeds by their seal.] He has designed Christ, he has set Christ apart for this very work, that he might give grace unto us. God has ordained to convey all fullness of light to the air by the sun, and therefore has put a greater fullness of light into the sun. God has ordained all fullness of nourishment to the branches by the roots, and therefore has put a fullness of juice into the roots. So the Lord has ordained that all the riches of grace, of peace, of glory, etc., which believers shall enjoy here and in heaven, they shall have from the Sun of righteousness, from this blessed root the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore the Father has filled this Sun with light, this root with heavenly juice, because he is by divine ordination to convey all spiritual and glorious riches into the hearts of his chosen and beloved ones, John 15:21-22.

A *third* ground is,

**[3.] *To take away all excuse from ungodly and wicked men, and that they may be found speechless in the day of vengeance, when the Lord shall come to reckon with them.***

[Sirens are said to sing skillfully while they live—but to roar horribly when they die. So will all those who have rejected so rich a Jesus as has been offered to them, when the Lord Jesus shall plead with them, etc.]

Ah, sinners! how will you who have turned your backs upon Christ, who is thus rich—be able to answer in the day when God shall reason the case with you? When God shall say, Sinners, has it not been often told you that Christ is rich in mercy, and rich in goodness, and rich in grace, rich in pardons, rich in loves, and rich in glory, rich in spirituals, rich in temporals, and rich in eternal—*and yet you have slighted this Christ, you have turned your backs upon this Christ—you have preferred your lusts,*

and the world, and the service of the devil, above this Christ. Oh! how dumb, how speechless will sinners be, when the Lord shall thus plead with them. Oh! how will their countenances be changed, their thoughts troubled, and their joints loosed, their consciences enraged, and their souls terrified—when they shall see what a rich match they have refused, and thereupon how justly they are forever accursed, etc.

[4.] *Lastly*, It is upon this account, ***That he may be a complete Redeemer to us, and that nothing may hinder our souls closing with the Lord Jesus Christ.***

We stand in need of one who is rich—rich in **grace** to pardon us, rich in **power** to support us, and rich in **goodness** to relieve us, and rich in **glory** to crown us. There is none but such a Christ can serve our turns. We stand in need of one who is rich, who is universally rich, one who is rich in money to pay all our debts. We have run much in debt with God, and none can pay this score but Christ. Our sins are debts that none can pay but Christ. It is not our tears but his blood, it is not our sighs but his sufferings—which can satisfy justice for our sins. We are much in debt to God for the ground we tread on, the air we breathe in, the beds we lie on, the bread we eat, the clothes we wear, etc.; and none can pay this debt but Christ. Angels and saints may pity us—but they cannot discharge the least debt for us, etc. Christ must pay all—or we are prisoners forever, etc. We stand in need of one who is rich in goodness. We are a needy people, and are still in need. Christ must be still a-giving, or we shall be still a-languishing. If he shuts his hand—we perish and return to dust. Our temporal needs are many, our spiritual needs are more, and if Christ does not supply them, who will? who can? Nay, our needs are so many and so great, that Christ himself could not supply them, were he not very, very rich.

And thus I have given you a brief account of the reasons of the point, why the Lord Jesus is held forth by the Scripture to be so very rich. We shall now come to the third thing proposed, and that is,

**III. The excellency of the riches of Christ—above all other**

## **riches in the world.**

I shall briefly run over this third branch, and so come to the application, which is most in my eye, and upon my heart.

[1.] *First, The riches of Christ are INCOMPARABLE riches.*

"Happy is the man who finds Wisdom," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, "For the profit of wisdom is better than silver, and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. She offers you life in her right hand, and riches and honor in her left. She will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying." Proverbs 3:14-17

One grain of grace is of far greater worth, than all the gold of Ophir and all the silver of the Indies—which are but the guts and garbage of the earth. We may say of the riches of this world, compared with the riches of Christ, as Gideon once said of the vintage of Abiezer, "The gleanings of Ephraim are better than the vintage of Abiezer." So the gleanings, the smallest gatherings of the riches of Christ, are far better, more excellent, more satisfying, more contenting, more ravishing than all the riches of this world. [Riches are called thick clay, Hab. 2:6, which will sooner break the back than lighten the heart, etc.]

"The whole Turkish empire," says Luther, "is but a crust which God throws to a dog." The wise merchant, Mat. 13:44-45, parts with all to gain this pearl of price; the truth is, other riches are but a burden. Gen. 13:2, "Abraham was very *rich* in cattle, in silver, and in gold." The Hebrew is, "He was very *heavy* in cattle, in silver, and in gold"; to signify, that riches are but heavy burdens. **A little will satisfy nature, less will satisfy grace—but nothing will satisfy men's lusts.**

Pheraulus, a poor man, on whom Cyrus bestowed so much, that he knew not what to do with his riches, being wearied out with care in keeping of them, he desired rather to live quietly, though poor, as he had done before, than to possess all those riches with discontent; therefore he gave away all his wealth, desiring only to enjoy so much as might supply his necessities. Let worldly professors think seriously of this story and blush,

etc.

[2.] Secondly, **The riches of Christ are *INEXHAUSTIBLE riches***. As I have showed you, Christ can never be drawn dry. Earthly riches are true gardens of Adonis, where we can gather nothing but trivial flowers surrounded with many briars, etc. "Have you entered into the treasures of the snow?" says God to Job. Now, Gregory of Nyssa says that the treasures of the snow are worldly riches, which men rake together as children do snow, which the next shower washes away, and leaves nothing in the place but dirt; and can dirt satisfy? Surely not! No more can worldly riches.

The Spanish ambassador coming to see the treasury of St. Mark, in Venice, which is famous throughout the world, fell a-groping whether it had any bottom, and being asked why, answered, "In this among other things, my great master's treasure differs from yours, in that his has no bottom, as I find yours to have," alluding to the mines of Mexico and Potosi, etc. Certainly Christ's treasures have no bottom, all his bags are bottomless; but Scripture, history, and experience, do abundantly testify that men's bags, purses, coffers, and mines—may be exhausted or drawn dry—but Christ's can never. Millions of thousands live upon Christ, and he feels it not; his purse is always full, though he is always giving, etc.

[3.] *Thirdly, The riches of Christ are **SOUL-SATISFYING riches***. Oh those riches of grace and goodness that are in Christ—how do they satisfy the souls of sinners! A pardon does not more satisfy a condemned man, nor bread the hungry man, nor drink the thirsty man, nor clothes the naked man, nor health the sick man, than the riches of Christ do satisfy the gracious man.

John 4:13-14, "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water springing up to everlasting life." Grace is a perpetual flowing fountain. Grace is compared to water. Water serves to *cool* men when they are in a burning heat, so grace cools the soul when it has been scorched and burned up under the sense of divine wrath and displeasure. Water is *cleansing*, so is grace; water is *fructifying*, so is grace; and water is

*satisfying*, it satisfies the thirsty, and so does grace. "Show us the Father, and it suffices us," John 14:8. But now earthly riches can never satisfy the soul; but as they said once of Alexander, "that had he a body suitable to his mind, he would set one foot upon sea, and the other upon land;" he would reach the east with one hand, and the west with the other. And doubtless the same frame of spirit is to be found in all the sons of Adam.

In Eccles. 5:10, "He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with increase. This is also vanity." If a man is *hungry*, silver cannot feed him; if *naked*, it cannot clothe him; if *cold*, it cannot warm him; if *sick*, it cannot cure him—much less then is it able to satisfy him. Oh! but the riches of Christ are soul-satisfying riches. A soul rich in spirituals, rich in eternal, says, *I have enough, though I have not this and that temporal good, etc.* [The reasonable soul may be *busied* about other things—but it cannot be *filled* with them, etc.—Bernard.]

[4.] *Fourthly, The riches of Christ are HARMLESS riches.* They are riches that will not hurt the soul, that will not harm the soul. Where is there a soul to be found in all the world that was ever made worse by spiritual riches? Oh but earthly riches have cast down many, they have slain many. If poverty, with Saul, has killed her thousands, riches, with David, has killed her ten thousands. Eccles. 5:13, "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." Earthly riches are called thorns, and well they may; for as thorns, they pierce both head and heart; the head with cares in getting them, and the heart with grief in parting with them. Oh the souls that riches have pierced through and through with many sorrows! Oh the minds that riches have blinded! Oh the hearts that riches have hardened! Oh the consciences that riches have benumbed! Oh the wills that riches have perverted! Oh the affections that riches have disordered and destroyed! Earthly riches are very vexing, very defiling, very dividing, and to multitudes prove very ruining. "For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:10. [Some say where gold grows, no plant will prosper; so no truth, no good, etc., will have any heart-room where the love of money prevails, etc.]

It was a wise and Christian speech of Charles the Fifth to the Duke of

Venice, who, when he had showed him the glory of his princely palace and earthly paradise, instead of admiring it, or him for it, only returned him this grave and serious memento, *These are the things which make us unwilling to die.*

[5.] *Fifthly, The riches of Christ are UNSEARCHABLE riches.* This is plain in the text, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." There are riches of justification, riches of sanctification, riches of consolation, and riches of glorification in Christ. All the riches of Christ are unsearchable riches. A saint with all the light that he has from the Spirit of Christ, is not able to search to the bottom of these riches. Nay, suppose that all the perfections of angels and saints in a glorified estate should meet in one noble bosom—yet all those perfections could not enable that glorious glorified creature for to search to the bottom of Christ's unsearchable riches. Doubtless when believers come to heaven, when they shall see God face to face, when they shall know as they are known, when they shall be filled with the fullness of God, even then they will sweetly sing this song, "Oh the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ!" As there is no Christ to this Christ, so there are no riches to his riches, etc. Oh but such are not the riches of this world, they may be reckoned, they may be fathomed, etc. [The philosophers seeing to the very bottom of earthly riches, despised them, and preferred a contemplative life above them.]

[6.] *Sixthly, The riches of the Lord Jesus Christ are permanent and abiding riches; they are lasting, they are DURABLE riches.* That is a choice scripture, Proverbs 8:18, "Riches and honor are with me, yes, durable riches and righteousness." The Hebrew word that is rendered "*durable riches*" signifies old riches. All other riches are but new, they are but of yesterday as it were. Oh! but with me are old riches, durable riches. All other riches, in respect of their fickleness, are as a shadow, a bird, a ship, an arrow, a dream, a post, etc. [It is reported of one Myrogenes, when great gifts were sent him, he sent them back, saying, I only desire this one thing at your master's hands, to pray for me, that I may be saved for eternity, etc.] This Valerian, Valens, and Bajazet, three proud emperors, found by experience, and so have many kings, and

generals, and nobles, as Scripture and history do abundantly evidence. Earthly riches are very **uncertain**, 1 Tim. 6:17. They are ever upon the wing; they are like tennis balls, which are bandied up and down from one to another. As the bird hops from twig to twig, so do riches from man to man. This age can furnish us with multitudes of instances of this nature, etc.

[7.] *Seventhly* and lastly, **The riches of Christ are *the most USEFUL riches***—*to sweeten all other riches, mercies, and changes*, etc., which speaks out the excellency of these riches above all other riches. The more useful anything is, the more excellent it is. Now the riches of Christ are of all things the most useful to poor souls. When the soul is under the guilt of sin, nothing relieves it like the riches of Christ. When the soul is surrounded with temptations, nothing strengthens it like the riches of Christ. When the soul is mourning under afflictions, nothing comforts it like the riches of Christ. When all earthly good fails, nothing makes a Christian sing care away like the riches of Christ, etc. The riches of Christ sweeten all other riches that men enjoy. [Earthly riches cannot enrich the soul, nor better the soul. Oftentimes under silk and satin apparel there is a threadbare soul.]

If a man be rich in parts, or rich in grace, rich in faith, rich in knowledge, rich in wisdom, rich in joy, rich in peace, etc.; or if a man be rich in temporals, rich in money, rich in wares, rich in jewels, rich in lands, etc., the glorious and unsearchable riches of Christ sweeten all his riches, and the lack of these riches embitters all the riches which men enjoy. When men's consciences are enlightened and awakened, then they cry out, what are all these worldly riches to us, except we had an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ? As Absalom once said, "What are all these to me, except I see the king's face?"

I have read of one that, upon his dying bed, called for his bags, and laid a bag of gold to his heart, and then cried out, "Take it away, it will not do, it will not do."

There are things that earthly riches can never do:  
They can never satisfy divine justice.  
They can never pacify divine wrath.

Nor they can never quiet a guilty conscience.

And until these things are done, man is undone. The crown of gold cannot cure the headache, nor can the honorable ring cure the gout, nor can the chain of pearls around the neck take away the pain of the teeth. Oh but the unsearchable riches of Christ give ease under all pains and torments.

Nugas, the Scythian king, despising the rich presents and ornaments that were sent unto him by the emperor of Constantinople, asked "Whether those things could drive away calamities, diseases, or deaths?" looking upon all those presents as no presents, that could not keep off calamities from him. Truly, all the riches and glories of this world cannot keep off the least calamity, neither can they make up the lack of the least mercy. But the riches of Christ do both keep off calamities, and make up the lack of all mercies that the soul craves or needs. All which speak out the excellency of the riches of Christ above all other riches. We come now unto,

#### ***IV. The USES and APPLICATION of this point.***

Use 1. And the first use that we shall make, is a use of **exhortation, to exhort you all, seeing Christ is so rich, to labor to be spiritually rich.** Oh labor to be rich in grace. In the handling of this use I shall propound this method.

[1.] I shall lay down some considerations that may provoke your souls to labor to be rich in grace.

[2.] I shall propound some directions or helps, to help you to be rich in grace, which is as much a mercy as a duty, etc.

[3.] I shall lay down some propositions concerning the soul's being rich in grace.

[4.] I shall show you how you may know whether you are the people who are rich in grace, or no.

I shall begin with the first, and be a little the more large upon it, because it is a point of mighty weight and concern; and then be the more brief in the three following particulars.

For the first, by way of **MOTIVE**, I shall only propound these following considerations, to provoke your souls to labor to be rich in grace. *Laborandum* was one of the emperors' motto, and must be every Christian's.

[1.] *First, Consider that the more rich the soul is in grace, the higher the soul will be in joy and comfort.* [Oh the joys, the joys, the unconceivable joys! cried out Katharine Bretterge, who had attained to a great measure of grace, etc.]

It is the greatest measures of grace, which usher in the greatest measure of joy and comfort into a believing heart. Christians, have you tasted of the consolations of God? Have you at times sat down and drank of these wells of salvation? Are your hearts carried out for more of those waters of life? Then labor to be rich in grace. A little star yields but a little light, and a little grace will yield but a little comfort—but great measures of grace will yield a man not only a heaven hereafter—but also a heaven of joy here. Divine comfort is a choice flower, a precious jewel, and only to be found in their bosoms who are rich in grace. Spiritual comforts are such strong waters, that weak Christians are not able to bear them. Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest evidence of the truth of grace; and the clearer evidence there is in the soul of the truth of grace, the higher will joy and comfort spring. The soul is apt to hang her comforts on every hedge, to seek in every by-corner for comfort; but as fuel heats not without fire, so neither can anything soundly comfort a Christian without the God of grace, without his being rich in grace.

Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest evidence of a man's union and communion with God, and the more a man's union and communion with God is evidenced, the more will the soul be filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, and with that comfort and peace which passes understanding. In great measures of grace a man may read most of the love and favor of God; and the more a man sees of the love and favor of God to him, the more high the springs of comfort rise in

him. In great measures of grace, as in a crystal glass, the soul sees the glorious face of God shining and sparkling—and this fills the soul with joy. Acts 9:31, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." The more their graces were increased, the more their comforts were augmented.

"If one drop of the joy of the Holy Spirit should fall into hell, it would swallow up all the torments of hell," says Austin. Oh! who would not then labor to increase in grace, that he may abound in joy? The promise lies most fair before the eyes of those who are rich in grace. Their interest in it is most clear, and rarely that they go without it, unless it is by taking part sometimes with Satan against their interest in Christ, or sometimes through the power of unbelief, which indeed cuts off all the comfort of the soul, or by looking after other lovers, or by not hearkening to the voice of the Comforter, etc. Christians, you often complain of the lack of joy and comfort. Oh! do but abound in grace, and you won't complain of the lack of comfort. "Without delight the soul cannot live," says one; "take away all delight, and the soul dies." Let this that has been spoken, provoke every Christian to labor to be rich in grace.

[2.] But, *secondly*, consider this, ***you have singular opportunities and choice advantages to be rich in grace.***

In former times God gave our grace by drops—but now by flagons, Cant. 2:5. Opportunities, if not improved, will, as that sword which Hector gave Ajax, be turned into your own heart. This will be a sword in your heart—that there have been soul-enriching opportunities, and you have neglected them, and turned your back upon them. The thoughts of this will one day be the scorpions that will vex you, the rod that will lash you, the thorns that will prick you, and the worm that will gnaw you. "The stork," says the prophet, "knows the time of her migration, as do the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane. They all return at the proper time each year. But not my people! They do not know what the Lord requires of them" Jer. 8:7. The market for your souls is open; do not let your season slip away, lest with the foolish virgins you go to buy when it is too late, Mat. 25. The merchant will not slip his opportunity of buying, nor the sailor his of sailing, nor the farmer his of sowing; and why should you

slip yours of growing rich in grace? Many men lose their souls, as Saul lost his kingdom—by not discerning their time to be spiritually rich.

Tamerlane at first hung out a white flag—but if they slipped that opportunity, then a red, and so death and destruction followed, etc. The Lord Jesus hangs out the white flag of mercy in these days, to entice souls to come in, and to share with him in his glorious and unsearchable riches, in the riches of his grace and mercy; but if you don't come, Christ has a red flag, and if that be once put out, you are lost forever. Thrice happy are those who take the first opportunity of closing with Christ, and of subjecting themselves to Christ. [Such there have been who, by giving a glass of water opportunely, have obtained a kingdom, as you may see in the story of Thaumastus and king Agrippa, etc.]

Plutarch writes of Hannibal, "That when he *could* have taken Rome he *would* not—but when he *would* have taken Rome he *could* not." When many men may have mercy—they would not receive it; and when they would have mercy—they will be refused. Proverbs 1:24, *seq.* Mercy and grace are sometimes upon the bare knee. Christ stands knocking at sinners' doors; he is willing to come in and make sinners rich and happy forever; he calls upon souls to open to him, Rev. 3:20, *seq.* "Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle," Psalm 24:7-8. The King of glory comes not empty-handed; no, he comes with his hands and heart full of rich and royal presents, and blessed and enriched forever are those who open to this King of glory, etc.

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider this, ***souls rich in grace shall have their names immortal.***

Every man naturally would have, if it were possible, his name immortal. Now there is no way in the world to have your names immortal, like this of growing rich in grace. A man who is spiritually rich shall live—and his name shall live when he is dead. In Neh. 7:2, it is said of Hananiah, that "he was a faithful man, and feared God above many;" or, "he feared God above multitudes," as the Hebrew has it. His name lives, though his body for many hundred years has been turned to dust. So in Acts 7:55,

"Stephen was a man full of the Holy Spirit." Though Stephen was stoned—yet his name lives, his memorial is precious among the saints to this very day. So in Heb. 11:38, they were such "of whom this world was not worthy." And in the third Epistle of John, the six first verses, compared with ver. 12, Gaius and Demetrius, who were rich in grace, have crowns of honor set upon their heads, their names live, and are a sweet savor to this very day, etc. So in Psalm 112:6, "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance—but the name of the wicked shall rot." The great man's name, and the rich man's name, shall rot, says he—but "the name of the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." [If I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough, said Plautus.]

The Persians use to write their kings' names in golden letters; so the Lord writes the names of souls rich in grace in golden characters. Their names are always heirs to their lives. Believe it, there is no such way in the world to have immortal names, like this of growing rich in grace. One man thinks to make his name immortal, by making himself great; another by heaping up silver and gold as the dust of the earth or the stones of the street; and another by doing some strange exploits, etc. But for all this the Lord will make good his word, "the name of the wicked shall rot." If God is God, his name must rot; but "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance;" they leave their names behind for a blessing, Isaiah 65:15. It is sad to consider what many poor carnal creatures have done and suffered to make their names immortal. The Romans' desires of praise and a name, made them bountiful of their purses, and prodigal of their lives. [A good name yields a fragrant smell over town and country; it puts a shining luster upon the countenance; it fits to any public employment, in ministry or magistracy; it stops many a foul mouth, and it makes men live when they are dead.]

Erostratus set the temple of Diana on fire, on that night that Alexander was born—only that he might be talked of when he was dead.

Calvin observes, that Servetus in Geneva, in the year 1555, gave all his goods to the poor, and his body to be burned—and all for a name, for a little glory among men. But these poor creatures have all missed the mark. There is no way, Christians, to have your names immortal, like this, of growing rich in grace. Neither Satan nor the world shall ever be able to

bury such men's names, who are rich in grace; their names shall rise in glory here, as well as their bodies hereafter.

[4.] But then, *fourthly* and mainly, consider, ***that spiritual riches will enable you to live up to your principles.***

That man who has but so much grace as will keep hell and his soul asunder, will never live up to his principles. Souls weak in grace are too apt to deny, and in their practices to contradict—their own principles. Oh that this age could not furnish us with too many instances of this nature! Oh! what is that that is the reproach of religion, and the dishonor of God and the gospel—but this, that professors live below their principles, that they live not up to their principles? And let me tell you, Christians, **there is nothing but a rich measure of grace that will enable a soul to live up to his principles.** A man who is not rich in grace will never be able to live up to his own principles—but will upon every occasion and temptation be ready to wound two at once; the honor of God and his own soul. Yes, men who are not rich in grace, will be ready to deny their own principles—as many weak Christians did in persecuting times.

But you will say to me, ***What are those gracious and holy principles, that a rich measure of grace will enable a man to live up to?***

I will instance only in those who have most worth and weight in them, and they are worthy of all your thoughts.

(1.) *First*, It is your principle, that **you must suffer, rather than sin.**

It is your principle rather to undergo the greatest calamities, than willingly to commit the least iniquity. Now, pray tell me, what will enable a Christian to live up to this principle? Will a *little* grace, a little knowledge of God, a little faith in God, a little love to God, a little zeal for God, a little communion with God? Will this do it? Surely not! It must be much grace that must enable the soul to live up to this principle. [It is better for me to be a martyr than a monarch, said Ignatius when he was to suffer, etc.] When sin and suffering have stood in competition, many weak Christians have chosen rather to sin, than to suffer, which has

opened many a mouth, and saddened many a heart, and wounded many a conscience. Yes, such by their not suffering, have suffered more than ever they could have suffered from the wrath and rage of man.

Oh! but now spiritual riches will enable a man to live up to this principle, as you may see in Daniel, who had an excellent spirit in him, who was rich in grace, and filled with the Holy Spirit; he lives up to his principles; he lives out his principles, when he was put hard to it; when he must either neglect the worship of his God and make a god of his king—or be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Daniel chooses rather to be cast into the lions' den than not to do homage to his God; he had rather suffer much, than that God should lose a grain of his glory. Of the same spirit and metal were those worthies, Heb. 11, who, when they were put to it, did rather choose to suffer the very worst of miseries, than they would in the least dishonor the Lord, wound their own consciences, and make work for repentance, etc. And so did Jovinian, Eusebius, Galeacius, Basil, Vincentius, Bolilas, etc. By all which you see, that Christians who are spiritually rich, live up to this principle, namely—to suffer rather than sin, when sin and suffering stand in competition; which babes in grace cannot do. [Of the very same spirit were the primitive Christians: they chose rather to be thrown to lions without, than left to lusts within.]

(2.) *Secondly*, It is your principle, ***that grace and virtue are to be pursued after, for their own worth, beauty, and excellency.***

But pray, tell me, what will carry a Christian out to this principle? Will a *little* grace carry a man out to pursue after grace, for the beauty, holiness, excellency, and spirituality that is in it? Alas! we see by daily experience that it will not do it. All other considerations put together, are little enough to draw men on to pursue after grace for its native beauty and excellency. Many seek Christ—but it is more for loaves—than for love, John 6:26; and they pursue after the means of grace, not for the beauty, excellency, and glory that is stamped upon the means—but one to maintain his honor, and another to keep up his name, and another to bring in credit or custom, and another to please his friends, and another to silence his conscience, etc.—but few there be, if any—but those who are rich in grace, who are true to this principle, who pursue after grace for its own beauty and excellency.

It was a notable expression of David, who was a man rich in grace, Psalm 119:140, "Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it." Oh! for a soul to love grace, and the word of grace, for its own interest, for the holiness, purity, and glory of it. This speaks out the soul to be rich in grace. So Paul, a man rich in grace, pursues after grace for its own interest, for the beauty and excellency of it. He forgets "what is behind, and presses forward after the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead," Philip. 3:13-14. That is, to that perfection that the dead shall reach to in the morning of the resurrection, etc.

The young philosophers were very forward to learn the precepts of their sect, and the rules of severity, that they might discourse with kings and nobles, not that they might reform their own manners. Many professors in this age are like those philosophers; they are very industrious to get knowledge, that they may be able to discourse, and that they may be eyed, owned, and honored among others, for their knowledge and understanding. But now souls who are rich in grace, they labor after greater measures of grace, out of love to grace, and because of an excellency that they see in grace. **Grace is a very sparkling jewel, and he who loves it, and pursues after it for its own native beauty, has much of it within him,** etc.

(3.) *Thirdly*, It is your principle, ***that men must subject themselves, and square all their actions by the word of God.***

Now, what will make a man live up to this principle? Will a *little* grace? Surely not! Isaiah 8:10. But great measures of grace will. Zacharias and Elizabeth were rich in grace, and they lived up to this principle: Luke 1:5, "They walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless." The apostles were rich in grace, and they lived up to this principle: 2 Cor. 1:12, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have lived our lives in the world." So in 1 Thes. 2:10, "You are witnesses, and God also, how holily, justly, and unblameably, we have behaved ourselves among you who believe." Oh! here are souls who live up to their principles. A Christian who is rich in grace is excellent all over.

George, prince of Anhalt—his family is said to have been *ecclesia, academia, curia*, a church, a university, and a court. A Christian who is rich in grace has a heart as large as his head, yes, a heart that is as large as the whole will of God: Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who shall fulfill all my will." In the Greek it is, *all my wills*, to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience. Souls rich in grace practice that themselves, which they prescribe to others. Lessons of music must not be read only—but acted also. Souls rich in grace are good at this, and they will be good in all places and cases. They are as good at the particular duties of religion, as at those who are more general; they are good fathers, and good masters, and good husbands—as well as good Christians, in a more general sense.

But now souls who have but a *little* grace, they are much in the general duties of religion—but very defective in the particular duties of religion, as sad experience does abundantly evidence. Those who have a blemish in their eye, think the sky to be ever cloudy; and nothing is more common to weak spirits, than to be criticizing and contending about other duties, and to neglect their own. But such who are rich in grace, make it their glory to subject themselves to the rule of righteousness; as Baldasser, a German minister, cried out, *Let the word of the Lord come, let it come—and we will submit to it*. It must be much grace that must enable a man freely, fully, and sweetly to subject himself and his actions to the word of the Lord.

(4.) *Fourthly*, It is your principle, **that you must deny yourselves, your own profit, ease, pleasure, etc., for a public good.**

And this the Scripture requires. It is your principle to deny yourselves, your own honor, pleasure, profit, etc., for a public advantage, when your particular advantages stand in competition with the public. Now self must be laid by, and the public must carry the day. Oh—but will a little grace enable a man to live up to this principle! Woeful experience shows the contrary. Ay—but now, give me a man who is rich in grace, and he will live up to this golden principle, as you may see in Nehem. 5:14-18.

**Nehemiah** was a man eminent in grace, and he chose rather to live upon his own purse than upon the public purse: "I would like to mention that

for the entire twelve years that I was governor of Judah—from the twentieth until the thirty-second year of the reign of King Artaxerxes—neither I nor my officials drew on our official food allowance. This was quite a contrast to the former governors who had laid heavy burdens on the people, demanding a daily ration of food and wine, besides a pound of silver. Even their assistants took advantage of the people. But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way. I devoted myself to working on the wall and refused to acquire any land. And I required all my officials to spend time working on the wall. I asked for nothing, even though I regularly fed 150 Jewish officials at my table, besides all the visitors from other lands! The provisions required at my expense for each day were one ox, six fat sheep, and a large number of domestic fowl. And every ten days we needed a large supply of all kinds of wine. Yet I refused to claim the governor's food allowance because the people were already having a difficult time."

Oh, here was a brave spirit indeed; he was far from enriching himself by others' ruins, from emptying others' purses to fill his own. But he is dead—and it seems this brave spirit is buried with him! There are few of his name, and fewer of his spirit, if any in this world, and therefore well might he pray, "Remember, O my God, all that I have done for these people, and bless me for it." And accordingly God did remember him for good—and made him very famous and glorious in his generation. [It is a base and unworthy spirit for a man to make himself the center of all his actions. The very heathen man could say, A man's country and his friends, and others—challenge a great part of him.]

And that is a remarkable passage concerning **Moses**: Num. 14:12-21, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of you a great nation, and mightier than they," says God to Moses. "Therefore let me alone to destroy them and cut them off, for they are a rebellious generation. And I will make you a mightier nation for honor, riches, and power, than they. Nay!" says Moses, "this may not be, Lord." Oh, the people must be spared, the people must be pardoned, and the people must have your presence with them, and rather than it should be otherwise, let my name, Lord, be blotted out of the book of life. Lord! I care not how bad it goes with myself—just so they may live. Can the self-

seekers of our age think seriously of this and not blush?

So **Mordecai** was a man of a brave public spirit: Esther 10:3, "Mordecai the Jew was next unto King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, because he worked for the good of his people." He made it his business to seek their good.

**Christ** also was full of grace, and had a brave public spirit; he laid out himself and laid down himself for a public good; and so did Paul, etc. Few in our days are of Lorenzo's opinion and mind—who was rather willing to beautify Italy than his own house. "That pilot dies nobly," says Seneca, "who perishes in the storm with the helm in his hand." Such that seek themselves more than the public good, must be served as Aesop did his fellow-servant; he gave him warm water to drink, by which means he vomited up the stolen figs. Friends, it is not a little grace that will make a man prefer the public good, above his own particular good—but much grace will; therefore labor to be rich in grace. [Christ healed others—but was hurt himself; he fed and filled others—but was hungry himself, etc.]

(5.) *Fifthly*, It is your principle, ***that you are to do the duties that God requires of you, and quietly leave the outcomes and results of all, to the wise disposal of God.***

But pray tell me, will a *little* grace enable a man to live up to this principle, to do his duty, and to leave outcomes and results to him to whom they belong? Surely not! Eccles. 9:10, "Whatever your *hand* finds to do—do it with all your might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you go." Mark, he does not say, what your *head* finds to do, for that may find a thousand things; nor what your *heart* finds to do, for that may find ten thousand things; but what your *hand* finds to do; that is, look what work which God cuts out to your hand to do—that do with all your might.

We are to do much good in a little time; we are made here, and set to be a-doing something that may do us good a thousand years hence, yes, that may stand us in stead to eternity. Our time is short, our task is great. The devil knows that his time is but short, and that is the reason why he is so active and stirring, why he does outwork the children of light, in a quick

despatch of the deeds of darkness. Christians, do not deceive yourselves; it is not *shows* of grace, nor little measures of grace—which will enable a man to live up to this principle—but great measures of grace will, as you may see in the three Hebrew children, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king—O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Daniel 3:16-18

So those worthies, Psalm 44:19, "Though you have sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death—yet have we not forgotten you, neither have we dealt falsely in your covenant." Here was much of Christ and grace within. So in Acts 21, when Paul was to go up to Jerusalem to suffer, his friends, by many tears and arguments, labored to dissuade him, for fear of some sad outcome and event which would follow. But Paul, rich in grace, answered, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." I will go up to Jerusalem, and I am willing to go up, though I die for it. Ay, here is a soul who lives up to his principle!

Ay—but now souls who are weak in grace, as we have had large experience of it in our times, they are more taken up and busied about the outcomes and results of things, than they are with their own duties. [Christ healed others—but was hurt himself; he fed and filled others—but was hungry himself, etc.] When they should be a-praying, a-believing, a-waiting, and acting for God—they have been a-questioning and fearing what the outcomes and results of this, and that, and the other thing would be. And indeed they have been high and low, as secondary causes have wrought—which has made many of their lives a very hell. But now those who are rich in grace, they say as once he did, "Let us be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do that which seems him good," 2 Sam. 10:10-12. **Let us do our duties—and let the Lord do as pleases him,** etc.

(6.) *Sixthly*, It is your principle, *that men are to be prepared, and to*

***stand fast against all sudden assaults and invasions that may be made upon them.***

Many a valiant person dares fight in a battle or a duel, who yet will be timorous and fearful if suddenly surprised in a midnight alarm. Many precious souls, when they have time to consider of the evil of sin, the holiness of God, the eye of God, the honor of God, the glory of the gospel, the joys of the saints, and the stopping of the mouths of sinners—will rather die than sin; they will rather suffer anything than do the least thing that may be a reproach to Christ. Oh! but when a *sudden* occasion or temptation is presented, why, then they often fall; as David, by chance, spied Bathsheba washing herself, and falls before the temptation; he is conquered and carried captive by that sudden occasion.

But that is a more comfortable and considerable passage that you have concerning Joseph, in Gen. 49:23-24, "The archers sorely grieved him," says the text, "and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Joseph never lacked counsel nor courage, when he was at the worst. Souls rich in grace usually stand firm under the greatest and suddenest pressures, assaults, and invasions, as you may see in Paul, 2 Cor. 1:9-12; and so the three children; and so Daniel; and so those worthies, Heb. 11:35, "They would not accept of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Many sudden assaults and attempts were made upon them; their enemies would gladly have stormed them, and overcome them—sometimes by golden offers, sometimes by terrible threats. But they are invincible; nothing stirs them, nothing overcomes them.

Really, friends, it must be much grace that will make a man live up to this principle; and there is nothing that speaks out more the strength of grace in a man, than his standing against sudden assaults and invasions that by the devil and the world are made upon him. You may *talk* of this—but without much grace you will never be able to *do* it, etc.

(7.) *Seventhly* and lastly, It is your principle, ***that your hearts are to be ready for every work which God shall impose upon you.***

You are not to choose your employment, neither are you to refuse any employment that God shall put upon you. You are always to have an open ear, a ready hand, an obedient heart, and a willing cheerful soul—to comply with whatever work or service it is, which God shall put upon you; this is your principle. Ay—but tell me, Christians, will a *little* grace enable a man to live up to this principle? I judge not. You are to stand ready to change your employment from better to worse, if the Lord shall be pleased to order it so. You are to be ready to change your crown—for a cross; to change that employment that is honorable—for that which is base and low; and that which is more profitable—for that which is less profitable: as it were from the ruling of a province—to the keeping of a herd; from being a master—to be a servant; from being a servant to great men—to be a servant to the basest servant, yes, to the poorest beast. Certainly a *little* grace will never enable a man bravely and sweetly to live up to this principle. Their hearts which are poor in grace, are like a wounded hand or arm, which being but imperfectly cured, can only move one way, and cannot turn to all postures and all natural uses.

Weak Christians are very apt to choose three things—their mercies, their crosses, and their employments. They are often unwilling that God himself should choose their way or their work.

But now souls who are rich in grace—they are at God's beck and call. They are willing that God shall choose their work and their way. They are willing to be at his disposal; to be high or low; to serve or to be served; to be something or to be nothing, etc. Now I beseech you, Christians, that you would seriously and frequently remember this, that there is nothing in all the world that is such an honor to God, and a glory to the gospel—as for Christians to live up to their principles; nor is there anything of such a reproach to God and his ways, as this—for men to live below their principles, and to act contrary to their principles. And you will never be able to live up to your principles, nor to live out your principles, except you grow rich in grace; therefore labor, I say, labor as for life, to abound in grace, etc.

[5.] Now the fifth motive is this, ***consider that souls rich in grace are a mighty blessing to the land and place where they live.***

There are no such blessings to cities, and nations, as those souls are, who are rich in grace. Oh they are great blessings to all places where they come; they are people who are fit for the highest and noblest employments. There is not the **highest** work that is too high for a man who is rich in grace; nor the **hottest** work that is too hot for a man rich in grace; nor the **lowest** work that is below a man rich in grace. Such a man will not say, I would do it—but it is below my place, my nobility, my parts, my education. *May Christ have honor? may others have good? If so, I will do it,* says the soul who is rich in grace, *whatever comes of it, and bless God for the opportunity.*

Dan. 6:3, "Now **Daniel** so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom." Why was Daniel set upon the throne? Because of his his exceptional qualities, which fitted him for the highest employment.

So **Joseph** was a blessing to his master's family, and the people among whom he lived. None can be such blessings to people and places, as souls rich in grace. So in Neh. 7:2, "I gave the responsibility of governing Jerusalem to my brother Hanani." And why he? "because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do." Oh the wisdom, the prudence, the zeal, the courage, the compassion, the patience, the self-denial—that should be in magistrates! There is a truth in that old maxim, magistracy will try a man. None fit to rule—but such who are rich in grace; such a one will be father of his country.

What a world of good may a man do with worldly riches, in a parish, in a city, in a nation! but that is nothing compared to the good that a man may do, who is rich in grace. Oh the sins that he may prevent! Oh the judgments that he may divert! Oh the favors and blessings that he may draw down upon the heads and hearts of people! I presume you forget not what a blessing Moses, Joseph, Job, Nehemiah, Mordecai, and Daniel, proved to the people among whom they lived; and these were all rich in grace. A man rich in wisdom, rich in faith, rich in goodness, etc., oh what a blessing may he prove to ignorant souls, to staggering souls, to wandering souls, to tempted souls, to deserted souls, etc.

Look! What the sun is to us, that may a soul rich in grace be to others, etc. O friends! would you be blessings to your families? would you be blessings to the city, to the nation? Oh then labor to be rich in grace, and do not think it enough that you have so much grace as will keep you from dropping into hell, and which will bring you to heaven; but labor to be rich in grace, and then you will prove indeed a blessing to the place and nation where you live.

The Romans, when they did perceive any natural excellency to be in any people, though they were never so poor and base—they would take them from their dinners of turnips and water-cresses, to lead the Roman army. It is true, that **natural and moral endowments will enable men to do much; but grace will enable men to do ten thousand times more.** There is no work too high nor too hard for souls rich in grace; and therefore, as you would be choice instruments in the Lord's hand, and eminently serviceable in your generations, oh labor to be rich in grace! It is not he who has most wit in his head—but he who has most grace in his heart—who is most fit for generation-work.

[6.] Sixthly, ***A rich measure of grace will bear up your souls in several cases, therefore labor to be rich in grace.***

A rich measure of grace will bear up the soul under great **means of grace.** When a soul is spiritually rich, this will bear him up under great means. Such a one will be able to look God in the face with joy and comfort; he can say, *It is true, Lord, I have had more means than others, and lo! I am grown richer than others. You have taken more pains with me than with others, and lo! I bring forth more fruit than others: my five talents have become ten.* But a little grace will not bear men out under much means of grace.

Again, A great measure of grace will bear the soul up under a great **name**, as well as under great means. For a man to have a great name to live, and yet to have but a little life—is a dreadful stroke; to be high in name and little in worth—is a very sad and sore judgment. [What will the name avail, where the thing is lacking? says Augustine.] To have a name to be an eminent Christian, and yet to be poor in faith, in love, in wisdom, in knowledge, etc., is the greatest unhappiness in the world. This stroke is

upon many in these days. But that which is saddest of all is this—they feel it not, they observe it not. But now he who is rich in grace, has something within which will bear him up under a great name in the world.

Again, a great measure of grace will bear you up under great **desires**, as well as under a great name. A man who is rich in grace may ask what he pleases; he is one much involved with God, and God will deny him nothing. The best of the best is for this man; he may have anything; he may have everything that heaven affords. He is able to improve much, and therefore he may ask much, and have it.

It was a sweet saying of one, "O Lord, I never come to you but by you. I never go from you without you." Sozomen says of Apollonius, that he never asked anything of God—but he had it.

And another, speaking of Luther, says, He could have what he wanted from God. Rich men may long for this and that, and have it; they have something that will fetch it—but poor men may not. Oh! now, who would not labor as for life, to be rich in grace? Oh! this will bear you out under great means, and under great names, and under great desires; therefore, rest not satisfied with a little grace.

But then, seventhly and lastly,

**[7.] *Souls rich in grace are the honor of Christ, and the glory of Christianity.***

It is the glory of Christ when those who are ingrafted into him thrive and grow. This declares to all the world that Christ keeps a good house, and that he does not feed his children with trash—but with the choicest delicacies; that he is open-handed and free-hearted. It is the glory of the father when the child grows rich under him, and the glory of the master when the servant grows rich under him; and so it is the glory of Christ when poor souls grow rich under him. The name of Christ, and the honor of Christ, is kept up in the world by souls who are rich in grace. They are the people who make others think well and speak well of Christ.

You may at your leisure read the first and second epistles to the

Thessalonians, and there you shall see what an honor they were to the Lord Jesus and the gospel, who abounded in spiritual riches. Such Christians who are like to Pharaoh's lean kine reproach three at once—God, the gospel, and their teachers: and this age is full of such Christians. It is your greatest work in this world to keep up the honor and the glory of the Lord, and this you can never, you will never do, except you labor to be rich in grace. Let others "labor for the food which perishes." You are to "labor for that which endures to everlasting life." When you come to die, and when you come to make up your accounts, it will never be a grief—but a joy unto you, that you have made it your greatest business and work in this world to be rich in grace.

But here you may say,

***What MEANS must we use that we may grow rich in grace?***

I answer:

[1.] First, ***Let no discouragements take you off from laboring to be enriched with spiritual riches.***

A soul who would be spiritually rich must be divinely resolved, that come what may—he will hold on in the use of means, that he may be rich with the riches of Christ. Joshua was resolute in this point: "Choose whom you will serve, whether the Lord, or those other gods that your fathers served. As for my part, I and my house will serve the Lord!" Josh. 24:15; Luke 13:24, "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate." The Greek word signifies, "to strive with all your might," with all your strength, to strive even to an agony, to strive as they did for the garlands in the Olympic games. The word here used seems to allude to their striving for the garland, where they put out themselves to the utmost. So in John 6:27, "Labor not for the food which perishes—but for that which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." [Many men are like Cicero, not thoroughly resolved in themselves whether to follow Pompey or Caesar; the riches of this world, or the riches of another world. Such men will still be poor.]

I have read of one that did not fear what he did, nor what he suffered, so

he might get riches: "For," says he, "men do not ask how good one is, or how gracious one is—but how rich one is." Oh, sirs! the day is a-coming when God will ask how rich your *souls* are; how rich you are in faith, in wisdom, in knowledge, in fear, etc.; and not how rich you are in money, or in jewels, or in land, or in goods—but how rich are you in *grace*! This should provoke your souls to strive in the face of all discouragements to be rich in grace. What will not the merchant do, and the mariner do, to gain these temporal riches? Oh the dangers, the hazards, the tempests, the storms, the deaths that they run through for earthly riches—which are never without their sting! And shall not Christians labor in the face of all oppositions after spiritual riches?

It is reported of Nevessan the lawyer, that he would say, "He who will not venture his body—can never be valiant; and he who will not venture his soul—will never be rich." I am sure that man who will not venture, and venture hard, in the face of all discouragements, to be spiritually rich—will never be rich. He may be good in the main, and may go to heaven in a storm; but he will never be rich in spirituals, who will not venture himself to the uttermost for the gain of spiritual riches.

[2.] Secondly, ***Be fixed under a Christ-exalting and a soul-enriching ministry.***

Fix yourself under that man's ministry, who makes it his business; not a thing by the by—but his business, his work; not to tickle the ear, to please the fancy—but to enrich the soul, to win the soul, and to build up the soul. 2 Tim. 4:3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine—but after their own lusts shall they heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears." This age, yes, this city is full of such slight, light, delirious souls—who neither like nor love anything, but what is empty and airy.

Junius confesses, "that in his time there was one who confessed that he had spent over twenty years in trying different religions," pretending that scripture, "Try all things, and hold fast that which is good." It is sad to see how many preachers in our days, under pretenses of angelical attainments, make it their business to enrich men's heads with high, empty, airy notions—instead of enriching their souls with saving truths. If

these are not strangers to that wisdom that is from above, I know nothing. Proverbs 11:30, "He who wins souls is wise." The Hebrew word signifies to catch souls, by using all art and industry, as fowlers do to take birds. [**He is the best preacher, not who tickles the ear—but who breaks the heart!**] No wisdom compared to that which wins souls from sin and the world, and which wins souls to Christ and holiness! No teaching compared to this! Remember this, you will never be rich in grace if you care not who you hear, nor what you hear. That Christ that commands you to take heed **how** you hear, commands you also to take heed **what** you hear. And every soul won to God is a new pearl added to a minister's crown, etc.

But you will say to me,

***How should we know which is a soul-enriching ministry, that so we may wait on it?*** Take these three rules:

(1.) *First*, Judge not of the soul-enriching ministry by the voice of the minister, nor by the multitude of hearers who follow him, nor by his affected tone, nor by his rhetoric and flashes of wit—but by the holiness, heavenliness, and spiritualness of the matter. Many ministers are like empty orators, who have a **flood** of words—and a **drop** of matter.

Some preachers affect rhetorical strains; they seek abstrusities, and love to hover and soar aloft in dark and cloudy expressions, and so shoot their arrows over their hearers' heads, instead of bettering their hearers' hearts. Mirthful things in a sermon are only for men to gaze upon and admire. What are high strains and flashes of wit, new-minted words and phrases—but like fancy bottles to the good corn. Truth is like Solomon's spouse, "all glorious within." [rather the Spouse, the Church: Psalm 45:13 –G.] She is most beautiful when most naked, as Adam was in innocency.

The oracle would have Philip of Macedon use silver lances in winning an impregnable fort, etc.—but ministers must not use golden sentences, strong lines, froth of wit. It is iron, and not gold, that kills in the encounter. It is the steel sword, not the golden sword—which wins the field, etc. "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God." 1

## Corinthians 2:1

(2.) *Secondly*, Judge of it by its revealing the whole counsel of God, the whole will of God, revealed in his word.

In Acts 20:27, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." There are some who make it their business only to advance the glory of Christ, and to darken the glory of the Father; and some cry up the glory of the Father, and yet cast clouds and darkness upon the glory of the Son. And what dirt and scorn is cast upon the Spirit by many vain, blasphemous people in these times is notoriously known; and if these men are not far from declaring the whole counsel and will of God, I know nothing.

Christ must be held out in all his offices, for they all tend to the enriching of poor souls, to the adding of pearls to a Christian's crown. And clearly it is sad to consider how many there be that cry up one office and cry down another. Some cry up the kingly office of Christ—but mind not his prophetic office; and some cry up his prophetic office—but trample upon his kingly office; and some cry up both his kingly and prophetic office, and yet make slight of his priestly office. Christians, fix yourselves under his ministry, who gives the Father his due, the Son his due, and the Spirit his due; who makes it his business to open the treasures and the riches both of the one and the other, and to declare to you the whole will of God; for there are many who "hold the word in unrighteousness," Romans 1:18, and who will only acquaint you with some parts of the will of God, and keep you ignorant of other parts—whose condemnation will be great as well as just, etc. Serious experienced saints relish those very truths best—which such corrupt teachers distaste most, etc.

(3.) *Thirdly* and lastly, You may judge of it by its coming nearest to the ministry of Christ and his apostles. [Christ and his apostles labored to make men Christians, and not critics. Augustine.]

There was no ministry so soul-enriching and soul-winning as the ministry of Christ and his apostles. Oh! the thousands that were brought in by one exercise! Let men of frothy wits say what they will, there are no preachers compared to these who come nearest in their ministry to Christ and his

apostles. That incomparable man, Peter Hamus, said: "Let us speak the very words of Scripture, for so did Christ, the prophets, and apostles; let us make use of the language of the Holy Spirit, and forever abominate those who profanely disdain at the stately plainness of God's blessed book, and who think to correct the divine wisdom and eloquence with their own childishness and sophistry." God's holy things ought to be handled with fear and reverence, rather than with wit and dalliance. Spiritual sophistry is the next degree to unfaithfulness. No ministry like that which comes nearest to Christ, etc.

[3.] The *third* direction is this, ***If ever you would be rich in grace, be rich in spirituals—then keep humble.***

Psalm 25:9, "The humble he will teach his way, and the meek he will guide in judgment;" James 4:6, "God resists the proud—but gives grace to the humble." "He sets himself in battle-array against the proud," as the Greek has it, "but he gives grace to the humble." He pours grace into an humble soul, as men pour wine into an empty vessel. Of all souls, humble souls do most prize spiritual riches; of all souls they most improve spiritual riches; of all souls they are most fearful of losing spiritual riches. In Isaiah 57:15, "For this is what the high and lofty One says--he who lives forever, whose name is holy—I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Humility, as the violet, though the lowest—yet is the sweetest of flowers. The word notes to us thus much: that God will not dwell with a humble man as a wayfaring man dwells with his relations—a few nights and then away. *Dwelling* notes a constant and not a transient act of God. God will forever keep house with the humble soul; when once they meet, they never part. There is no such way to be rich—as to be poor and low in our own eyes. This is the way to enjoy his company—in whom all treasures are.

[4.] *Fourthly, If ever you would be spiritually rich, improve the riches that you have.*

Improve that **knowledge**, that **faith**, that **light**, that **love** that you have.

Those who had two talents did, by the improvement of them, gain two more; and those who had five did, by the improvement of them, gain five more: Proverbs 10:4, "The diligent hand makes rich." Take hold of all opportunities to enrich your souls with spiritual riches. Men will easily, readily, greedily, and unweariedly grasp all opportunities wherein they may get earthly riches; and why should not you be as diligent in taking hold of all opportunities to enrich your precious souls? [The neglect of golden, soul-enriching opportunities, has made many a man's life a hell.]

Is not the soul worth more than raiment, more than friends, more than relations, more than life—yes, more than all? And why, then, do you not labor to enrich your souls? You were better have a rich soul under a thread-bare coat, than a thread-bare soul under a silk or golden coat. If he is a monster among men, who makes liberal provision for his dog—and starves his wife; what a monster is he who makes much provision for his baser part—but none for his noble part!

A slothful heart in the things of God is a heavy judgment: Proverbs 4:31, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding," or, as the Hebrew has it, "the man who had no heart," that is, to make use of his vineyard, "and lo, it was all grown over with thorns and nettles," etc. Oh the lusts, the wickednesses—which will overgrow slothful, sluggish souls! Spiritual sluggards are subject to the saddest strokes. Oh the deadly sins, the deadly temptations, the deadly judgments that spiritual sluggards will unavoidably fall under! None such an enemy to himself—none such a friend to Satan—as the spiritual sluggard. It is sad to think how the riches of Christ, the riches of consolation, the riches of justification, the riches of glorification, are brought to many men's doors, and yet they have no hearts to embrace them! There is no judgment like this! Well, spiritual sluggards, remember this, when your consciences are awakened, this will be a sword in your souls—that you might have been saved, you might have been spiritually and eternally enriched—but that you have trifled and fooled away golden opportunities and your own salvation! Wealth without wit is ill bestowed, etc.

[5.] *Fifthly, If ever you would be spiritually rich, **walk uprightly, holily, and obediently.***

If ever you would be spiritually rich, look to your walking. It is not the knowing soul, nor the talking soul—but the close-walking soul, the obediential soul—that is in spirituals the richest soul. Others may be rich in notions—but none so rich in spiritual experiences, and in all holy and heavenly grace, as close-walking Christians. Psalm 84:11, "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly." The upright walker shall be both of his court and council; he shall know anything, and have anything.

In John 14:21, 23, compared, "If any man loves me, he will keep my commandments, and I will love him, and my Father will love him." What then? "We will make our abode with him, and will manifest ourselves to him." Certainly they cannot be poor, who enjoy such guests as these; they must needs be full, who enjoy those who are fullness itself. God and Christ are overflowing fountains, and holy souls find it so. [*When my heart is coldest—I present God to my soul under the notions of his greatness; but when my heart is loose and fearing—then I present God to my soul under the notion of his goodness, says Luther.*]

[6.] Sixthly, *If ever you would be spiritually rich, **be most in with those Christians who are spiritually rich.***

Let them be your choicest companions—who have made Christ their chief companion. Do not so much eye the outsides of men, as their inside; look most to their internal worth. Many people have an eye upon the external garb of this and that professor—but give me a Christian who minds the internal worth of people—who makes such as are most filled with the fullness of God, to be his choicest and his chief companions.

In Psalm 16:2, "My goodness extends not to you," says David, now David speaks in the person of Christ—"but to the saints who are in the earth, in whom is all my delight." There are saints—and there are excellent saints. Now those are the excellent ones—who are most rich in heavenly treasures; and these you should make your bosom friends, your choicest companions: Proverbs 13:20, "He who walks with wise men shall be wise;" that is, he shall be more wise, more humble, more holy, and more abounding in all spiritual riches. The word that is rendered *walk*,

signifies *walking*; to note to us, that it is not he who *talks* with the wise, nor he who *commends* the wise, nor he who takes a *step* or two or three with the wise, who shall be wise—but he who gives up himself to the society and company of the wise, who shall be more and more wise, more and more gracious, more and more holy.

He who comes where sweet spices or ointments are stirring, does carry away some of the sweet savor, though he himself does not realize it. The spouse's lips drop as the honeycomb: Cant. 4:10, "The tongue of the just is as choice silver," he scatters pearls, he throws abroad treasures where he comes: Proverbs 15:7, "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge." The Hebrew word is a metaphor from scattering abroad with a fan, or from seedsmen scattering abroad of their seed in the furrows of the field. They scatter their light, their love, their experiences, among those with whom they converse, as seedsmen scatter their seed in the field. Christ says his spouse's lips are like a thread of scarlet, with talking of nothing but a crucified Christ; and thin like a thread, not swelled with other vain and wicked discourses.

The old zealous primitive Christians did so frequently, and so effectually mind and talk of the kingdom of heaven, and of the riches and glory of that state, that the heathen began to be a little jealous who they affected the Roman empire; when, alas, their ambition was of another and a nobler nature: Psalm 37:30, "The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks judgment; for the law of the Lord is in his heart." Proverbs 12:28, "The tongue of the wise is health, his tongue is a tree of life, whose leaves are medicinal." No way to be rich in spirituals, like being much in with precious souls, whose tongues drop marrow and fatness. [The very heathen man could say, *When a wise man speaks, he opens the rich treasures and wardrobe of his mind*, etc.]

Utterance is a gift; and dumb Christians are blameworthy, as well as dumb ministers. We should all strive to a holy ability and dexterity of savory discourse. If Christ should come to many of us, as he did to his two disciples, in that last chapter of Luke, and say to us, as to them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" oh! with what paleness of face and sadness of countenance would we look! When the heart is full, it overflows in speech. We know *metals* by their tinkling, and *men* by their

talking. Happy is he who speaks out anything of Christ from experience.

[7.] Seventhly, *If ever you would be spiritually rich, **then take heed of tasting or eating of forbidden fruit.***

This stripped Adam of his crown, of his jewels, and of all his rich ornaments in a moment; and of the richest and greatest prince who ever breathed, made him the miserablest beggar that ever lived. Oh take heed of tasting of poison, of eating of poison. A person who has ate poison will not thrive, let him take ever such wholesome food. The choicest cordials will not increase blood, and spirits, and strength—but the man will vomit up all. Poor souls who have been tasting of poison, are apt to find fault with the minister, and sometimes with this and that, as the cause of their not growing rich in spirituals; when, alas! the only cause is their eating of poison. These are like him who, having a thorn in his foot, complained of the roughness of the way as the cause of his limping. Sirs, it is not the minister, nor this, nor that—but your eating of forbidden fruit, that is the cause of your non-thriving in spirituals. Sin is the soul's sickness—and nothing more hinders growth than sickness. Christians, if ever you would be trees, not only having the leaves of honor—but the fruits of righteousness, then **take heed of sin, abhor it more than hell, and fly from it as from your deadliest enemy**, etc.

[8.] *Eighthly and lastly, if ever you would be spiritually rich, **be sure to maintain secret communion with God.***

You know many men come to be very rich in the world by a secret trade. Though many have not such an open trade as others—yet they have a more secret trade, and by that they gain very great estates, as many of you here in London know by experience. [Acts 10:3, 9; Gen. 21:33; Exod. 14:16; 1 Sam. 1:13.] Take it, friends, as an experienced truth, there is no such way under heaven, to be rich in spirituals, as by driving of a secret trade heaven-wards. It is true, it is good for men to attend upon this, and that, and the other public services; for in all divine services God shows his beauty and glory. Ay—but such that delight to be more upon the public stage than in the closet, will never be rich in spirituals. **They may grow rich in notions—but they will never grow rich in gracious experiences**, Psalm 63:2-3; 27:4; 84:10.

Oh! God loves to see a poor Christian shut his closet door, Mat. 6:6, and then to open his bosom, and pour out his soul before him. God has very choice discoveries for souls who drive a secret trade—the best wine, the best dainties and delicacies are for such. And I never knew any man or woman in my life, who was richer in grace, than those who were much in closet communion with God. Much of a Christian's spiritual strength lies in secret prayer, as Samson's did in his hair. Nothing charms away Satan, and weakens sin, like this. Secret prayers are the pillars of smoke wherein the soul ascends to God, out of the wilderness of this world. Secret prayer is Jacob's ladder, where you have God descending down into the soul, and the soul sweetly ascending up to God. No way to be rich in spirituals like this. Therefore be sure to maintain and keep up a secret trade between God and your own souls.

Oh let God hear often of you in secret. Oh! in the secret walks, the soul meets with the King of glory. Oh! there the soul hangs upon Christ; there the soul sucks and draws virtue from Christ; and there the soul is made rich with the riches of Christ. Christ is much delighted and taken with secret prayer: Cant. 2:14, "O my dove, who is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs—let me hear your voice, let me see your countenance; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is lovely." **Secret meals are very fattening, and secret duties are very soul-enriching!** Christians! set more close to this work, and if you don't thrive by it, trust me no more. And thus you see by what means you may grow rich in grace.

**3.** The third thing I propounded to speak to was, ***Some propositions concerning spiritual riches.*** And the first proposition is this:

**[1.] *All who grow rich in grace—grow rich gradually.***

The sun ascends by degrees; children, plants, and trees all grow by degrees; so do saints in spirituals. It is true, many men as to temporals, by the death of some friend, or this and that providence, grow rich in a sudden; but no soul who is rich in grace—but grows rich gradually. In Proverbs 4:18, "But the path of the just is like the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." He proceeds from virtue to virtue, until at length he shines like the sun in its strength. And so in Mal.

4:2, "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture." Hosea 14:5-7, "I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. It will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. Its branches will spread out like those of beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedar forests of Lebanon. My people will return again to the safety of their land. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon ." I shall but hint at this now, because I have spoken more fully to it already, etc.

The second proposition is this:

**[2.] *Few or none are rich in all graces.***

There are some men in the world who are generally rich—who are rich in money, and rich in land, and rich in goods—but where you have one man who is a generally rich man in this sense, you have ten thousand who are only rich in some one thing, as money, goods, or land, etc.; so it is here. It is a hard thing, if possible, to find a soul who is universally rich; who is rich in every grace, who is rich in faith, and rich in wisdom, and rich in love, and rich in patience, etc. Abraham was rich in faith, and Job was rich in patience, and Moses was rich in meekness, and David was rich in zeal, etc; but none of these were rich in every grace. And so in these days you may find one Christian rich in one grace, and another Christian rich in another grace; but where will you find a Christian who is rich in every grace? Such who are rich in some graces—are yet very defective and lame in other graces.

The saints once at Rome were richer in wisdom and knowledge than the saints at Thessalonica, Romans 15:14; and the saints at Thessalonica were richer in faith, love, patience, and charity than the saints at Rome, 1 Thes. 1:4, 2:8, compared with 2 Epistle 1:3-4. It is with saints as with sinners, one sinner excels in one vice, another in another vice; so one saint excels in one virtue, and another in another virtue. One is rich in joy, in comfort; another is rich in humility, in fear; another in faith and hope; and another in love. [No grace grows alike in all saints. In the parable some brought forth thirty, some sixty, some a hundred, etc.] And mark

how this arises.

It arises sometimes from hence—that every saint does endeavor to excel in that particular grace which is most opposite to his bosom sin. Now every saint's bosom sin is not alike. It may be pride is one man's bosom sin, and hypocrisy another man's bosom sin, etc. Now it is the very nature of grace to make a man strive to be most eminent in that particular grace that is most opposite to his bosom sin, and upon this account it comes to pass that one is rich in one grace, and another in another.

Again, some saints have frequent occasions to act and exercise such and such graces. Others are called forth to exercise such and such other graces. Now the more any particular grace is exercised, the more that particular grace is increased. Frequent exercise cause a stronger habit both in graces and in sins. If all Christians would be rich in all graces, what difference would there be between heaven and earth? What need would there be of ordinances? And when would Christians long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? etc.

The third proposition is this:

**[3.] *Souls may be rich in grace, and yet not know it—and yet not perceive it.***

The child is heir to a crown, to a great estate—but knows it not. Moses' face did shine, and others saw it—but he perceived it not. So many a precious soul is rich in grace, and others see it, and know it, and bless God for it—and yet the poor soul perceives it not. Now because a right understanding of this may be of much use to some saddened, dejected souls, I will show you how this comes to pass.

***First, Sometimes it arises from the soul's strong desires of spiritual riches.*** The strength of the soul's desires after spiritual riches, does often take away the very sense of growing spiritually rich. Many covetous men's desires are so strongly carried forth after earthly riches, that though they do grow rich—yet they cannot perceive it, they cannot believe it. It is just so with many a precious Christian; his desires after spiritual riches are so strong, that they take away the very sense of his

growing rich in spirituals. [The sun ascends without perception; and so it is often in this supernatural motion, etc. The Greeks derive their word for desire from a root that signifies to burn. Now, if one should heap ever so much fuel upon a fire, it would not quench it—but kindle it the more. The application is easy.] Many Christians have much worth within them—but they see it not. It was a godly man who said, "The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not," etc. Gen. 28.

**Again, This arises sometimes from men's neglecting the casting up of their accounts.** Many men thrive and grow rich, and yet by neglecting the casting up of their accounts, they cannot tell whether they go backward or forward. It is so with many precious souls; they grow in grace and are spiritually rich, and yet by neglecting the casting up of their accounts, they do not know it, they do not perceive it, etc. [Seneca reports of one Sextius, that he would every night ask himself these three questions: (1). What evil have you mended this day? (2). What vice have you stood against this day? (3). In what part are you bettered this day? etc.]

**Again, sometimes it arises from the soul's too frequent casting up of its accounts.** If a man should cast up his accounts once a week or once a month, he may not be able to discern that he does grow rich—and yet he may grow rich. But let him compare one year with another, and he shall clearly see that he does grow rich. Though most are to blame for neglecting the casting up of their accounts—yet some are to blame for casting up their accounts too often; for by this means they are not able to perceive their spiritual growth, and so can neither be so thankful nor so cheerful as otherwise they might. Let there be some considerable time between your casting up of your accounts, and you will find that your souls are grown rich, though for the present you perceive it not.

But then *again*, **sometimes it arises from the soul's mistake in casting up of its accounts.** The soul many times mistakes; it is in a hurry; and there the soul puts down ten for a hundred, and a hundred for a thousand; as sometimes men in hurrying over their books, they slip and make mistakes, and so they think there is nothing gained, whereas indeed there is much gained, and in the close they shall find it so. Many a gracious soul many times takes a great deal of grace for a little; and little

grace for no grace. Look, as hypocrites put down their counters for gold, their pence for pounds, and always appraise themselves above the market; so sincere souls do often put down their pounds for pence, their thousands for hundreds, and still appraise themselves below the market, etc.

The fourth proposition is this:

**[4.] *That saints must endeavor to grow rich in every grace.***

It is the duty and the glory of saints to endeavor to grow rich in every grace. So the apostle, 2 Pet. 1:5-12, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," etc. It is the work, the duty, the glory of a Christian, to be still adding one grace to another. So in chapter 3:18, "Grow in grace," that is, in every grace—but more particularly and specially, "in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"Grow in grace." That is, grow in love, in faith, in humility, in meekness, etc.—but especially "in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior." All the graces which are in you are weak; and therefore you had need to strengthen them all.

Again, You have the seeds of all corruptions in you; and is there any way to be rid of every sin—but by thriving in every grace?

Again, You have opportunities as well to thrive in one grace as in another.

Again, Will not Satan labor might and main to keep your graces low and poor? You never hurt him less, you never honor Christ less, you never mind your work less—than when grace is weak and low. This he knows, and therefore labors to keep your graces down.

Again, are not you liable to many changes in this world? As, to be rich and poor, exalted and abased; now to relieve, and at another time to be relieved; now well, and at another time sick; now strong, and at another time weak; now in storms, and at another time in calms; now tempted, and at another time delivered; now in one condition, and at another time in another condition; now up, now down; now forward, now backward,

etc.

Now pray tell me, do not the many changes and variety of providences which we meet with in this world behoove us to be rich, not in some—but in every grace? Don't a state of prosperity behoove a man to be rich in wisdom, rich in humility, rich in love, and rich in compassion, that his heart may be kept close to God in that state, and that he may do nothing unworthy of God, who has done so much for him? And now, when God shall change the manner of his administrations towards such a man, when God shall put out his candle, pull off his robes, and clothe him with rags, and set him with Job upon the ash-heap, doesn't this condition bespeak much patience, much contentment, much self-denial, much faith? How else will this man bravely bear up, when God shall write such bitter things against him, and pass the sentence of death upon his nearest and his dearest comforts? If a man be not rich in one grace as well as in another, when God shall bring changes upon him, and pour him from vessel to vessel—his life will be a burden, a hell to him, etc.

Again, consider this: growing rich in every grace renders a Christian most lovely and beautiful in grace; as a growth in all the members of the body renders the body most lovely and beautiful. The perfect beauty and loveliness of the body rises from the symmetry and fitness of the parts unto one another. Rare and excellent beauty arises from the loveliness of all parts. If one part is lovely, and another deformed, then there is no perfect beauty. Well, remember this, there are no such beautiful Christians as those who grow rich in every grace. Oh! they are the beauty of Christ, the honor of the gospel, and the glory of Christianity.

And so much for the fourth proposition, namely, that we must labor to be rich in every grace.

The fifth proposition that I shall lay down is this,

**[5.] *Saints should labor more particularly and more especially to be rich in FAITH.***

Though it is of concern to believers to be rich in every grace—yet it is of special concern to them to labor to be rich in this particular grace of faith.

In Jude, ver. 20, "Building up yourselves in your most holy faith." It is not enough to have faith—but they must build up themselves and build up one another "in their most holy faith."

**There are three things that the Scripture calls precious:**

*First*, The **blood of Christ**: in 1 Peter 1:19, "You are not redeemed with silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot."

*Secondly*, The **promises** are called precious promises: 2 Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises."

*Thirdly*, **Faith** is called precious faith: ver. 1, "Unto those who have obtained like precious faith with us." Now, though it be of concern for every saint to labor to be rich in every grace—yet more especially and more particularly to be rich in this grace of faith; and that upon this account that follows:

(1.) *First*, Because **faith is the soul's greatest and choicest fence against her worst enemies**. In Eph. 6:16, "Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." "**Above all**, take the shield of faith." Neglect no part of your armor—but above all, look to the shield of faith. Look, what the shield is to the body, that is faith to a believer's soul, to secure him against all the fierce and fiery darts of Satan.

Satan would say to a man with great faith, "You do always overcome me. When I would exalt and promote you, you keep yourself in humility; and when I would throw you down, you lift yourself up in assurance of faith." Faith makes the soul invincible; it makes the soul victorious; it leads captivity captive; it binds Satan in chains; it foils him at every weapon; and therefore, above all, labor to be rich in faith.

(2.) *Secondly*, **Growth in faith will advance the growth of all other graces**.

All other graces thrive in the soul as faith thrives—and not otherwise. Be

rich in faith, and be rich in all; be weak in faith, and be weak in all. Faith has an influence upon all other graces; it is like a silver thread which runs through a chain of pearls; it puts strength and vivacity into all other graces. You never knew a man rich in any grace—who has not been rich in faith. Every man's hope, joy, fear, love, humility, patience, etc., is as his faith is. All other graces live upon faith's cost and charge. Look, what the breast is to the child, wings to the bird, oil to the wheels, and the soul to the body—that is faith to all other graces in the soul of man.

It is reported of the crystal, that it has such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a luster and a beauty upon them. I am sure it is true of faith. There is such a divine virtue and power in faith, that it will quicken and cast a luster and a beauty upon all other graces in the soul of man; and therefore you should labor as for life—to be rich in this particular grace of faith.

(3.) *Thirdly*, consider this, ***Of all graces that are in the soul of man, faith is the most useful grace; and therefore you should, above all, labor to be rich in faith.***

It is a Christian's right eye, without which he cannot see for Christ; it is his right hand, without which he cannot do for Christ; it is his tongue, without which he cannot speak for Christ; it is his very vital spirits, without which he cannot act for Christ.

It is fabled of King Midas, that whatever he touched would be turned into gold. I am sure that whatever faith touches, it turns into gold, that is, into our good. If our faith touches the promises, it turns them into our good; whatever faith lays its hand upon, it appropriates to itself, and turns it into the soul's good. If faith looks upon God, it says, "This God is my God forever and ever, and he shall be my guide unto death," Psalm 63:1; 89:26. When it looks upon Christ, it says with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God," John 20:28. When it looks upon the crown of righteousness, it says, "This crown is laid up for me," etc.

Faith is *bread* to nourish us, and *wine* to cheer us, and a *cordial* to strengthen us. Faith is a *sword* to defend us, a *guide* to direct us, a *staff* to support us, a *plaster* to heal us, a *friend* to comfort us, and a *golden*

*key* to open heaven unto us. Faith, of all graces, is the most useful grace to the soul of man. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11:6; 4:2. All those services are lost, wherein faith has not a hand. You may write loss upon all the *prayers* you make, and upon all the *sermons* you hear, and upon all the *tears* you shed, and upon all the *alms* you give—if all be not managed by a hand of faith.

(4.) *Fourthly*, You should labor above all to be rich in faith, **because *faith is that princely grace that Christ is most taken with.***

Cant. 4:9, "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes,"—that is, with that piercing eye of faith that looks up to my mercy-seat—"with one chain of your neck."

There are two things that with open mouth speak out Christ to be most taken with the faith of his people.

And the *first* is, **his uncrowning himself to crown his people's faith.** Christ does often take the crown off his own head, and puts it upon the head of faith. Witness such passages as these, which are frequent in Scripture, "Your faith has healed you," "Your faith has saved you," "Your faith has made you whole," etc. Christ takes the crown off his own head—and puts it upon the head of faith. And no wonder; for of all graces, faith takes the crown off a man's own head, and puts it on the head of Christ. Man naturally is apt to crown anything but Christ. He is apt to crown his prayers, and crown his desires, and crown his endeavors, etc. Oh but now faith acts like a king of kings—and uncrowns all, and sets the crown upon the head of Christ!

And then a *second* thing that speaks out Christ to be most taken with the grace of faith is this, that **he overlooks all other graces in comparison of faith**, as you may see in the Canaanite woman, Mat. 15:21-29. The poor woman shows a great deal of compassion, a great deal of wisdom, a great deal of humility, a great deal of love, and a great deal of self-denial; but in the close says Christ, "O woman, great is your faith, be it unto you even as you will." He does not say, O woman, great is your love; nor, O woman, great is your wisdom; nor, O woman, great is your humility and self-denial; nor, O woman, great is your patience, etc.; but,

"O woman, great is your faith!" He overlooks, as it were, all other graces, and sets the crown upon the head of faith: "O woman, great is your *faith*."

So in Mark 5, the woman who had a hemorrhage twelve years comes to Christ for cure, and in the close of the story says Christ to her, "Woman, your faith has made you whole." He does not say, Woman, your pressing hard to come to me has made you whole—but "Your *faith* has made you whole." He does not say, Woman, your earnest desires and endeavors to be made whole has made you whole—but "Your *faith* has made you whole." He does not say, Woman, your fear and trembling has made you whole—but "Your *faith* has made you whole," etc.

So in Luke 7:50, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." Though she wept much, and loved much—yet Christ does not say, Your tears have saved you, your sorrow has saved you. He does not say, Your humility, your charity has saved you; but "O woman, your *faith* has saved you." Christ overlooks all other graces, as it were, and casts a loving eye upon the grace of faith, etc.

(5.) And then again, in the *fifth* place, you should above all labor to be rich in faith, *because of all graces in the soul of man, faith makes him most lively and active.*

There is no grace, I say, no grace in the soul of man, which makes him so full of life and action—as the grace of faith. Faith is the first pin, the first wheel which moves all the golden wheels of obedience. In Heb. 11, you read what those worthies did; they left their country, their kindred, upon a bare command of God. Faith has Rachel's eye—but Leah's womb. Faith makes souls very fruitful in ways of well-doing. Faith is as the spring in the watch, which moves the wheels. Not a grace stirs until faith sets it to work.

Faith is like Solomon's virtuous woman, who sets all her maidens to work. Faith sets **joy** to work. "Abraham desired to see my day, and saw it, and rejoiced." Faith sets **love** to work; it works by love; Gal. 5:6. Faith sets hope to **work**, Romans 8:24-25. Faith sets **godly sorrow** to work, Zech. 12:10. Faith sets **patience** to work. I believe that God is wise and loving, and what he does is out of some noble design to do my soul good;

this spins out **patience**. Faith fits a man to do, to suffer, to wait, to walk, etc., therefore labor above all to be rich in faith. [True faith puts forth itself into vital operations. Ferdinand believed the story told him by Columbus, and therefore he furnished him with ships, and got the West Indies by his faith in the undertaking. But Henry the 7th of England believed him not, and therefore trusted him not with shipping, and so lost all the purchase of that faith.]

(6.) And then, *sixthly*, of all graces, **faith renders the soul most invincible**; and therefore you should labor above all to be rich in faith.

It renders the soul invincible and unconquerable under all the hardships and trials which it meets with in this world. Faith makes a man triumph in all the changes and conditions of this life. It was their faith which made them invincible in Daniel 3:16-18, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king—O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

And so Daniel's faith stopped the lion's mouth; it made him too strong for the strongest beasts of prey, as you may see in Daniel 6.

Though the enemies of a believer are very subtle, strong, and experienced; and though the battle be hot and long—yet a soul rich in faith shall have the day. Faith will render a believer victorious in the close: "He may suffer death," as Cyprian said to Cornelius, "but never conquest." Faith renders the soul a lion, a rock, etc. It is reported of some of the Roman and Grecian captains, that they proved always victorious, and were never beaten by any. Such is the nature of faith; it renders a soul victorious in all engagements. In all engagements faith brings a man bravely off, and enables him to keep his ground, and triumph. [As may be fully seen in the Book of Martyrs, and in Heb. 11.] Psalm 60:6-10, "God has spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my wash-

pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph you because of me," etc.

It is not great resolutions, nor big words, nor high looks—but faith, that will make a man stand fast in shaking times. No hand can put the garland upon a Christian—but the hand of faith, etc. Faith alters the tenses, it puts the future into the present; Gilead *is* mine, etc.

(7.) And then, *seventhly*, above all labor to be rich in faith, ***because Satan will labor might and main to weaken your faith.***

Oh! the great design of Satan is not so much to weaken you in externals, as it is to weaken you in internals. Satan can be contented that men should have their heads full of notions, and their mouths full of religion, and their bags full of gold, and their chests full of silver, and their shops full of wares—just so that their souls be either void of faith, or but poor and low in faith. Satan's greatest plot is to weaken the faith of Christians. Luke 22:31-32, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Satan has a gnawing tooth at your faith; his design is upon that; he will labor might and main to weaken that, to frustrate that, and therefore "I have prayed that your faith fail not."

(8.) And then, *eighthly*, consider this, of all graces, ***faith contributes most to the bringing down of mercies and blessings upon yourselves and friends;*** and therefore you should above all labor to be rich in this particular grace of faith.

Faith contributes to the bringing down of blessings upon **ourselves**. In Dan. 6:23, "Daniel was delivered," says the text, "because he believed in his God." It was his faith, and not his prayers; it was his faith, and not his tears; it was his faith, and not his sighs that stopt the lion's mouths, and wrought deliverance for him. So in Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living: So in 2 Chron. 20:20, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall you prosper," and so they did.

That is a very famous scripture to this purpose, 2 Chron. 13:15-17, "Then

the men of Judah began to shout. At the sound of their battle cry, God defeated Jeroboam and the Israelite army and routed them before Abijah and the army of Judah. The Israelite army fled from Judah, and God handed them over to Judah in defeat. Abijah and his army inflicted heavy losses on them; there were 500,000 casualties among Israel's finest troops that day." Here was a great slaughter; no wars, no slaughters comparable to those the Scripture speaks of. And the reason is rendered, verse 18, "So Judah defeated Israel because they *trusted* in the Lord, the God of their ancestors." Were men more rich in faith, they would be more rich in other blessings, etc.

And as faith is the only way to bring down a blessing upon ourselves, so faith is the only way to bring down blessings upon our friends and relations. Though another man cannot be saved by my faith—yet he may be blessed with many blessings, upon the account of my faith. In Mat. 15:22-29, it was the Canaanitish woman's faith which brought a blessing of healing upon her daughter. And so in Mat. 8:6-14, the centurion's faith healed his servant that was sick of a palsy, "and from that very hour he was healed." The servant got well by his master's faith. And so likewise in Mark 9, the faith of the father prevailed for the his demon possessed son. "If you can believe," says Christ, "all things are possible." And the poor man said with tears, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." And presently Christ charged the evil spirit to come out of him, etc. A believing husband, a believing wife, a believing child, or a believing servant, may bring down, by the actings of faith, many a blessing upon their relations. Faith has a happy hand, and never but speeds in one kind or another. It has what it would, either in money or money's worth.

One pointing to Luther said, "There is a man who can have anything of God that he will ask." **Faith has a kind of omnipotency in it**, it is able to do all things, etc.

And as faith brings down blessings upon our own heads and the heads of our friends, so **it often brings down wrath upon our enemies**. There is nothing contributes so much to our enemies' ruin as faith does. I am confident it has neither been armies, nor navies, nor parliaments, that have had the chief hand in bringing down the proud and stout enemies of Christ and Zion, in this and other nations—but the faith of his despised

people. One enemy may stand before the face of another—but what enemy can stand before the face and power of faith? That is a remarkable scripture, Heb. 11:33, "By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight." Other means were used—but that which did the work, and struck all dead, was faith. **Faith engages God in every encounter**, and who can stand before a consuming fire? [Mary Queen of Scots, was accustomed to say that she feared John Knox's prayers, who was a man of much faith—more than an army of ten thousand men.]

Polybius, speaking of Horatius' keeping of the field against his enemies' forces, says, "That his enemies were more afraid of his faith than of his warlike strength." And truly there is nothing that renders men more dreadful to an understanding enemy than their faith. Oh! it is brave for men to believe down the power of darkness, to believe down those who war against the Lamb, etc. No way to get an enemy down like this; nor no way to keep an enemy down like this; no way to save a kingdom like this; nor no way to keep a kingdom like this. The nation is indebted to none so much as to believing souls. O England! England! you had long before this been a prey to men that delight in blood, had it not been for the faith of the worm Jacob, etc. Christians! as you would have Christ, go on and do more and more for England; as you would be crowned with the choicest and the chief blessings, and as you would have vengeance executed upon all that hate, that wage war against and persecute Christ and the saints—be mighty in believing.

(9.) Ninthly and lastly, ***Faith is a root grace; and will the branches flourish if the root withers?***

Oh! therefore, water this root, have an eye to this root. If you have a choice root in any of your gardens, oh how careful are you of it! you will mind it and water it and look to it, etc. Well, of all graces faith is the root grace, and if this dies you will find your graces to languish. Your hope, love, fear, patience, humility, joy, etc., can never outlive your faith. These live together and they die together; therefore, above all, labor to be rich in

faith, for this is a root grace, and if this flourishes—all other graces will flourish; but if this decays—all other graces will lose their strength, beauty, glory, etc.

And thus much for the fifth proposition. We come now to the sixth proposition, and that is this:

**[6.] *That no gracious souls do at all times alike grow and thrive in spiritual riches.***

A child sometimes shoots up more in a month than he does at other times in many months, and sometimes more in a year than he does afterwards in many years. And do not plants and trees sometimes shoot up more in a week than in many, etc. So, many a Christian thrives more, and gets more spiritual riches in one month than in many, in one year than in many. I appeal to your experiences, Christians! don't you find it so? I know you do. To cite Scripture to prove this would be to cast water into the sea, and to light candles to see the sun at noon. Sin and Satan do sometimes work more violently and more strongly in the souls of saints than at other times. Now, when sin and Satan work most, and prevail most, then grace thrives least. **As the life of grace is the death of sin, and the growth of grace the decay of sin—so the increase of sin is the decay of grace, and the strengthening of sin is the weakening of grace.**

Again, No saints have at all times alike gales of the Spirit of God, and therefore they do not grow in spiritual riches at all times alike. No ships have at all times the same gales of wind, etc. A man thrives in spiritual riches as the gales of the Spirit of God are upon him, and not otherwise. When the Spirit of the Lord does blow most sweetly and strongly upon his heart, then his graces thrive and flourish most, then those beds of spices do yield the most fragrant smell; but when the Spirit of the Lord withdraws and withholds his influences, how does the strength and glory of grace wither and decay! Latimer said of the Spirit, that *He is coming and going*, etc.

The herb *heliotropium* does turn about, and open and shut, according to the motion of the sun; so do the graces of the saints according to the

internal gales, motions, and operations of the Spirit, etc.

Again, no saints have at all times the like external advantages and opportunities of growing rich in spirituals. They have not the word, it may be, in that power and life as formerly; or it perhaps they enjoy not the communion of saints as formerly; or if they do—yet perhaps those who have formerly been as fire to warm and inflame them, are now become water to cool them, and deaden them; or it may be they have not those advantages for closet duties as formerly; or it may be, the course of nature is changed; and if so, it is no wonder that they thrive not in spirituals as formerly. When children have not as good food, and as good lodging, and as good looking after as at other times, no wonder if they thrive not as at other times. When men have not the same advantages and opportunities to grow rich in the world as formerly, do we wonder that they thrive not as before? Surely not!

And sometimes this arises from the breaking of some bone by sin. David found it so. Many a man, by breaking a bone, is much hindered from thriving in the world. Oh! this broken arm, this broken leg, has cost me many a fair pound which otherwise I might have got. Oh friends! sin is the breaking of the bones, the breaking of a man's peace and communion with God; it is the breaking of his hope and confidence in God; it is the disjoining of a man from God; and so it hinders a man's spiritual growth: Isaiah 59:1-2; chapter 64:7; Gal. 6:1. Believe it, Christians! if you play and dally with sin, if you fall in with sin, if you make friends with one with sin—you will never grow rich in spirituals. Sin will cause such a breaking of bones, as will undoubtedly hinder the prosperity of your souls. And so much for the sixth proposition.

[7.] The *seventh* and last proposition that I shall propound is this: ***A man may grow rich in those graces which are more remote from Christ, which are less conversant about Christ, when he does not grow rich in those graces, that, as special favorites, stand always at the elbow of Christ, and are most busied and conversant about Christ.*** Let me open it thus to you:

You know at court there are some that have the honor to attend always at the prince's elbow, and there are others that appertain to the same prince

—but are more remote in their employments for him, etc. So in the soul, there are some graces which are more remote, and not so conversant about the person of Christ, as now humility, self-denial, patience, meekness, temperance, sobriety, and the like. Now, though these graces do appertain to the same prince, though they are all servants of the Lord Jesus—yet notwithstanding they are more remote, and busied about other objects and things. Oh! but now faith and love are choice favorites, that always stand at the elbow of Christ. Faith and love are Christ's greatest favorites in heaven.

Now I say, a Christian may grow rich in those graces which are more remote from Christ, which are less conversant about the person of Christ, when he does not grow rich in those particular graces which are most active about the person of Christ. He may grow rich in humility, in self-denial, in meekness, in temperance, etc., when he does not grow up in joy and delight and comfort, etc. The tree grows downward, when it does not grow upward; so a soul may grow rich in some particular graces, when he does not grow rich in other graces. He may grow rich in those graces which are more remote from Christ, when he does not grow rich in those graces which are more conversant about the person of Christ. Some limbs and branches of a tree grow more than others.

And so I have done with these propositions; the serious minding of them may prevent many objections, and to many give satisfaction in several cases, etc.

The fourth and last thing propounded was, to give you,

***Five marks of a person who is spiritually rich.***

Clearly, as there are few worldly rich men, compared to those who are poor; so there are few in this professing age, that will be found to be spiritually rich, compared with the multitude of Laodiceans who swarm in these times. We have many who *say* they are rich, and who *think* they are rich; when the truth is they have either no grace, or but a very little grace; and these five following things do clearly evidence it, etc.

**[1.] First, *Rich men have more variety of objects to delight themselves with, than poor men have.***

They have houses and gardens, and lands and cattle, and silver and gold, and jewels and pearls, and what not, to delight themselves with. Oh! but poor men have not such variety of objects to delight themselves with, as rich men have. It is just thus in spiritual riches. A man who is rich in grace has more variety of spiritual objects, about which his soul is most conversant, than a man who is poor in grace. He has more objects of love, of joy, of delight, of contentment—to busy and exercise his soul about, than others who are weak in grace. **A soul rich in grace possesses and enjoys all things in Christ, and Christ in all things.** They enjoy all good in him who is the chief good, who is the spring and fountain of good. Joseph, in Pharaoh's court, had more variety of objects to delight him, than his brethren had to delight themselves in their father's house, etc.

I have spoken largely to this already, and therefore shall content myself in giving you this hint. It stands upon you to inquire what variety of objects you have to delight your souls in. But,

**[2.] Secondly, *Rich men can reach to those things that poor men cannot reach to.***

I would have such and such things, says the poor man, as the rich man has; I would fare as he fares, and wear as he wears, and do as he does—but my funds will not reach it. So a soul who is spiritually rich can reach to those things that one who is poor in grace cannot reach unto. He can reach to those joys, to those comforts, and to those contentments, to those heights of communion with God, and to those visions and apprehensions of God—that a soul who is not rich in grace cannot reach to. *Oh! I would gladly have that comfort, and that joy, and that peace, and that communion with God, and those visions of God, that such and such souls have, says a poor Christian; but I cannot; my funds will not reach to it.*

It is an argument a man is grown taller, when he can reach higher than he

could before, whether it be a beam or a pin, etc. So it is an argument, that a soul is grown rich in grace, when he can reach beyond what formerly he could reach unto; when he can reach beyond his enlargements, beyond his in-comes, beyond his comforts—to Christ; when in duty—he can reach above duty; when in an ordinance—he can reach to Christ, above the ordinance; when under enlargements—he can reach above enlargements, to Jesus Christ.

Oh! but now a man who has but a little grace, he can rarely reach above his duties, above ordinances, above enlargements—to Christ. He is very apt to sit down and warm himself with the sparks of his own fire, and to feed upon ashes, as the prophet speaks, Isaiah 50:11, 44:20, etc. But now, a soul who is rich in grace, says, *Well! these ordinances are not Christ, these refreshings are not Christ, these meltings are not Christ, these enlargements are not Christ; these are sweet—but he is more sweet; these are very precious—but he is most precious.* And thus those who are spiritually rich do out-reach all others, etc. [A tree that is well grown stands firm in the worst storms; it bends not, it breaks not, etc.]

[3.] Thirdly, ***Rich men can with more ease and pleasure bear burdens, than poor men can.***

When trials and burdens are laid upon poor men, they sigh, and shrug, and complain that they are not able to bear them—when rich men make nothing of them. So souls who are rich in grace can bear burdens without a burden; they can bear crosses, afflictions, and persecutions, with abundance of ease, cheerfulness, and contentedness of spirit; they do not shrug, nor grumble—but bear the greatest trials with greatest sweetness, as you may see in Acts 5, "They went out *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus." So Paul, 2 Cor. 12:10, "I take *pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." "I take pleasure." The Greek word is an emphatical word; it is the same word that God the Father uses to express his infinite delight in his Son: Mat. 3:17, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" or, "in whom I am infinitely delighted." The same word the apostle uses to express the wonderful delight that he took under all his sufferings; he rejoices and leaps for joy under all his burdens.

Oh! but now a soul who is poor in grace, he cannot bear a burden without a burden; every light affliction discourages him, and sinks him; every molehill is a mountain; every scratch on the hand is a stab at the heart; every wave is a sea—and the poor Christian sighs and groans, and cries out, *Oh! There is no sorrow like my sorrow! no loss like my loss! no cross like my cross!* but souls rich in grace act quite contrary, as has been hinted and proved, etc.

[4.] Fourthly, ***Rich men are most envied.***

History and Scripture speak out this, as well as our own experience. The rich man above all others is the greatest object of envy, and it is as true that such who are most rich in spirituals are of all men the most envied. Moses and Aaron were rich in spirituals—and oh, how were they envied by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and other wicked wretches! Ezra, Nehemiah, and Mordecai, were rich in spirituals—and who more envied? Among all the prophets and apostles, those have been most envied, who have most abounded in spiritual worth. And to this very day, none are such objects of scorn and envy, as those who have most of Christ within. Men who have more leaves than fruit, who have a golden outside—but a threadbare inside—are less envied than those who are "all glorious within." [It was said of Caesar and Pompey, that the one could not endure a superior, nor the other an equal.]

**Men of greatest excellencies, are the main objects upon which the eye of envy is placed,** Psalm 45:13. Saul's envious eye was placed upon David, and Cain's upon Abel, and Esau's upon Jacob, and Herod's upon John, and the Pharisees' upon Christ. Envious souls are like the ravens, that fly over the sweet garden, and light upon the stinking carrion. Envy does ever ascend; it never descends. An envious man can with more ease die miserably, than see another live happily. **An envious heart weeps to see others' mercies, and joys to see others' miseries.** An envious heart is like the mermaid, which never sings but in a storm, and never mourns but in a calm. An envious man cannot endure those excellencies in others that he lacks in himself; he loves not any light which outshines his own, any crown which outweighs his own, etc. Socrates calls envy *the soul's saw*, etc.

[5.] Fifthly, ***Rich men are most tempted and assaulted.***

Pirates do not attack empty vessels—but those who are most richly laden. Beggars need not fear the thief, though the rich man does. Those who have been most rich in spirituals, have been most assaulted and tempted by Satan. Witness Abraham, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, yes, Christ himself. The best men have always been most and worst tempted. None so much in the school of temptation—as those who are most rich in grace. There are none who are such blocks, such mountains in Satan's ways—as these. None do him such mischief as these; none are so active and so resolute in their oppositions against him as these, etc.; and therefore none so assaulted and tempted as they. [God and Satan will try to the utmost those particular graces wherein any Christian does excel, etc.] And thus by these five things you may know whether you are rich in grace or no.

***Use 2. If the Lord Jesus Christ is so rich, then do not join anything with him, in the great work of your redemption and salvation.***

There are riches enough in Christ to pay all your debts, and to satisfy divine justice to the utmost farthing, without being indebted to your prayers, tears, or humiliations. Kings love no equals.

When Augustus Caesar desired the senate to join two consuls with him, for the carrying on the government of the state, the senators answered, "That they held it a diminution to his dignity to join any with so incomparable a man as Augustus Caesar was." Was it a diminution to his dignity to join others with him in the government of the state? And is it not a diminution of the dignity and glory of Christ, to join your actions and your endeavors with his blood, in the business of your redemption? In Isaiah 63:3, "I have trodden the wine-press *alone*; and of the people there was *none* with me." And in Isaiah 44:24, "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and he who formed you from the womb, I am the Lord who makes all things; who stretches forth the heavens alone, who spreads abroad the earth by myself." It is a sad reproach to Christ to join anything with him in the great business of your salvation; therefore abhor it more than hell itself: let Christ be all in all. We must say of Christ as it was once said of Caesar, *He may have a companion—but he must not have a*

*competitor, etc.*

**Use 3. If Christ is so rich, then take heed of three things.**

**(1.) Take heed of sitting down dejected and discouraged under any losses or troubles which befall you, or which have or shall befall you for the name of Christ.**

Christ is universally rich; he is able to make up all your losses and needs: Philip. 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ," as he did the widow's vessel. The *fountain* has not the less water for the vessel it fills, nor the *sun* the less light for that it gives forth to the stars; so the Lord Jesus Christ has never a whit the less for what he gives forth unto his saints.

When Zedislaus, the king of Poland's general, had lost his hand in his service, the king sent him a golden hand. Ah, Christians! when you lose this or that for Jesus, he will send you a golden hand; if you lose a penny for him, he will give you a pearl. Christ will not live long in any man's debt; if he would, he would lose his glory, etc.

**(2.) If the Lord Jesus is very rich, Oh then take heed of despairing by reason of your sins.**

I confess, the least sin should humble the soul—but certainly the greatest sin should never discourage the soul, much less should it work the soul to despair. Read 1 Tim. 1:13-15, and despair—if you can. Despairing Judas perished, Acts 2, whereas the murderers of Christ, believing on Christ, were saved. Despair is a sin exceeding vile and contemptible; it is a word of eternal reproach, dishonor, and confusion; it declares the devil a conqueror; and what greater dishonor can be done to Christ, than for a soul to proclaim before all the world the devil a crowned conqueror? A despairing soul is a terror to himself; his heart a hell of horror; his conscience a field of black blood. He has no rest at home nor abroad, at bed nor board—but is as if infernal devils followed him in fearful shapes, terrifying and tormenting his perplexed soul. Eternity of misery, feared or felt, begets that monster which, like Medusa's head, astonishes with its very aspect, and strangles *hope*, which is the breath of the soul. Other

miseries may *wound* the spirit—but despair *kills* it dead, etc. ["My sin is greater than can be forgiven," says Cain. *You lie, Cain*, says Augustine; for God's mercy is greater than the sins of all men, and it is a great injury to God to distrust of his mercy.]

### **(3.) If Christ be so rich, *then take heed of presuming.***

Take heed of taking encouragement to sin upon this account, that Christ is rich in grace and mercy. Christ is a lion as well as a lamb; he has a sword as well as a scepter. To argue from the riches of Christ's mercy to sinful liberty—is the devil's logic. A soul who thus reasons is a soul left of God, a soul who is upon the last step of the ladder, a soul who Satan has by the hand; and the eternal God knows where he will lead him. What the women sung of Saul and David, that "Saul had slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," 1 Sam. 18:6-7, that I may say of despair and presumption, "*Despair* has slain her thousand—but *presumption* has slain her ten thousand." "Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Romans 6:1-2.

As the beams of the sun, shining on the fire, put out the fire, so the shinings of God's mercy on us should extinguish sin in us, as the apostles argue, 2 Peter 3:15, Romans 2:4. Christ seems to say to souls, as Theseus said once, "Go," says he, "and tell Creon, Theseus offers you a gracious offer—yet I am pleased to be friends, if you will submit. This is my first message—but if this offer prevails not, look for me to be up in arms." Ah souls! if you shall abuse the riches of grace to a presumptuous sinning against Christ, Christ will take up arms, and you shall die for it.

### ***Use 4. If Christ be so rich, Oh! then, open to Christ when he knocks.***

Christ knocks by his word, and he knocks by his rod; he knocks by his Spirit, and he knocks by his messengers, and he knocks by conscience. Oh, open to him! for he is very rich. Though you shut the door against a poor man—yet you will open it to one that is rich; and why not then to Christ, who would sincerely have entrance? Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will

come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

"Behold, **I stand.**" I who am the King of glory, I who am "King of kings, and Lord of lords," Psalm 24:7-9, Rev. 17:14. I who am rich in mercy, rich in goodness, rich in grace, rich in glory, "I stand at the door and knock." I who have gold to enrich you, I who have eye-salve to enlighten you, I who have glorious apparel to clothe you, I who have mercy to pardon you, I who have power to save you, I who have wisdom to counsel you, I who have happiness to crown you, "I stand at the door and knock."

"If **any man** opens." If the master will not—yet if the servant will; if the mistress will not—yet if the maid will; if the parent will not—yet if the child will; if the rich man will not—yet if the poor man will; if the pharisee won't—yet if the publican will.

"I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me." Jesus Christ has the greatest worth and wealth in him. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is concentrated in one piece of gold, so all the heavenly excellencies which are scattered abroad in angels and men, are united in Christ; yes, all the whole volume of perfection which is spread through heaven and earth—is epitomized in Christ.

They say it is true of the oil at Rheems, that though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France—yet it never wastes. Christ is a pot of manna, a cruse of oil, a bottomless ocean of all comforts and contentments—which never fail. A saint may say, "In having nothing, I have all things, because I have Christ. Having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward."

***Use 5. If Christ be so rich, then sit down and wonder at his condescending love.***

That one so rich should fall in love with such who are poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, Rev. 3:17-21, etc.; that one so high should look so low as poor us; that one so great, that one who is the Lord and heir of all, should match with us who have nothing at all. O the breadth, the length, the depth, the height of Christ's love to unlovely souls! to such that had neither portion nor proportion; that had neither external nor

internal worth that might in the least draw his love towards them, Heb. 1:2-4, Philip. 3:17-19, etc., Ezek. 6:16. You were indebted to God for the clothes you wear, for the bread you eat, for the houses you live in, the air you breathe in, the beds you lie on, the ground you tread on, etc. Now for Christ to love such, and to be willing to bestow himself upon such nothings, oh! how should this work them to spend their days in admiring and contemplating upon his kindness and goodness!

I have read a story of an elephant, who being fallen down, and unable to help himself or get up again, by reason of the inflexibleness of his legs, a forester coming by helped him up, wherewith the elephant, by the very instinct of nature, was so affected, that he followed this man, would do anything for him, and never left him until his dying day. The application is easy. [Love is like fire, very operative.]

***Use 6. If Christ be so rich as has been discovered to you, then PRIZE Christ above all.***

As the people prized David above themselves, saying, "You are worth ten thousand of us," 2 Sam. 18:3, so should saints lift up Jesus Christ above themselves, and above everything below himself. He who does not lift Christ up above all—has no saving interest in Christ at all; he who sets not Christ above all—is not a disciple of Christ: Luke 14:26, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26. Surely **they do not truly love Christ—who love anything more than Christ.** [Austin says he would willingly go through hell to Christ.]

It was a notable saying of Jerome, "If my father should hang upon me, my brethren should press round about me, and my mother should stand before me—I would throw down my father, I would break through my brethren, and I would trample upon my mother—to come to Christ."

Other saints have lifted up Christ above all their lands, relations, and lives, as you may see in Heb. 11; and so did a multitude of the martyrs under the ten persecutions, etc. As Pharaoh set up Joseph above all, and made him governor of the land, and as Darius set up Daniel over all—so

you must prize Christ, and set up Christ above all.

Remember a few things, that this may the better stick upon your hearts.

[1.] First, ***A Christ highly prized will be a Christ greatly delighted in.***

Every soul **delights** in Christ as he prizes Christ—and no otherwise. The reason of reasons why Christ is no more delighted in, is because he is no more prized among the sons of men: Cant. 2:5, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the forest, so is my well-beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was pleasant to any taste." The seeing of this object delights the eye of a believer, the hearing of this object delights the ear of a believer, the enjoying, the possessing of this object delights the heart of a believer: "I sat down under his shadow with great delight."

The apple-tree is delightful for shadow, so is Christ; he is a shadow to poor souls when they are scorched with troubles within and terrors without: Isaiah 32:2, "And a man," that is, Christ, "shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and as a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The apple-tree is delightful for pleasantness of fruit, so is the Lord Jesus for those pleasant fruits of righteousness and holiness which grow upon him.

And the apple-tree is delightful for varieties, so is Christ; for there are all varieties of excellencies in himself: Col. 1:19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." We delight in people and things as we prize them, and no otherwise. Jonathan highly prized David, and delighted in him accordingly. Jacob highly prized Rachel, and delighted in her answerably. You will delight in Christ as you prize him; if you prize him but a little, you will delight in him but a little.

[2.] *Secondly*, Remember this, ***a Christ highly prized will be a Christ gloriously obeyed.***

Every man **obeys** Christ as he prizes Christ, and no otherwise. The higher price any soul sets upon Christ, the more noble will that soul be in his obedience to Christ. If Christ were more prized in the world, he would be more obeyed in the world. A soul who highly prizes Christ is better at obeying than at disputing any command of Christ. If Christ will command such a soul to step over the world's crown to take up his cross, the soul will do it, as you may see in Moses, Heb. 11:24-26. He sets a higher price upon Christ's cross than upon Pharaoh's crown. When Christ's cross and the world's crown stood in competition, upon a bare command of God Moses steps over the world's crown to take up Christ's cross: "He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." And so Abraham, upon a bare command of God, leaves his country, and his near and dear relations. He wholly resigns up himself to God; he puts his hand into God's, and is willing that God should lead him where he pleases, and do with him what he pleases. [The command of God must outweigh all authority and example of men. —Jerome.]

I remember an excellent saying of Luther, "I had rather," says he, "fall with Christ than stand with Caesar." And indeed every gracious soul who highly prizes Christ will rather choose to fall with Christ than to neglect his obedience to Christ. By obeying Christ we gain more honor than we can give; by kissing the Son we even command him, and make him ours, etc.

[3.] *Thirdly*, Christians, remember this, ***all the causes of prizing people and things are eminently and only in Christ***; which bespeaks you all to set a very, very high price upon the Lord Jesus. Christ's beauty needs no letters of commendation. You prize some for their **beauty**; why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the fairest among the children of men, Psalm 45:1-2; Cant. 5:10, "My beloved is white and ruddy; the chief," or, the standard-bearer, "among ten thousand." You prize others for their **strength**; why, the Lord Jesus Christ has in him everlasting strength: Isaiah 26:4, "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength; he is the rock of ages." You prize others for bearing their father's image; why the Lord Jesus bears the image of his Father: Heb. 1:3, "He is the brightness of his Father's glory,

and the express image of his person." [The character of his subsistence. A comparison from the seal of a ring, the form of which is imprinted in the wax.] You prize others for their **wisdom** and **knowledge**; such a one is a very wise man, you say, and therefore you prize him; and such a one is a very knowing man, and therefore you prize him; why, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ: Col. 2:3, "In whom," says he, speaking of Christ, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The truth is, all those perfections and excellencies which are in all angels and men, they all center in Christ, they are all epitomized in Christ.

All the angels in heaven have but some of those perfections that are in Christ. All wisdom, and all power, and all goodness, and all mercy, and all love, etc., is in no glorified creature, no, not in all glorified creatures put together. But now in Christ all these perfections and excellencies meet, as all water meets in the sea, and as all light meets in the sun. Others you prize for their **usefulness**; the more useful people and things are, the more you prize and value them. The Lord Jesus Christ is of universal use to his people; why, he is the right eye of his people, without which they cannot see; and the right hand of his people, without which they cannot do, etc. He is of singular use to all his people. He is of use to weak saints—to strengthen them; and he is of use to doubting saints—to settle them; and he is of use to dull saints—to quicken them; and he is of use to falling saints—to support them; and he is of use to wandering saints—to recover them. In prosperity he is of use to keep his saints humble and watchful, spotless and fruitful; and in adversity he is of use to keep them contented and cheerful. All which should very much engage our hearts to prize this Christ. [Christ is, as Origen speaks, whatever we can desire. If we hunger and thirst, he is the food of the soul.]

Again, we prize things as they **suit** us; why, Christ is not only a good—but a suitable good. Christ is light to enlighten us, John 1:8-9; and he is life to enliven us. He is riches to supply us, and he is raiment to clothe us; he is a staff to support us, and he is a sword to defend us; he is bread to nourish us, and he is water to refresh us, and wine to cheer us; and what would we have more?

[4.] *Fourthly*—yet once more, that this may stick upon us, let us consider, *that where we are highly prized—there we highly prize.* [Christ

may well be compared to the trees of the sanctuary, Ezek. 47:12, which were both for food and for medicine.]

Why, the Lord Jesus Christ does exceedingly prize every believing soul; yes, even such poor weak saints—whom many swelled souls slight and despise as people of no worth, because they lack that light and knowledge, and those parts and gifts—which others have. Well, Christians, remember this, Christ prizes you as the apple of his eye, Zech. 2:8; he prizes you as his jewels, Mal. 3:17; he prizes you as his portion, Deut. 32:9, "The Lord's portion is his people;" he prizes you as his glory, Isaiah 46:13; he prizes you as his ornaments, Ezek. 7:20; he prizes you as his throne, Jer. 40:21; he prizes you as his diadem, Isaiah 62:3; he prizes you as his friends, John 14; he prizes you as his brethren, Heb. 2:11-12; he prizes you as his bride, Isaiah 62:5; he prizes you above his Father's bosom—for he leaves that to do you service, John 16:28; yes, he prizes you above his very life—he lays down his life to save your souls, John 10. Now, oh who would not highly prize such a Christ—who sets such an invaluable price upon such worthless souls!

[5.] *Fifthly* and lastly, consider, ***That your high prizing of Christ will work you to value the least things of Christ, above the greatest worldly good.***

It will make you value the least nod of Christ, the least love-token from Christ, the least good look from Christ, the least good word from Christ, the least truth of Christ, etc.—above all the honors, treasures, pleasures, and glories of this world: Psalm 119:72, "The law of your mouth is better than thousands of gold and silver." Luther would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible. And oh that a serious consideration of these things might work all your hearts to a high prizing of the Lord Jesus!

***Use 7. If Christ be so rich—then TRUST to Christ.***

Who will not trust a rich man? Everyone strives to trust a rich man: "The rich have many friends," Proverbs 14:20. Why, the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich; will you be persuaded to trust him? Oh trust him with your best treasures, with your choicest jewels, with your names, souls, estates, relations! The apostle was excellent at this: 2 Tim. 1:12, "I know him,"

says he, "in whom I have believed, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, until that day." [Interpreters differ about the pawn or pledge which the apostle committed to God's custody. One says it was his soul; a second says it was himself, which is all one; a third says it was his works; a fourth says it was his sufferings; a fifth says it was his salvation. Without doubt, it was all that was near and dear to him.] I have committed my soul to him, and my life to him, and my name to him, and all my mercies and enjoyments to him. The child cannot better secure any precious thing it has, than by putting it into the father's hands to keep. **Our mercies are always safest and surest when they are out of our hands, when they are in the hands of God.** We trust as we love, and we trust where we love; where we love much, we trust much. Much trust speaks out much love; if you love Christ much, surely you will trust him much.

That was a notable bold expression of Luther, "Let him who died for my soul—see to the salvation of it." I have committed my soul to him, I have given it up into his hands, who is my life, who is my love, and let him look after it, let him take care of it. In securing of that, he secures his own glory.

**Oh that Christians would trust in this rich Christ for a supply of necessities!** Is Christ so rich—and will you not take his word that he will not see you lack? Will you trust a rich man upon his word, and will you not trust a rich Christ upon his word? Do you believe he will give you a crown—and will you not trust him for a crust? Do you believe he will give you a kingdom—and do you doubt whether he will give you a cottage to rest in? Has he given you his blood—and do you think that he will deny you anything that is really for your good? Surely he will not, he cannot." [Christ's promises are ever performed, 2 Cor. 1:20. His promises are over-performed, 1 Cor. 2:9, etc.]

Again, ***Trust him for power against all the remainders of sin in you.*** Has Christ freed you from the damnatory power of sin, and from the dominion of sin—and will not you trust him for deliverance from the remainders of sin? Psalm 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, you shall purge them away." Oh excellent faith! Romans 8:1, 6:14.

Again, ***Trust him to bring you into the land of rest.*** Do you think that this Joshua is not able to carry you through all difficulties, dangers, and deaths? Do you think that he will leave you to die in the wilderness, who have already had some glimpses of heaven's glory? Oh trust to this Christ for the bringing your souls into the promised land! Christ would lose his glory should you fall short of glory, etc.

***Use 8. If Christ be so rich—then do not forsake him, do not leave, do not turn your backs upon him.*** Are there riches of justification, and riches of sanctification, and riches of consolation, and riches of glorification in Christ? Yes! Then do not depart from him, do not shake hands with him. [You read of no arms for the back, though you do for the breast, Eph. 6:11.] That is a sad complaint of God in Jer. 2:12-13, "Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the Lord. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." It is madness and folly to fly from the fountain—to the stream; from the light of the sun—to the light of a candle. And is it not greater madness and folly to forsake the Creator—to run after the creature? Oh say as Peter, "Where should we go, you have the words of eternal life," John 6:68. To run from Christ, is to run from all life, peace, and joy; it is to run from our strength, our shelter, our security, our safety, our crown, our glory. Crabs, which go backward, are reckoned among unclean creatures, Lev. 11:10. The application is easy.

Origen, on coming to Jerusalem, after he had shamefully turned his back upon Christ and his truth, and being exceedingly pressed to preach, at last he yields, and as he opened the book, he happened to cast his eye upon that place of the psalmist, "What have you to do to declare my statutes, or that you should take my covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction, and cast my word behind you?" Psalm 50:16-17. Now the remembrance of his own folly so reflected upon his conscience, that it made him close the book and sit down and weep. Such as forsake a rich, a full Christ—shall have weeping work enough.

That is a very solemn scripture, Jer. 17:13, "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will

be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water." Can you read this text, backsliding souls, and not tremble? etc.

**Use 9. If the Lord Jesus Christ be so rich, *Oh! then all you who have a saving interest in him, labor mightily to clear up your interest, and to be more and more confident of your interest in so rich a Jesus.***

My brethren, it is one thing for a man to have an interest in Christ, and another thing to have his interest cleared up to him. I do speak it with grief of heart, that even among such Christians that I hope to meet in heaven, there is scarce one of forty, nay, one of a hundred, that is groundedly able to make out his interest in the Lord Jesus. Most Christians live between fear and hope, between doubting and believing. One day they hope that all is well, and that all shall be well forever; the next day they are ready to say that they shall one day perish by the hand of such a corruption, or else by the hand of such or such a temptation; and thus they are up and down, saved and lost, many times in a day.

But you will say unto me, ***What means should we use to clear up our interest in Christ?*** I will tell you.

There are six distinct means that you should labor after, for the evidencing more and more your interest in Christ. And take it from experience, you will find that they will contribute very much for the evidencing your interest in Christ.

[1.] And the *first* is this, ***Faithfully and constantly fall in with the interest of Christ.***

Holiness is the interest of Christ, the gospel is the interest of Christ, the precious ordinances are the interest of Christ, etc. Now the more sincerely and soundly you fall in with the interest of Christ, the more abundantly you will be confirmed and persuaded of your interest in Christ. Such souls as fall in with strange interests, or with base and carnal interests, may justly question whether ever they had any real interest in Christ. Christians! did you more sincerely and fully fall in with Christ's

interest, you would less question your interest in Christ; this would scatter many a cloud. [The primitive Christians did generally fall in with the interest of Christ, and they generally had an assurance of their interest in Christ.]

[2.] *Secondly, Be kind to the Spirit of Christ.* [Lam. 1:16, Philip. 4:30, Isaiah 63:10.]

Do not grieve him, do not slight him. If you should set this Spirit mourning—who alone can evidence your interest—who alone can seal up your interest in Christ—by whom shall your interest in Christ be sealed up. Oh do not grieve the Spirit by acting against light, against conscience, against engagements; do not grieve him by casting his cordials and comforts behind your backs; do not grieve him by slighting and despising his gracious actings in others; do not cast water upon the Spirit—but wisely attend the hints, the items, and motions of the Spirit, and he will clear up your interest in Christ, he will make you say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his!" Cant. 2:16.

[3.] Thirdly, *Labor more and more after a full and universal conformity to Jesus Christ.*

The more the soul is conformable to Christ—the more confident it will be of its interest in Christ: 1 John 4:17, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." "As he, so are we." The child is not more like the father—than we are like our Savior. The child is the father multiplied, the second edition of the father. Our *summum bonum*—our *highest good*—consists in our full communion with Christ, and in our full conformity to Christ. Oh! if men were more universally conformable to Christ in their affections, ends, designs, and actings, etc., they would have abundantly more clear, full, and glorious evidences of their interest in Christ. **A more full conformity to Christ in heart and life will make your lives a very heaven**, etc. As all good orators endeavor to be like Demosthenes, so all good Christians should endeavor to be like Jesus Christ; for therein lies their glory and perfection.

[4.] Fourthly, *Interest Christ in the glory of all you enjoy, and in*

### ***the glory of all you do.***

This is a precious way to have your interest in Christ more and more evidenced to your own souls, 1 Cor. 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do—do it all for the glory of God." Such as are good at this, as are much in this—will find Christ every day a-clearing up more and more their interest in himself. It is not usually *night* for a long time, with such souls.

Oh Christians! interest Christ more and more in the glory of all your **graces**, interest him in the glory of all your **duties**, interest him in the glory of all your **abilities**, as Christ does interest you in himself, in his Spirit, in his graces, in his riches, in his titles, in his dignities, in his offices. Ah Christians! did you interest Christ more in all you **have**, in all you **are**, and in all you **do**—you would never be so full of fears, and doubts, and questions about your interest in Christ as you are, John 1:16, Rev. 1:5-6, 1 Peter 2:9. Your glorifying of Christ in all you have and do, will speak out not only the truth of your love—but also the strength and greatness of your love; and where men love much, where they love strongly, there they do not question the truth of their love. [The mother who strongly loves her child, does not question the truth of her love to her child.]

The heathen gods were contented to divide their honors among themselves; and hence the senate of Rome rejected Christ, from taking him to be a God, after that they had consulted about it; for, said they, if Christ comes to be acknowledged a God, he will not share with the rest, he will have all himself; and so upon this reason they refused him. Christians! Christ will not have any competitor; he will rather part with anything than with his glory: Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." Christ will rather part with his life than with his honor; therefore, let every Christian say as David does: 1 Chron. 29:11-13, "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Riches and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and it is at your discretion that people

are made great and given strength. O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name!" And clearly, friends, the more your hearts are led forth to interest Christ in all you enjoy, and in all you do, the more clear and glorious evidence you will have of your interest in Christ. Let his honor and glory lie nearer and nearer to your hearts—and you shall see that he has set you as a seal upon his arm, as a seal upon his heart.

[5.] The *fifth* means to gain the knowledge of your interest in Christ is, ***By cleaving to Christ, and whatever is dear to Christ—in the face of all miseries, difficulties, and dangers.***

It is nothing to cleave to Christ in fair weather, when everyone cleaves to Christ, when everyone professes Christ; but to cleave to him in a storm, when everyone runs from him, this speaks out a child-like disposition; it speaks out a Jacob's spirit: Psalm 44; Acts 5; Heb. 11; Dan. 3; Acts 21:13. Surely he must needs have much of Christ—which nothing can take off from cleaving to Christ. When the soul says to Christ, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me," Ruth 1:15-18.

When neither the frowns of men, nor the reproach of men, nor the contempt of men, nor oppositions from men—can take the soul off from cleaving to Christ—it will not be long before Christ speaks peace to such a soul: Psalm 63:8, "My soul follows hard after you, your right hand upholds me." In the Hebrew it is, "My soul cleaves to you," or "is glued to you," as Jonathan's soul cleaved to David, and as Jacob's soul cleaved to Rachel—in the face of all difficulties and troubles.

Doubtless, when the soul cleaves to Christ in the face of all afflictions and difficulties, this very much evidences of its interest in Christ. In temporals men cleave to people and things, as their interest is in them; and so it is in spirituals also. Christ cannot, Christ will not, throw such to hell—who hang about him, who cleave to him. [Shamma, one of David's worthies, stood and defended the field when all the rest fled.]

[6.] *Sixthly* and lastly, ***If you would know whether you have an***

***interest in Christ—then be very much in observing what interest Christ has in you.***

Observe whether he has the interest of a head, a husband, a father, or no. Christ has a general interest in all creatures—as he is the Creator and preserver of them; and he has a head's interest, a husband's interest, a father's interest—only in those who have a saving interest in him. The interest of the head, the husband, the father, is the greatest interest; it is the sweetest interest, it is a commanding interest, it is a growing interest, it is a peculiar interest, it is a lasting interest. And really, if the Lord Jesus has such an interest in you, you may be as confident that you have a real and glorious interest in him, as you are confident that you live. And thus much for the means whereby you may come to know your interest in rich Jesus.

Before I close up this discourse, give me permission to **speak a few words to poor sinners** who, to this very day, are afar off from this Jesus, who is so rich in all excellencies and glories. Ah poor hearts! you have heard much of the riches of the Lord Jesus, and oh that I could persuade with you to get a saving interest in this Christ! Get this Christ—and you get all. Miss him—and you miss all. It is a matter of eternal concernment to your souls. Nothing can make that man miserable—who has this rich Christ. Nothing can make that man happy—who lacks this rich Christ.

In Proverbs 4:5-7, "Get wisdom (that is Christ), get understanding, forget it not. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all your getting get understanding." And so in Proverbs 16:16, "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding, rather to be chosen than silver?" Had you all the power of the world, without a saving interest in Christ—you would be but weak," 1 Cor. 1:25-29. Had you all the wit and learning in the world, without a saving interest in Christ—you will be but a fool. Had you all the honors in the world—yet without a saving interest in Christ, you would be but base. Had you all the wealth in the world—yet without a saving interest in Christ—you would be but a beggar, Dan. 4:17; Luke 16:22-26, etc. Oh, therefore, labor for a a saving interest in Christ!

Oh, become the wise merchant at last! The wise merchant in the Gospel, parts with all to buy the pearl, to get an interest in Christ, Mat. 13:45-47. Oh it is your greatest wisdom, it is of an eternal concernment to your souls—to sell all, to part with all, for an interest in the Lord Jesus! Oh do not deal with your own souls, when Christ is offered to you, as sometimes simple people do when they go to market; they might have a good pennyworth—but they are loath to part with some old piece of gold that has been given them by a father or a friend; somewhat willing they are to have a good pennyworth—but unwilling they are to part with their gold. It is so with many poor sinners, when the Lord Jesus Christ is presented to their souls as a very glorious pennyworth, somewhat willing they are to have him—but unwilling they are to part with their old good, with some old sweet darling lust.

But, sinners, don't you deceive your own souls. **Sin and your souls must part—or Christ and your souls can never meet!** Sin and your souls must be two—or Christ and your souls can never be one. Christ is a most precious commodity; he is better than rubies, Proverbs 8:11, or the most costly pearls; and you must part with your old gold, with your shining gold, your old sins, your most shining sins—or you must perish forever. Christ is to be sought and bought with any pains—at any price. We cannot buy this gold too dear. He is a jewel more worth than a thousand worlds—as all know that have him. Get him—and get all; miss him—and miss all.

Now if ever you would get an interest in Christ, and so by gaining a saving interest in him, be possessed of all the riches and glory that come by him—then be sure to get your hearts possessed with these nine principles that follow.

[1.] And the first principle is this, ***That the great end and design of Christ's coming into the world, was the salvation of sinners.***

Get this principle rooted in your spirits. "I came not to call the righteous," says he, "but sinners to repentance," Mat. 9:13, Mark 2:17. And in 1 Tim. 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Christ lays aside his royal crown; he puts off his glorious robe; he leaves his Father's bosom; he

takes a journey from heaven to earth—and all to save poor lost sinners. That which Christ had most in his eye, and upon his heart, in his coming into the world—was the salvation of sinners. Lay up this truth, feed upon this honey-comb.

[2.] Secondly, Get this principle rooted upon your hearts, namely, ***That none ever yet obtained an interest in Christ but unworthy creatures.***

When you are pressed to get an interest in Christ, you are ready to say, Oh "I am unworthy," will Christ ever look after such a one as I am?

I answer—this is a most certain principle, that none ever attained an interest in Christ but unworthy creatures. Was Paul worthy before he had a saving interest in Christ? What worthiness was in Matthew when Christ called him from the tax collector's booth? And what worthiness was in Zaccheus when Christ called him down from the sycamore tree, and told him that this day salvation was come to his house? Was Manasseh or Mary Magdalene worthy before they had a saving interest in Christ? Surely not! Though you are unworthy—yet Christ is worthy; though you have no merit—yet God has mercy; though there is no salvation for you by the law—yet there is salvation for you by the gospel.

Again, Christ requires no worthiness in any man before he believes. He who won't believe before he is worthy—will *never* believe. [Such as shall go to prove he does—must make a new gospel, a new Bible.] If you look upon God with an evangelical eye, you shall see that he who is most unworthy—is most capable of mercy. A real sense of our own unworthiness renders us most fit for divine mercy. This objection, *I am unworthy*, is an unworthy objection, and speaks out much pride and ignorance of the gospel, and of the freeness and riches of God's grace, etc.

[3.] Thirdly, Let this principle dwell in you, namely, ***That Christ has lost none of his affections to poor sinners by going to heaven.***

Oh how did his affections work toward sinners when he was on earth! And certainly they work as strongly towards them now that he is in heaven. His love, his heart, his good-will, is as much towards them as

ever. Christ is Alpha and Omega; the phrase is taken from the Greek alphabet, whereof Alpha is the first letter, and Omega the last, Rev. 1:8. I am before all, and I am after all. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever," Heb. 13:8. Christ is the same before time, in time, and after time. Christ is unchangeable in his essence, in his promises, and in his love to poor sinners.

[4.] Fourthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, ***That he is able to save to the uttermost—all who come unto God by him.***

Heb. 7:25, "He is able to save to the uttermost;" that is, to all ends and purposes, perfectly and perpetually. He needs none to help him in the great business of redemption; he is thorough Savior; "he has trod the wine-press *alone*," Isaiah 63:3.

[5.] Fifthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, ***That the lack of such preparations or qualifications that many men lay a great stress upon, shall be no impediment to hinder your soul's interest in Christ, if you will but open to Christ, and close with Jesus Christ.***[Some men there are, who would have men better Christians before they come to Christ, before they believe in Christ—than usually they prove after they are come to Christ. Surely, did legal preachers seriously weigh the following scriptures, they would not so vehemently, I say not angrily, press the absolute necessity of such and such qualifications before faith in Christ, as they do: Mark 16:16; John 3:34; Heb. 11:6; Romans 14:28; John 5:12; Mat. 7:17-18, 12:33; Romans 8:2; Gal. 5:6.]

Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if *any* man hears my voice, and open to me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Pray tell me at whose door was this that Christ stood and knocked? Was it not at the Laodiceans' door? Was it not at their door who thought their penny as good silver as any—who said they were rich, and had need of nothing, when Christ tells them to their very faces, "that they were poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." None more unprepared, unqualified, and unfitted for union and communion with Christ than these lukewarm Laodiceans; and yet the Lord Jesus is very ready and willing that such should have intimate communion and

fellowship with him.

"If *any* man will open, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The truth of this you have further evidenced, Proverbs 1:20-24, and 8:1-6, and 9:1-6. All these scriptures with open mouth speak out the truth asserted, namely, That the lack of preparations or qualifications shall not hinder the soul's interest in Christ—if the soul will adventure itself by faith upon Christ. I ask, what qualifications and preparations had they in Ezekiel 16, when God saw them in their blood—and yet that was a time of love, and God even then spread his skirt over them, and made a covenant with them, and they became his. What qualifications or preparations had Paul, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, and Lydia, etc.? And yet these believed in Christ, these had a blessed and glorious interest in Christ, etc.

Ay—but some may object, and say,

*Objection:* What is the meaning of that text, Mat. 11:28, "Come unto me, all you who are *weary* and *heavy laden*, and I will give you rest"?

*Answer:* There is a threefold answer to be given to this objection.

*First,* Though the invitation be to those who are weary and heavy laden—yet the promise is made to coming, to believing. [The dove found no rest until she returned to the ark. No more will the troubled soul until it returns to Christ.]

*Secondly,* This text shows only this, that those who are burdened and bowed down under sin, and under the sense of divine wrath, are to come to Christ, and that there is no way for them to obtain ease and rest but by coming to Christ. But this text does not show that only these must come to Christ, or that only these may come to Christ.

*Thirdly,* and lastly, No one scripture speaks out the whole mind of God; and therefore you must compare and consult this scripture with the scriptures, and instances lately cited, and then you will clearly see that souls may believe in Christ, and come to obtain an interest in Christ, though they are not so and so prepared, nor so and so qualified, as some

would have them.

[6.] Sixthly, Get this principle rooted in your hearts, *That Christ is appointed and anointed by the Father to this very office of receiving and saving poor sinners.* [Moses was faithful in his office as a servant—but Christ as a Son, Heb. 3:2-6. Christ had never entered into glory, had he not been faithful in his offices, etc.]

Turn to Isaiah 61:1-4, John 6:28, and Psalm 68:18, "You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also (what for?), that the Lord God might dwell among them." Christ has received gifts for rebellious sinners, for rebellious Sabbath breakers, for rebellious swearers, for rebellious drunkards, etc.

"That the Lord God might dwell among them." That is, that he might have near communion and fellowship with them.

[7.] Seventhly, Get this principle rooted in you, *That it is the delight of Christ to give poor sinners a saving interest in himself.*

He is not only able to do it—but it is his delight to do it. Christ's soul is in nothing more. Witness his leaving his Father's bosom; witness his laying down his crown; witness those many sufferings and deaths that he went through in this world; witness those gospel acclamations, Mark 16:16, Rev. 22:17; witness those persuasive exhortations and gracious entreaties, Ezek. 53:11, Mat. 11:28, 2 Cor. 5:20; witness divine injunctions, 1 John 5:23, Mat. 11:21; witness those solemn lamentations, Mat. 23:37, Luke 19:42, Psalm 81:13; and witness the inward motions and secret excitations of his blessed Spirit, Gen. 6:3, all which speak out his great willingness and delight to save poor sinners.

So in Psalm 40:7-8, "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is in my heart;" or, as the Hebrew has it, "It is in the midst of my affections." Now mark, the will of the Father was the salvation of sinners. This was the will of the Father, "That Jesus Christ should seek and save those who are lost," Mat. 18:11. Now, says Christ, "I delight to do your will, O my God;" it is the joy and rejoicing of my heart to be a-seeking and a-saving

lost sinners. When Christ was hungry, he went not into a dining house—but into the temple, and taught the people most part of the day, to show how much he delighted in the salvation of sinners, etc. [Christ did so much delight, and his heart was so much set upon the conversion and salvation of the Samaritans, that he neglected his own body to save their souls, as you may clearly see in John 4.]

[8.] Eighthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, ***That as there is nothing in Christ to discourage you from looking after an interest in him—so there is everything in Christ that may encourage you to get an interest in him.***

Look upon his name: [*The name of a Savior is honey in the mouth, and music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart, says one.*] "Your name is an ointment poured out, and therefore do the virgins love you," Cant. 1:3. *The name of Jesus has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it, says Chrysostom; and so have all his other names.*

If you look upon Christ in his natures, in his offices, in his graces, in his beauties, in his gifts, and in his works, you will find nothing but what may encourage you to believe in him, and to resign up yourselves to him. Ah, poor sinners, what would you have? Is there not power in Christ to support you, and mercy in Christ to pardon you, and grace in Christ to heal you, and goodness in Christ to relieve you, and happiness in Christ to crown you—what more would you have? Oh that you would believe!

[9.] Ninthly, Let this principle be rooted in you, ***That the surest way, and the shortest way to mercy, and to get an interest in Christ, is by an instant casting of the soul by faith on Christ.***

There is no way under heaven to be saved by Christ but by believing. There is no way to get an interest in the riches of Christ but this, "he who believes shall be saved," let his sins be ever so great. "He who believes not, shall be damned," let his sins be ever so little. [John 3:16-18, 36, and 8:24, and 16:9, and 4:50, 53, and 5:24, and 6:35, 40, and 7:38, and 11:25, 26, and 12:46; Acts 10:43; Romans 3:26; 1 John 5:10-12.] And so much shall suffice to have spoken concerning this great and weighty point. I shall follow what has been said with my prayers, that what has been said

may work for your internal and eternal welfare, etc.

*I shall now proceed to the sixth doctrine, namely—***That it is the great duty of preachers to preach Jesus Christ to the people.**

"To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I **should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.**" Ephesians 3:8

I shall prove it, and then open it to you.

The **proof**. In Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach." What? Jesus Christ. So in Acts 3:20, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you." So in 1 Cor. 1:23-24, and 2 Cor. 4:5, "We preach not ourselves—but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." So in Acts 4:2, and 2:35, and 9:20. As soon as Paul was converted, straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he was the Son of God.

Now for the **opening** of the point, I shall only attempt two things.

(1.) Give you the reasons *WHY* it is the great duty of ministers to preach Christ to the people.

(2.) Which will be the main point—to show *HOW* they are to preach Christ to the people.

I confess this a very useful point in these days, wherein many men preach anything, yes, everything but a crucified Jesus. Well, Christians, remember this, as it is your duty to take heed **how** you hear, so it is as much your duty to take heed **who** you hear. Many there are, who count and call themselves the ministers of Christ, and yet have neither skill nor will to preach Jesus Christ, to exalt and lift up Jesus Christ in lip or life, in word or work. A sad reckoning these will have to make up at last!

## **I. WHY it is the great duty of ministers to preach Christ to the people.**

### **[1.] *Because this is the only way to save and to win souls to Jesus Christ.***

There is no other way of winning and saving souls—but by the preaching of Christ to the people. In Acts 4:10-12 compared, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." You may preach this and that, and a thousand things to the people, and yet never better them, never win them. It is only preaching of Christ, that allures and draws souls to Christ: John 17:3, "This is life eternal, to know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." **Ah, nothing melts the hearts of sinners, nor wins upon the hearts of sinners, like the preaching of the Lord Jesus.** It is true, the teaching of this and that opinion, may please many a man's fancy—but it is only the preaching of Christ that changes the heart, that conquers the heart, that turns the heart, etc. Peter, by preaching of a crucified Christ, converts three thousand souls at once, Acts 2:14-42. Were Christ more preached, men would be more enamored with him. He is only precious to those who hear of him, and who believe in him. Christ is in all respects incomparable; and therefore, as you would honor him, and win upon others, make him more and more known to the world, 1 Peter 2:7, etc.

### **[2.] *They are to preach Christ to the people, because it is the choicest and the chief way to ingratiate Christ with poor souls.***

This brings Christ and the soul together, and this keeps Christ and the soul together. Nothing endears Christ to the soul like this. We see, by woeful experience, Christ neglected, despised, scorned, and trampled upon by most; and no wonder, for many preach themselves more than Christ, and they preach men more than Christ, and their own notions and impressions more than Christ. Surely Christ is but little indebted to such ministers; and, I think, the souls of men as little. Oh that they were so wise as to consider of it, and lay it to heart! Surely a real Christian cares nothing for that which has nothing of Christ in it. There is a strange and

strong energy or forcibleness in hearing Christ and his beauties and excellencies displayed and discovered.

The daughters of Jerusalem, by hearing the church presenting Christ in so high a character, and by describing and painting him out in such lively colors, are so enchanted and inflamed that, might they but know where to find him, they would be at any pains to seek him. When Christ is set forth in his glories, with much affection and admiration, others fall in love with him, as you may see by comparing Cant. 5:10, *seq.*, with chapter 6:1.

**[3.] It is their great duty to preach Jesus Christ to the people, because the preaching up of Christ is the only way to preach down antichrist, or whatever makes against Christ.**

Some would have antichrist down, yes, they would have him down root and branch—but there is no such way for his total and final overthrow as the preaching of Christ; for the more the glory, fullness, perfection, and excellency of Christ is discovered, the more the horrid vileness and matchless wickedness of the man of sin will be discovered and abhorred, etc.: 2 Thes. 2:3-4, 7-10, "And then shall that wicked one be revealed." The Greek word properly signifies a lawless monster; one that holds himself subject to no law. **Pope** Nicholas the First said "that he was above law," because Constantine stiled the pope God; and of the same opinion were most of the popes.

"Whom he shall consume." The Greek word signifies to consume little by little, until a thing comes to nothing.

"With the spirit of his mouth." That is, with the evidence and glory of his word in the mouths of his messengers. The ministers of the word are as a mouth whereby the Lord breathes out that glorious, mighty, and everlasting gospel which shall by degrees bruise antichrist and all his adherents, and break them in sunder like a rod of iron, etc.

When Christ was born, all the idols that were set up in the world, as historians write, fell down. When Jesus Christ comes to be lifted up in a nation, in a city, in a town, in a family, yes, in any heart—then all idols without and within will fall before the power, presence, and glory of

Jesus. Since Luther began to lift up Christ in the gospel, what a deal of ground has antichrist lost! and he does and will lose more and more, as Christ comes to be more and more manifested and lifted up in the chariot of his word.

Many in these days that speak much against antichrist, have much of antichrist within them. And certainly there is no such way to cast him out of men's hearts, and out of the world, as the preaching and making known of Christ, as the exalting or lifting up of Christ in the gospel of grace. [Bellarmine confesses, to his great grief, that ever since the Lutherans have declared the **pope to be antichrist**, his kingdom has more and more decreased and decayed.]

**[4.] A fourth reason why they are to preach Christ to the people is this, *because else they contract upon themselves the blood of souls.***

There is no other way for them to avoid the contracting of the blood of men and women's souls upon them—but the preaching of Christ unto them. [The Germans have this proverb: say they, The pavement of hell is made of the bare skulls of priests and the glorious crests of gallants. Their meaning is, that the more eminent any one is in church or state, and does not employ his eminency accordingly, the more low shall they lie in hell, Rev. 18:11-14.] Now, a man were better to have all the blood of the world upon him than the blood of one soul. The blood of souls, of all blood, cries loudest and wounds deepest. The lowest, the darkest, and the hottest place in hell will be the sad and dreadful portion of such upon whose skirts the blood of souls shall be found at last.

Hence that passage of Paul in 1 Cor. 9:16, "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel." The motto that should be written upon preachers' study-doors, and on their walls, and on all the books they look on, on the beds they lie on, and on the seats they sit on, etc., should be this, "The blood of souls, the blood of souls!" The soul is the better, the noble part of man; it bears most of the image of God; it is capable of union and communion with God. Christ sweat for it, and bled for it; and therefore woe to those who make merchandise of the souls of men. This was a comfort and an honor to Paul, that he kept himself from the blood of souls, Acts 20:25-

27. He appeals to them that they were witnesses that "he was free from the blood of all men." Paul had held out Jesus Christ in his natures, in his names, in his offices, and in all his excellencies and perfections—and so frees himself from the blood of all men. And ministers can no way secure themselves from the blood of souls—but by *preaching up* and *living out* a crucified Jesus.

**[5.] The last reason is this, because the preaching of Christ contributes most to their comfort here, and to their reward hereafter; therefore they are to preach the Lord Christ to the people.**

When Luther was upon a dying bed, this was no small joy and comfort to his spirit. "You, O Lord," says he, "have I known, you have I loved, you have I taught, you have I trusted—and now into your hand I commend my spirit." There can be no greater joy to a minister than, by preaching Christ, to win souls to Christ: 1 Thes. 2:19-20, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. You are our glory and joy." Those who by preaching Christ win souls to Christ shall shine as the stars in the skies, Dan. 12:3. Every soul won to Christ is a glorious pearl added to a preacher's crown: 1 Peter 5:4, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory." A crown imports perpetuity, plenty, and dignity, the height of human ambition. [Jewel, Cowper, and others, had no such pleasure or joy as they had in preaching Christ unto the people.]

It is the opinion of some that there are three places of exaltation in heaven:

The first and highest is for converting ministers.

The second is for suffering martyrs.

The third is for persevering Christians.

Without doubt, those ministers shall be high in heaven who make it their heaven to hold forth Christ, and to win souls to Christ; who are willing to

be anything, to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all to poor souls. And thus I have given you the reasons of the point.

I shall now come to the second thing, which is the main thing, and that is, to show you,

## **II. HOW ministers are to preach Christ to the people.**

Many weak and slight spirits in these days think that it is as easy to preach as to play, and so they hop from one thing to another, and those who are not qualified nor fit for the least and lowest employment—yet judge themselves fit enough for the greatest and the weightiest employment in the world, and that which would certainly break the backs, not only of the best and strongest men—but even of the very angels, should not God put under his "everlasting arms." No labor to that of the mind, no travail to that of the soul—and those who are faithful in the Lord's vineyard find it so. Luther was accustomed to say that if he were again to choose his calling, he would dig, or do anything, rather than take upon him the office of a minister. And many other eminent lights have been of the same opinion with him. [2 Cor. 2:16, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Almost every upstart in these days thinks himself sufficient. "Who am I?" says Moses. Who am I not? says every green-head in these days.]

***But what are those rules that every preacher is to observe in his preaching of Christ to the people?*** I answer, These eleven:

**[1.] Jesus Christ must be preached *PLAINLY and CLEARLY, so that the lowest capacity may understand what they say concerning Christ.*** They must preach Christ for edification of others, and not to work admiration of themselves—as too many do in these days. Paul was excellent at this kind of preaching, 1 Cor. 14:18-19. He had rather speak five words to edification than ten thousand words to work admiration in ignorant people. So in 1 Cor. 2:4-5, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom—but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men—but in the power of God;" [Preaching is not a

matter of parts, words, or wit; it is opening up of Scripture which works upon the conscience, and which God owns and crowns.] as if he should say, such preach with little power who come with the excellency of speech, or with the enticing words of man's wisdom.

Ah! many there are—I speak it with grief, and to their shame, that delight to soar aloft in obscure discourses, and to express themselves in new-minted words and phrases, and to show high strains and flashes of wit, and all to work in the ignorant, admiration of themselves. Such kind of preachers are as clouds, and painted glass windows, that *hinder* the light from shining in upon souls, that hinder the sun of righteousness from breaking forth in his beauty and glory upon the spirits of poor creatures. Woe unto these men in the day when such souls shall plead against them, when they shall say, Lord, here are the people whose office and work was to make dark things plain, and they have made plain things dark and obscure, that we might rather esteem them—than any ways profit by them. [It was a saying of Luther: From a vain-glorious doctor, from a contentious pastor, and from unprofitable questions, good Lord deliver his church!]

Aaron's bells were of pure gold. Our whole preaching must be Scripture proof, or we and our works must burn together. The profoundest prophets accommodated themselves to their hearers' capacities. [If you will be a good preacher, study to be well acquainted with the Scripture.] Holy Moses covers his glistening face with a veil when he was to speak to the people. Yes, it is very observable that the evangelists spoke simply many times for their hearers' sake, even to manifest incongruity, as you may see in John 17:2, Rev. 1:4. But above all, it is most observable concerning God the Father, who is the great Master of speech, when he spoke from heaven, he makes use of three different texts of Scripture in one breath: Mat. 17:5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him." "This is my beloved Son," that scripture you have in Psalm 2:7; "In whom I am well pleased," this you have in Isaiah 42:1; "Hear him," this you have in Deut. 18:15; all which may bespeak them to blush, who through curious wiseness disdain at the stately plainness of the Scripture!

Oh how unlike to God are such preachers, who think to correct the divine

wisdom and eloquence with their own infancy, vanity, novelty, and sophistry! Yes, Jesus Christ himself, the great doctor of the church, teaches this lesson: Mark 4:33, "And with many such parables spoke he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it;" not as he was able to have spoken. He could have expressed himself at a higher rate than all mortals can! he could have been in the clouds. He knew how to knit such knots that they could never untie—but he would not. He delights to speak to his hearers' shallow capacities. So in John 16:12, "I have many things to say unto you—but you cannot bear them now." He who speaks not to the hearers' capacities is as a barbarian to them, and they to him.

"He is the best teacher," says Luther, "who preaches simply, who preaches most plainly." He is not the best preacher who tickles the ear, or that works upon the imagination, etc.—but he who breaks the heart and awakens the conscience. It is sad to consider how many preachers in these days are like Heraclitus, who was called "the dark doctor," because he affected dark speeches. Oh how do many in these days affect sublime notions, uncouth phrases—making plain truths difficult, and easy truths hard! "They darken counsel by words without knowledge," Job 38:2. But how unlike to Christ, the prophets, and apostles these dark doctors are, I will leave you to judge; nor would I have their reckonings for all the world; I will leave them to stand or fall to their own Master. God loves, owns, and crowns plain preaching. Though some account it foolishness—yet "to those who are saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1:20-30. I have stayed the longer upon this first direction, because of its great usefulness in these deluding days.

**[2.] As they must preach Christ plainly, so they must preach Christ *FAITHFULLY*.** Proverbs 13:17, 25:13, Job 33:23. Ministers are stewards, 1 Cor. 4:2; and you know it is the duty of a steward to be faithful in his stewardship, to give to every man the portion that is due to him, cheering up those hearts that God would have cheered, and weakening those wicked hands that God would have weakened, and strengthening those feeble knees that God would have strengthened. Ministers are ambassadors; and you know it is the great concern of ambassadors to be very faithful in their master's messages. God looks more, and is affected and pleased more, with a minister's faithfulness

than with anything else. A great voice, an affected tone, studied notions, and silken expressions, may affect and please poor weak souls; but it is only the faithfulness of a minister in his ministerial work that pleases God, that wins upon God: Mat. 25:21-23, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of the Lord:" a joy too big to enter into you, and therefore you must enter into it. This was Paul's glory, Acts 20:27, that he "had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God." Neither fear nor favor swayed him one way or another—but he was faithful in his Master's work, and usually God crowns him and his labors most, and sends most fish into his net—who is most faithful, though he be less skillful; who has more of the heart in the work, though he has less of the brain. [The office of a minister is the highest office; and if his office be highest, his faithfulness must be answerable, or he will be doubly miserable.]

The maid was looking for employment, when a man asked her, "Will you be faithful if I buy you?" "Ay," said she, "that I will though you do not buy me." So ministers must be faithful, though God should not buy them, though he should not thus and thus encourage them in their work. Their very feet are beautiful who are faithful, and their message most comfortable to those who sigh and mourn—who labor and languish under the sense of sin and fear of wrath, Isaiah 52:7.

### **[3.] They must preach Christ *HUMBLY* as well as faithfully.**

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Corinthians 4:5. Paul does not compliment as the men of the world do, but he spoke as it was, for there are no greater servants than those who are servants to the souls of men for Jesus' sake. So John was very humble in the exercise of his ministry: John 3:30-31, "He must increase—but I must decrease," etc.

Luther used to say, "that a minister must take heed of bringing three dogs into the pulpit, namely, pride, covetousness, and envy." The friends of the bridegroom must not woo and sue for themselves—but for the bridegroom. Dispensers of the gospel are the bridegroom's friends, and they must not speak one word for the bridegroom and two for themselves, as has been the trade of many weak and worthless men. It is

the greatest glory of a minister in this world to be high in spiritual work and humble in heart. Vain-glory is a pleasant thief; it is the sweet spoiler of spiritual excellencies. Paul was very humble in the exercise of his ministry: none so high in worth as he, nor any so low and humble in heart as he. Though he was the greatest among the apostles—yet he accounts himself "less than the least of all saints;" yes, he counted it not only his duty but his glory, to be a servant to the weakest saints: "To the weak I became as weak;" "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not," 1 Cor. 9:22, 2 Cor. 11:29.

**[4.] As they are to preach the Lord Jesus Christ humbly, so they are to preach him *WISELY*.** In Proverbs 11:30, "He who wins souls is wise;" and indeed the greatest wisdom in the world is requisite to the winning of souls to Christ. He who wins souls, or he who catches souls, as the fowler does birds, as the Hebrew word imports, or fishermen fishes, "he is wise." There is a holy and a heavenly craft required in the winning of souls to Christ: 2 Cor. 12:16, "Nevertheless being crafty," says the apostle. He speaks of a holy and heavenly craft. [If one soul is more worth than a world, as he has told us, who only went to the price of it, Mat. 16:26, then they must needs be wise who win souls to Christ.]

It is written of the fox, that when he is very hungry for prey, and can find none, that he lies down and pretends himself dead, and so the fowls light upon him, and then he catches them. Paul, hungering after the welfare of the Corinthians' souls, makes use of his heavenly craft to catch them. There is a great deal of wisdom required to hold out Christ unto the people, not only as a good—but as the greatest good, as the choicest good, as the chief good, as the most suitable good, as an immutable good, as an independent good, as a total good, and as an eternal good. Christ must thus be held forth to draw souls to fall in love with him, and to work their hearts to run out after him. There is wisdom required to answer all cavils and objections which keep Christ and poor souls asunder. There is wisdom required to take souls off from all false foundations that they are apt to build upon; there is wisdom required to present Christ freely to souls, in opposition to all unrighteousness, and to all unworthiness in man; there is wisdom required to suit things to the capacities and conditions of poor souls, to make dark things plain, and hard things easy.

Ministers must not be like him in the emblem, who gave straw to the dog and a bone to the donkey; but they must suit all their discourses to the conditions and capacities of poor creatures, or else all will be lost: time lost, pains lost, God lost, heaven lost, and souls lost forever.

**[5.] They must preach Christ, ZEALOUSLY, BOLDLY,** as well as wisely. Acts 4:20. When they had charged them that they should preach no more in the name of Christ, *Why, say they! what do you tell us of the whip, or of prisons, or of this and that?* "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." So in Jer. 20:9, "Your word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot." Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Israel their sins." And Isaiah had his tongue touched with a coal of fire from the altar, chapter 6:6-7. And when the disciples were to go and preach the gospel, the fire sat upon their tongues, Acts 2:34.

The worst of men are in a dead sleep, and the best of men are too often in a sinful slumber, as the spouse in Cant. 5:2, and the wise virgins in Mat. 25; and therefore faithful ministers had need cry aloud; they had need to be courageous and zealous, to awaken both sinners and saints, that none may go sleeping to hell. Every coward is a murderer, as the philosopher well observed. [Basil, Luther, Latimer, Dering, and multitudes of others, have been very zealous and courageous in their ministry, etc.] **The cowardice of the minister is cruelty; if he fears the faces of men he is a murderer of the souls of men.** Ministers must say, as Hector in Homer, "I will combat with him, though his hands were as fire, and his strength as iron." Let men's hands be as fire and their strength as iron—yet ministers must deal with them, and strive to make a conquest on them, Ezek. 2:3, *seq.*

Luther professed that he had rather be accounted anything than be accused of wicked silence in Christ's cause. "Let me be accounted," says he, "proud, let me be accounted covetous, let me be accounted a murderer, yes, guilty of all vices—just so that I be not proved guilty of wicked silence for the Lord Jesus Christ." [Those who write the story of the travels of the apostles, report that Simon Zelotes preached here in England. If ever there needed some Zelotes it is now; such, as Epiphanius

speaks of Elijah, that he sucked fire out of his mother's bosom.]

Themistocles being about to speak to the general of the Greek's army, against Xerxes, he held up his staff, as if he had been about to strike him, "Strike," said Themistocles, "but yet hear." So should ministers say, strike—but yet hear; rail—but yet hear; despise—but yet hear; censure—but yet hear; oppose—but yet hear; do what you will—but yet hear. Says Augustine, "He is no friend to God, who is not zealous for him."

When one desired to know what kind of man Basil was, there was, presented to him in a dream, a pillar of fire with this motto, *Basil is such a one, all on a-light fire for God*. So every minister should be all on a-fire for God.

[6.] **They are to preach Christ *LABORIOUSLY, PAINSTAKINGLY, FREQUENTLY*.** [The doctor has his fee though the patient dies, and the vine-dresser has his reward though the vine withers; so will God deal with faithful ministers, 2 Cor. 2:16; Isaiah 49:2-4.] A minister must be like the bee, that is still a-flying from one flower to another to suck out honey for the good of others. Should not that dreadful word make every idle shepherd tremble: Jer. 48:10, "Cursed be he who does the work of the Lord negligently." 1 Cor. 15:58, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Oh the dreadful woes which are pronounced in Scripture against idle shepherds! Jer. 23:1, "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: Destruction is certain for you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep? You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve. Ezekiel 34:2-3 (Zech. 11:17; Mat. 23:13-16, 23, 25, 27.)

The great Shepherd of our souls, the Lord Jesus, was still a-feeding of his flock, and much in provoking others to the same work: John 21:15, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep;" 2 Tim. 4:2, "Preach the word in season, and out of season." Christ wept for souls, and bled for souls, and prayed for

souls; and shall not ministers sweat much for souls, and work much for the good of souls? Doubtless they will give but a sad account to Christ, who make anything serve to fill up the hour; that spend only two or three hours at the end of a week to fit themselves for Sabbath exercises. **Idleness is hateful in any—but most abominable and intolerable in ministers;** and sooner or later none shall pay so dear for it as such. Witness the frequent woes which are denounced in Scripture against them. Where should a soldier die but in the field? And where should a minister die but in the pulpit? [If a minister had as many eyes as Argus to watch, and as many hands as Briareus to labor—he could find employment enough for them all.]

Pompey, in a great dearth at Rome, having provided store of provisions for his citizens that were ready to perish, and being ready to put to sea, he commanded the pilot to hoist sail and be gone. The pilot told him that the sea was tempestuous, and that the voyage was likely to be dangerous. "It matters not," said Pompey, "hoist up sail; it is not necessary that we should live, it is necessary that they should be preserved from ruin and famine." So should ministers say, it is not necessary that we should live—but it is necessary that poor souls should live and be happy forever; it is necessary that they should be acquainted with the things of their peace; it is necessary that they should be delivered from the power of Satan and from wrath to come; and therefore it is necessary that we should be frequent and "abundant in the work of the Lord," and not plead storms and tempests, or that a lion is in the way. [The angels on Jacob's ladder were some ascending, others descending, none standing or sitting still. Ministers must be like them.]

It was Vespasian the emperor's speech, and may well be applied to ministers, An emperor ought to die standing.

**[7.] As they are to preach Christ laboriously, so they are to preach Christ *EXEMPLARILY*.** [A preacher, as Quintilian says of an orator, should be a well-spoken and well-living person.] 1 Peter 5:3, "Be an *example* to the flock." They must preach Christ as well in their life—as in their doctrine. Ministers must not be hot in the pulpit, and cold and careless in their lives. They must say, as Gideon said to his soldiers: Judges 17:17, "Look on me and do likewise;" Mat. 5:16, "Let your light so

shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Ministers are called angels, and they are called stars, because they should shine in righteousness and holiness.

What Caesar once said of his wife, "that it was not enough for her to be without fault—but she should be without all *suspicion* of fault," may well be applied to ministers, who, of all men in the world, should be most free from the very appearances of evil. **The lives of ministers oftentimes convince more strongly than their words; their tongues may persuade—but their lives command.** [John the abbot professes that he had never taught others anything which he had not first practiced himself.]

"Talk not of a good life," said the heathen, "but let your life speak." God appointed that both the weights and measures of the sanctuary should be twice as large as those of the commonwealth, to show, that he expects much more of those who wait upon him in the sanctuary than he does of others. Ministers should be like musk among linen, which casts a fragrant smell, or like that box of spikenard, which being broken open, filled the house with its odor.

Gregory says of Athanasius, that his life was a continual sermon and wooing men to Christ. Aristotle requires this in an orator—that he be a good man; how much more then should God's orators be good and gracious? When Eli's sons were wicked, the people abhorred the offering of the Lord, 1 Sam. 2:17; and **what is that that renders the things of God so contemptuous and odious in the eyes of many people in this nation—but the ignorance, looseness, profaneness, and baseness of those who are the dispensers of them. Unholy ministers pull down instead of building up. Oh the souls who their lives destroy! These, by their loose lives, lead their flocks to hell, where they themselves must lie lowermost.** [The souls of priests, I may say of ministers, must be purer than the sunbeams, says Chrysostom. Jewel, Bucer, and Bradford, were famous examples for holiness.]

A painter being blamed by a cardinal for putting too much red upon the visages of Peter and Paul, tartly replied, that he painted them so, as

blushing at the lives of those men who styled themselves their successors. Ah how do the lewd and wicked lives of many who are called and accounted ministers, make others to blush!

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their ungodly lives, made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach: "Where," said they, "is that good law which they do believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they do learn? They read the holy Gospel—and yet are unclean; they hear the apostle's writings—and yet are drunk; they follow Christ—and yet disobey Christ; they possess a holy law—and yet do lead impure lives." As this is very applicable to many professors in those days, so it is applicable to many preachers also.

I have read of a scandalous minister that was struck at the heart, and converted in reading those words: Romans 2:21, "You who teach another, teach you not yourself?" If this treatise should fall into any such hand, oh that it might have the same operation! **Wicked ministers do more hurt by their lives than they do good by their doctrine.**

I have read of a woman who turned atheist because she lived under a great learned doctor who preached excellently—but lived very licentiously.

The heathen brings in a young man, who hearing of the adulteries and wickedness of the gods, said, "What! do they so, and shall I stick at it?" So say most, when their teachers and leaders are lewd and wicked, what! do they such and such abominations, and shall we stick at it?

When one debauched in life among the Lacedemonians stepped up and gave good counsel, they would not receive it; but when another of a better life stepped up and gave the same counsel, they presently followed it. The application is easy. Every minister's life should be a commentary upon Christ's life; nothing wins and builds like this. [Chrysostom preached so feelingly and so affectionately that his hearers thought they had as good be without the sun in the skies—as Chrysostom in the pulpit.] "Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity." 1 Timothy 4:12. "Watch your **life** and doctrine closely." 1 Timothy 4:16

**[8.] Ministers must preach *FEELINGLY, EXPERIMENTALLY*, as well as exemplarily. They must speak from the heart—to the heart;** they must feel the worth, the weight, the sweet of those things upon their own souls who they give out to others. 1 John 1:1-3, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard." The highest goal in preaching, is to feel what a man speaks, and then speak what a man feels.

Praxiteles exquisitely drew love, taking the pattern from that passion which he felt in his own heart.

It was said of Luther, that he spoke as if he had been within a man. Ministers must so speak to the people, as if they lived in the very hearts of the people; as if they had been told all their needs, and all their ways, all their sins, and all their doubts. No preaching compared to this, no preachers compared to these.

Ministers should not be like Caesar's soldier—who dug a fountain for Caesar, and himself perished for lack of water. Yet many such there are in these days, who dig and draw water out of the wells of salvation for others, and yet themselves eternally perish, by their non-drinking of the waters of life. If they are monsters, and not to be named among men, that feed and feast their servants—but starve their wives, then what monsters are those who feed and feast other men's souls, with the dainties and delicacies of heaven—but starve their own? No misery, no hell to this!

**[9.] As ministers must preach the word feelingly, experimentally, so they must preach the word *RIGHTLY*.** They must divide and distribute the word according to everyone's spiritual estate and condition. They must give comfort to whom comfort belongs, and counsel to whom counsel belongs, and reproof to whom reproof belongs, and terror to whom terror belongs: 2 Tim. 2:15, "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth;**" or, "Rightly cutting into parts the

word of truth," Isaiah 40:1-2, 50:4; 2 Cor. 5:10-12. Some say the metaphor is taken from the priests of the Old Testament, who having slain the beasts that were to be sacrificed, did divide the same in an accurate manner. Others say it is a metaphor taken from a cutter of leather, who cuts off that which is superfluous. So in the handling of the word, questions which are superfluous and unprofitable, ought to be cut off; and that only is to be held forth which makes for the hearer's instruction, edification and consolation. Others say the metaphor is taken from the cutting and squaring out of the streets and highways, and setting out the bounds of men's lands and possessions. Others by cutting the word of truth aright, understand the raising of right instructions, by following the rule of the word, only as a ploughman who draws or cuts a right furrow in the ground. [And if Galen could say that in anatomizing a man's brain, physicians must carry themselves as men do in the temple, how much more must ministers do so in dividing the word of life!]

To divide the word aright, is to cut out to everyone his portion, as a parent cuts out bread to his children. A general doctrine not applied, is as a sword without an edge, not in itself—but to the people, who by reason of their own singular senselessness and weakness, are not able to apply it to their own estates and conditions; or as a whole loaf set before children, that will do them no good. A garment fitted for all bodies, is fit for no body; and that which is spoken to all is taken as spoken to none.

**Doctrine is but the drawing of the bow; application is the hitting of the mark.** How many are wise in generals—but vain in their practical inferences! Such preachers are fitter for Rome than England. Souls may go sleeping and dreaming to hell before such preaching, before such preachers will awaken them and show them their danger. Oh that therefore the people were so wise—that when sin is reprov'd, judgments threatened, miseries promised, and Christ freely and fully offered—they would apply all to their own souls! **This is the misery of many in our days; they come to sermons as beggars come to banquets, carrying nothing but the scraps away with them.**

[10.] **They must preach the word ACCEPTABLY**, as well as rightly. Eccles. 12:10, "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words;" or words of delight, as the Hebrew has it, "and that which was written was

upright, even words of truth." Ministers' words should be divinely delectable and desirable; they should divinely please, and divinely profit; they should divinely tickle, and divinely please both ear and heart. A minister should be a weighty speaker; he should clothe his doctrine in such a lovely dress, as that he may by it slide insensibly into his hearers' hearts. Ministers should clothe their matter with decent words. The leaves give some beauty to the tree. Good matter in an unfitting language, is like a bright candle in a detestable candlestick; or like a lovely body in tattered clothes; or like a gold ring on a leprous hand.

"Truth," says one, "loves to be plain—but not repugnantly stated." As she loves not to be clad in mirthful colors, like a wanton strumpet—so not in repulsive rags like a nasty creature. Aaron's bells were golden bells, sounding pleasantly, and not as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals. Holy eloquence is a gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 18:24, and may doubtless, as well as other gifts of the Spirit, be made prudently useful to the setting forth of divine truth, and the catching of souls by craft, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 12:16. Surely where it is, it may be made use of, as an Egyptian jewel to adorn the tabernacle. [It was a fine commendation given by Quintilian of Thucydides: *Thucydides writes sound and lively, close and clear; he is solid and succinct, sententious and judicious.*]

Lactantius has well observed, that philosophers, orators, and poets, were therefore very insightful, in that they easily ensnared incautious minds with sweetness of speech. Therefore his advice is, even in delivering the truth of Christ, to sweeten the speech for the winning of them to Christ, who will neither hear, nor read, nor value, nor regard the truth, except it be polished and trimmed up in a lovely dress. [Basil and Bucer were sweet and concise, full and clear, in their discourses.]

**[11.] In the last place, and so to add no more, as they must preach the word acceptably, so they must preach the word *CONSTANTLY*.** [The show-bread stood all the week before the Lord, to show that preaching is not out of season on any day.] 1 Cor. 7:10, 24; they must not leave the word to serve tables, Acts 6:1, as some have done for worldly advantages; they must not change their black cloaks, for scarlet cloaks; they must abide and continue in their places and employments; they must neither change their work nor their master: Acts 6:4, "But we

will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." They would not assign their charge to some surrogates or deputies—that themselves might live at ease. No! they were peremptorily resolved to hold on, to continue in these two choice duties, prayer and ministry of the word.

So in chapter 26:22, "I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen." 1 Tim. 4:15, 16, "Meditate upon these things; give yourself wholly to them, [spend your time in them], that your profiting may appear to all, or in all things. Take heed unto yourself, and unto your doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this you shall both save yourself, and those who hear you." 2 Tim. 3:14, "But continue you in the things which you have learned, and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them." [Abide, keep your station, you will be put to it, you will meet with earthquakes.] Eccles. 12:9, "Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs."

Hosea was eighty years a prophet in Israel, and yet did not convert them; yet notwithstanding all discouragements he continued constant, and that with abundance of freshness and liveliness.

Chrysostom compares good pastors to fountains that ever send forth waters, or conduits which are always running, though no pail be put under.

Erasmus says of Jerome, **He allowed least time for sleep, little for food, none for idleness.** It best becomes a minister to die preaching in a pulpit.

Now if this be so, then by way of use let me say, *That this truth looks very sourly and badly upon all those who preach anything rather than Christ.*

The Lord be merciful to them! How have they forgotten the great work about which their heads and hearts should be most exercised, namely—

the bringing in of souls to Christ, and the building up of souls in Christ. Where do we find in all the Scripture, that Christ, his prophets or apostles, did ever in their preaching meddle with businesses of state, or things of a mere civil concernment? "My kingdom is not of this world. Who has made me a judge?" says Christ.

I hope it will not be counted presumption in me if I shall propound a few rules for such to observe, who are willing to preach Christ to poor souls. I will only propound three.

**[1.] *If you would preach Christ to the people, according to the rules last mentioned—then you must get Christ within you.***

There is nothing that makes a man indeed so able to preach Christ to the people, as the getting of Christ within him; and it is very observable, that the great Rabbis and doctors who lack Christ within, they do but bungle in the work of the Lord, in the preaching of a crucified Jesus. What sad, dead, and pitiful work would they make! Yes, for lack of Christ within, how little of Christ do they understand! How little of Christ do they make known, notwithstanding all their borrowed helps! Paul was a man who had got a Christ within him: Gal. 2:20, "I live; yet not I—but Christ lives in me: and the life that I live is by faith in the Son of God," etc.

Compare this with Gal. 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you." A Christ within, makes him travail in birth. The Greek word translated, "I travail in birth," signifies not only the travail of the woman at the birth of the child—but also the painful bearing thereof before the birth. The pains of travail breed not a greater desire to see a child born into the world—than Paul's love bred in him, until Christ were anew formed in them, 2 Cor. 11:23. No man did so much for the winning of souls to Christ as Paul, nor any man had so much of a Christ within him as Paul. Nothing will naturalise a minister's heart to his work—like Christ within; nothing will make him so wise, so painstaking, so watchful, so careful to win souls—as Christ within; nothing will make him hold out and hold on in the work of the Lord, in the face of all oppositions, persecutions, dangers, and deaths—as Christ within; nothing will make a man strive with sinners, and weep over sinners, and wait upon sinners for their return—as Christ within. [As nurses to princes'

children are fed with the best fare—but not for their own sakes—but for the children's sake to whom they give nurse, so it is with many ministers, 2 Tim. 2:24-25.] Such ministers as have not Christ within them, will find no comfort, and as little success, in their preaching of Christ. Above all gettings, get Christ within—or else after all your preaching, and yourself—will be a cast-away.

**[2.] Those who would preach Christ to the people, must *study more Scripture truths, Scripture mysteries—than human writings.***

They must study God's book more than all other books. The truth and antiquity of the *book of God* has no equal, either in age or authority. No writings are comparable to the writings of the scriptures, for,

1, antiquity [Moses is found more ancient than all those whom the Grecians make most ancient; as Homer, Hesiod, and Jupiter himself, whom the Greeks have seated in the top of their divinity.];

2, rarity [preciousness];

3, variety;

4, brevity;

5, perspicuity;

6, harmony;

7, verity [truth].

Gregory calls the Scripture, **the heart and soul of God**; for in the Scriptures, as in a mirror, we may see how the heart and soul of God stands towards his poor creatures. It was the glory of Apollos that he was mighty in the Scripture, Acts 18:24; John 5:39, "*Search the Scriptures,*" says Christ. The Greek word signifies to search as men search for gold in mines. You must search the Scriptures, not superficially but narrowly. The Scriptures are a great depth, wherein the choicest treasures are hid; therefore you must dig deep if you will find. Col. 3:16, "Let the word of

Christ dwell richly in you;" or as the Greek has it, "Let the word of Christ indwell in you, as an engrafted word, incorporated into your souls." Let the word be so ingested and digested by you, as that you turn it into a part of yourselves. You must be familiarly acquainted with the word; you must not let it pass by you as a stranger, or lodge and sojourn with you as a wayfaring man; it must continually abide with you, and dwell richly in you.

2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." All books and helps are not comparable to the Bible, for the completing and perfecting of a man for the work of the ministry.

That which a papist reports of their sacrament of the mass, that there are as many mysteries in it as there are drops in the sea, dust on the earth, angels in heaven, stars in the sky, atoms in the sunbeams, or sands on the sea-shore, etc., may be truly asserted of the word of God; no study like the study of the Scripture—for profit and comfort. Count Anhalt, that princely preacher, was accustomed to say, "That the whole Scriptures were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus," he being to be found almost in every page, in every verse, in every line. [*While they burned us, said Du Moulin, for reading the Scriptures, we burned with zeal to be reading of them. But where is this brave spirit now?*]

Luther would often say, "That he had rather that all his books should be burned, than that they should be a means to hinder people from studying of the Scripture."

**[3.] Such as would preach Christ aright to the people, had need dwell much upon the vanity of human doctrines.**

The vanity of which doctrines may be thus discovered:

**First, They do not discover sin in its ugliness and filthiness as the Scriptures do.** They search but to the skin, they reach not to the heart; they do not do as the master did in Jonah's ship, when they were in

a storm.

**Secondly, Human doctrines have no humbling power in them.** They may a little tickle you—but they can never humble you; they cannot cast down Satan's strongholds; they cannot melt nor break the heart of a sinner; they cannot make him cry out with the leper, "Unclean, unclean!" [These things had need be seriously minded in these days, wherein human doctrines are so much exalted and admired.]

**Thirdly, Human doctrines nourish not the noble part, the soul of man.** The prodigal was likely to starve before he returned to his father's house. A man may study much, and labor much, and lay out much of his time and spirits about human doctrines, and yet after all be like Pharaoh's lean kine. A man who studies human doctrines does but feed upon ashes.

**Fourthly, Human doctrines cannot cure a wound in the conscience.** The diseased woman spent all she had upon physicians—but was not a penny the better. The remedy is too weak for the disease. Conscience, like Prometheus' vulture, will still lie gnawing, notwithstanding all that such doctrines can do.

**Fifthly, Human doctrines are so far from enriching the soul, that they usually impoverish the soul.** They weaken the soul; they expose the soul to the greatest needs and to the greatest weaknesses; they play the harlot with the soul; they impoverish it, and bring it to "a morsel of bread." Who so poor in spiritual experiences and heavenly enjoyments—as such that sit under the droppings of human doctrines?

**Sixthly, Human doctrines make men servants to the whims and corruptions of men;** they make men-pleasers of men rather than pleasers of God; yes, they make men set up themselves and others, sometimes in the place of Christ—and sometimes above Christ.

I hope these few short hints may prevail with some to fall in with this counsel, that so they may the better preach the Lord Jesus to the people. And so much for this doctrine.

Having spoken much concerning ministers' duty, I shall now speak a little concerning **the ministers' dignity**, and so finish this text.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!"  
Ephesians 3:8

This **grace**, this **favor**, this **honor** is given to me—that I should preach, etc. I look not upon it as a poor, low, base, contemptible thing—but as a very great honor, "that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

The observation that I shall speak to is this: *That the office of a minister or preacher is honorable.*

For the understanding of this point, premise with me two things:

*First*, That by a minister, I understand one who is qualified according to gospel rules, and who is internally called by God, and externally called by the people of God, to the ministerial office.

The *second* thing that I would have you premise with me for the understanding of the point is this, that the common appellation of those who are set apart for the preaching of the gospel in the New Testament is *ministers*. So in 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6, and chapter 6:4, and chapter 11:15, 23; 1 Tim. 4:16, and in many other places, the word minister is a title of office, service, or administration given frequently to the preachers of the gospel. As for the names of ambassadors, stewards, and the like, wherewith they are often honored, they are figurative, and given to them by allusion only.

These two things being premised, we shall now proceed to the opening of the point.

1. And, in the first place, I shall prove that the office of a minister is an

honorable office.

2. And then, in the second place, I shall show you what honor is due to them.

3. And then, in the third place, I shall show you how you are to honor them.

4. And then, in the last place, we shall bring home all by a word of application.

Christians, give me permission to tell you this as an aside—that since the gospel has shined in England, a godly, faithful ministry was never more subtly and vehemently struck at by men who make a fair show, and by men of corrupt doctrines and wicked lives. This age has many church destroyers. Some there are, who under that notion of plucking up corrupt ministers, would pluck up by the very roots the true ministry. But God has and will be still too hard for such men. If they will be monsters, God will be sure to be master. His faithful ministers are stars which he holds in his right hand, Rev. 2:1; and men shall as soon pull the sun out of the skies, as pull them out of the hand of God.

Now, considering that there is such a spirit abroad in the world, I hope no sober, serious Christians will be offended at my standing up to vindicate the honor of a godly, faithful ministry. In order to which,

**I. I shall first prove that the office of a minister is honorable;** and to me these following things speak it out:

[1.] *The several **names** and titles which are given to them in Scripture,* does speak them out to be honorable. They are called fathers, stewards, ambassadors, overseers, and angels, as you all know, who know anything of Scripture. To spend time to prove this, would be to light candles to see the sun at noon.

[2.] *Their **work** is honorable.* Their whole work is about souls, about winning souls to Christ, and about building souls up in Christ; and to these two heads the main work of the ministry may be reduced. The more

noble the soul is, the more honor it is to be busied and exercised about it: James 5:20, "Let him know, that he who converts the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." [O divine soul, invested with the image of God, espoused to him by faith, etc.—Bernard.]

"Let him know," that is, let him take notice that an honorable and glorious work is done by him. The soul is the immediate work of God; the soul is the image of God; the soul is capable of union and communion with God; the soul is worth more than a world, yes, than a thousand worlds. Christ prayed for souls, and wrought miracles for souls, and wept for souls, and left his Father's bosom for souls, and bled out his heart's blood for souls, and is gone to heaven to make provision for souls, yes, he is now a-making intercession for souls. All which speaks out the excellency of their office whose whole work is about souls.

The Jews say of Moses his soul, that it was sucked out of his mouth with a kiss. Souls are dear and sweet to Christ.

[3.] A *third* thing that speaks out this truth is this, ***they are fellow-laborers with God***; they are co-workers with God in the salvation of sinners. And this is a mighty honor, to be a fellow-laborer with God, to be a co-worker with God: 1 Cor. 3:9, "For we are laborers together with God." Who would not work hard with such sweet company? Who would not affect, prize, love, and honor such service? Ministers are called the light and salt of the world, because they enlighten blind souls, and season unsavory souls, and so save them from corruption and perdition, Mat. 5:14; John 5:35; Mat. 5:13; Mark 9:59-60. Oh, to be joined in any work with God, is an honor beyond what I am able to express!

The senate of Rome accounted it a diminution of Augustus Caesar's dignity to join any consuls with him for the better carrying on the affairs of the state. Oh—but our God does not think it a diminution of his dignity, that even his poor despised servants should be fellow-laborers and co-workers with him in the salvation of souls.

[4.] ***The honorable account that the Lord has of them in this employment***, speaks out this truth, that their office is honorable. In

Mat. 10:41-42, compared, "He who receives you, receives me; he who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward;" and Luke 10:16, "He who receives you, receives me; and he who despises you, despises me." This honorable account God has of all his faithful servants in this employment. Kings and princes have their ambassadors in very high account: so has God his.

[5.] The *fifth* thing that speaks out this truth is this, ***they serve an honorable master***. They serve him who is all *ear* to hear, all *hand* to uphold, all *power* to protect, all *wisdom* to direct, all *goodness* to relieve, and all *mercy* to pardon. They serve that God that is *optimum*, *maximum*, the best and greatest. God has within himself all the good of angels, men, and universal nature; he has all dignity, all glory, all riches, all treasure, all pleasure, all delight, all joy, all beatitudes. Mark, abstracts do better express God than concretes and adjectives. [He has all—who has the haver of all.—Augustine.] God is being, goodness, beauty, power, wisdom, justice, mercy, and love itself. "God is love," says the apostle, in the very abstract. God is one infinite perfection in himself, which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures. And oh then, what an honor must it be to those who are employed under so honorable a master!

[6.] ***Their very work and service is honorable***. Why else did the apostle cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" There is no such embassy in the world as this is in which they are employed: Eph. 6:19-20, "Pray for me, that I may make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." [Their main work is to treat with sinners about eternity, etc.] Faithful ministers do represent the person of the King of kings and Lord of lords; their work is to treat of peace between God and man, or of open hostility between the Creator and the creature, 2 Cor. 5:19-20.

[7.] Lastly, ***Their reward from God is honorable***. Though the world crown them with thorns, as it did their Lord and master before them—yet God will crown them with honor: Dan. 12:3, "They shall shine as the stars in the skies." You know ambassadors have not honors while they are abroad—but when they come home into their own country, then their princes honor them, and put much honor upon them. So will God deal

with his ambassadors 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only—but unto all them also that love his appearing."

So in Isaiah 49:5. "I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength." So in 2 Cor. 2:15, "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in those who are saved, and in those who perish." [God will at last highly reward those very services that men don't regard, etc.] Ministers shall be rewarded according to their faithfulness and diligence, though some perish. It shall be with them as with vine-dressers. You know vine-dressers are rewarded according to their diligence and faithfulness, though some vines never bear, nor bring forth any fruit at all. As ministers are diligent and faithful, so the reward, the crown, shall be given forth at last. This is many a faithful minister's grief, that he takes a great deal of pains in rubbing and washing, as it were, to make souls white and clean, pure and holy, and yet they remain after all as black as hell; but surely their reward shall be never the less with God. The nurse looks not for her wages from the child—but from the parent. If ministers, like clouds, sweat themselves to death that souls may be brought to life, great will be their reward, though their souls should perish forever, for whom they have wept, sweat, and bled.

God won't deal by faithful ministers, as Xerxes did by his steerman, who crowned him in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening of the same day. No; God will set an everlasting crown upon their heads who remain laborious and faithful to the death. The world for all their pains will crown them with thorns—but God at last will crown them with glory; he will set a crown of pure gold upon their heads forever. And thus you have the point proved.

The second thing that I am to do is to show you,

## ***2. What honor that is, which is justly due to faithful ministers.***

Now, this I shall show you in three things. There is a threefold honor that is due unto them.

[1.] First, ***Honorable countenance*** is due unto those who are in so honorable a place and office as they are in: 1 Cor. 4:1, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers [Under-rowers to Christ, the master-pilot, helping forward the ship of the church to the haven of heaven.] of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;" 1 Thes. 5:12-13, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very high in love for their work's sake;" or, "to esteem them more than exceedingly," or, more than abundantly, as the Greek will bear. And so, in 1 Tim. 5:17, "Let the elders who rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." The Greek word that is here rendered *labor*, signifies not simply to labor—but to labor with much travail and toil, to labor even to exhaustion, as he does who chops wood, or that toils in harvest, or who goes a warfare. Preaching is a most difficult work, and enfeebles a man exceedingly; whence the prophet cries out, "My leanness, my leanness," Isaiah 24:16. [Our Savior, at little past thirty, was reckoned by the Jews to be towards fifty, John 8:57, he had so spent himself in preaching. Preaching is a spending, painful work.] No pains, no labor, no work compared to that of the brain, to that of the mind, nor any so worthy of praise as those who are most in that labor, in that work.

No men's work is so holy and heavenly as theirs, nor no men's work is so high and honorable as theirs, and therefore none deserve to be more honored than they, though not for their own sakes—yet their work's sake. Shall Turks and papists so highly esteem and honor every hedge-priest of theirs above their merits, and shall not Christians much more honor their *faithful* ministers? Faithful ministers must have *countenance* as well as *maintenance*, they must have *reverence* as well as *recompense*. You are not to nod the head and put out the lip, to scoff, and mock, and jeer at them.

Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace; who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation; who says unto Zion, your God reigns." "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet!" What is their face then? What is their doctrine then? Their very feet, when dirty, sweaty, and

dusty, are yet very beautiful and lovely.

It was a common saying at Constantinople, that it was better the sun should not shine than that Chrysostom should not preach.

I have read of one that said, "if he should meet a preacher and an angel together, he would first salute the preacher, and then the angel afterward." If you do not give them honorable countenance, Jews and Turks, papists, and pagans, will in the great day of account rise up against you, and condemn you. I could say much of what I have observed in other nations and countries concerning this thing—but I shall forbear. Should I speak what I have seen, many professors might well blush.

The Grecians used to give far greater respect and honor to their philosophers than to their orators, because that their orators did only teach them to speak well—but their philosophers did teach them to live well. Oh what honor then is due to those who do teach you both to speak well and to live well! both how to be happy here and how to be blessed hereafter. And thus you see that honorable countenance is due to faithful ministers.

[2.] Secondly, *There is **an honor of maintenance**, as well as an honor of countenance that is due to them:* 1 Tim. 5:17-18, "Let the elders who rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward." [Harvest-laborers have food and drink, and double wages. Some think that the apostle has respect to the law of the first-born, Deut. 21:17, in which a two-fold portion is commanded to be given him. The ancient Christians, as appears by Tertullian, were accustomed, in their Agapae, or love-feasts, to give their ministers a double portion. Surely ministers should have such a liberal, honorable maintenance, as might set them above the vulgar, as the first-born by their double portion were set up above the rest of their brethren.]

Gal. 6:6, "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." So in 1 Cor. 9:7-11, "Who serves as a

soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?" Mat. 10:9-10, "Don't take along gold, silver, or copper for your money-belts. Don't take a traveling bag for the road, or an extra shirt, sandals, or a walking stick, for the worker is worthy of his food." God's appointment in all these texts bespeak it.

Again, you may consider *the necessity of it*. How shall they go on in their warfare if they are troubled with the things of this life? Again, **they are to give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry**, 1 Tim. 4:5. And again, the equity and justice of the duty Christ and the apostle shows in the forenamed scriptures, Mat. 10:10, 1 Cor. 9:10. The maintenance of the minister should be so free, and so liberal, as may testify that you honor him in your hearts, and as may keep him from contempt and scorn in the world. There are multitudes who grumble at the expense of a penny for the maintenance of those divine candles who spend themselves to give light to them; who will rather die than spend a little money to save their souls. They like well of religion without expense; and a gospel without charge. The scripture says, "Buy the truth, sell it not." You can never overbuy it, whatever you give for it; you can never sufficiently sell it, if you had all the world in exchange for it.

It is said of Caesar that he had greater care of his books than of his royal robes; for swimming through the water to escape his enemies, he carried his books in his hand above the water—but lost his robes. But alas! what are Caesar's books to God's book? The word is the field, and Christ is the treasure that is hid in that field. The word is a ring of gold, and Christ is the pearl in that ring of gold, and is it then worth nothing? Many deal with faithful, laborious ministers, as carriers do with their horses, they lay heavy burdens upon them, and exact work enough; and then to

recompense this, they hang bells at their ears and necks. They shall be commended and applauded for brave excellent preachers, and for great painstakers, etc. That maintenance that is justly due to the ministers of the gospel is honorable; it ought to be suitable to their condition and dignity. The maintenance that is due to them, is of the same nature with that which is given to princes and magistrates, by those who are under them, and not a common maintenance which superiors give to their inferiors or servants.

[3.] Thirdly, *There is an honor of obedience and service that is due to them.* And indeed, of all honors, this is the greatest honor that can be cast upon a faithful minister, the honor of obedience: Heb. 13:7, "Remember those who have the rule over you, who have spoken to you in the word of God;" and verse 17, "Obey those who rule over you." Oh, submit yourselves, for they "watch for your souls as those who must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."

"Obey those who have the rule over you." The word that is rendered "Rule over you," in the seventh and seventeenth verses, signifies captains, guides. Faithful ministers are your captains, they are your guides, they are your chieftains, they are your champions who bear the brunt of the battle, the heat of the day; and therefore you must obey them, even as soldiers do their captains. So in 2 Thes. 3:14, "And if any man obey not our words, note that man, and have no company with him." Brand him as infamous, beware of him, let him see a strangeness in you towards him, that all may avoid him as one whose company is dangerous and infectious.

Ah Christians! by your submission to their doctrine, you highly honor them, and you make their heavy task to be easy and sweet unto them. Christians! it will be your honor and happiness in the day of Christ, that you have lived out what they have taught to you. I suppose you remember that happiness is not entailed to *hearing*, or *knowing*, or *talking*—but to *doing*. "If you know these things, blessed and happy are you, if you *do* them, John 13:17. There are some diseases which are called *opprobria medicorum*, the reproaches of physicians; and there are some people that may be truly called *opprobria ministrorum*, the reproach of ministers,

and those are those who are great hearers, and talkers, and admirers of ministers—but never obey the doctrines delivered by them. [**There is no fear of knowing too much—but there is much fear and danger of practicing too little.** I fear, with Augustine, that many grieve more for the barrenness of their lands than for the barrenness of their lives. The more the cypress is watered, the more it is withered. Oh that it were not so with many in these days!]

The Corinthians were Paul's honor, they were his living epistles, they were his walking certificates, they were his letters-testimonial, 2 Cor. 3:2-3. The obedience and fruitfulness of the people is the minister's testimonial, as the profiting of the scholar is the master's commendation. Oh what an honor is it to a faithful minister, when it shall be said of him, as one said once of Octavius, "When he came into Rome he found the walls all of base materials—but left them walls of marble!" So here is a minister who found the people *dark* and *blind*—but left them enlightened; he found them *dead*—but left them alive; he found them a *proud* people—but has left them humble; a *profane* people—but has left them holy; he found them a *carnal* people—but has left them spiritual; he found them a *worldly* people—but has left them heavenly; he found them a *wavering* people—but has left them settled and rooted, etc. No honor to a faithful minister like this. And thus you see what honor is due unto them, etc.

**USE.** And now let me make a word of use. Christians! if their office be so honorable, *then honor them*. Oh, give them the honor that is due unto them. Will you make conscience to give others their due, and will you make no conscience of giving ministers their due? Are there any who are greater blessings to a nation than faithful ministers? Who have stood more in the gap to turn away wrath than they? Who have begotten you to Christ through the gospel but they? Who have turned you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God but them? Who have built you up in the light and love of Jesus but them? etc. Oh, do not cast scorn and reproach upon them—but give them that honor that is due unto them!

But you will say to me, ***How shall we honor them?***

I answer, you must honor them these five ways:

**[1.] You must honor them *by hearing them, and giving credit to their message.*** The want of this honor troubled Isaiah too much; "Who has believed our report?" Not to believe the report that they make concerning God and Christ, etc., is to cast the greatest dishonor that can be upon them. [Antisthenes, a philosopher, went every day six miles to hear Socrates.] The wise men, Mat. 2, went many weary hundred miles to find Christ at Jerusalem; some think near a thousand miles. The Queen of Sheba, some say, went 964 miles to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and what was Solomon's wisdom to that wisdom of Christ that is held forth to souls in the ministry of the gospel. [We can never hear that too often that we can never learn too well.] The holy martyrs thought no weather too hot, no winter too cold, no journey too long, nor no torment too great—to enjoy the preaching of the gospel, though darkly.

**[2.] You may honor them, *by standing fast in the doctrine of the Lord delivered by them.***<sup>1</sup> Thes. 3:8, "You are our joy, our crown, if you stand fast in the Lord;" else, says the apostle, you kill our very hearts. If after all our studying, wrestling, sweating, and preaching, you shall play apostates, and leave the precious ways of God, and run after notions and vain opinions which cannot profit you, nor better you, you will kill many at once: your own souls and our hearts.

**[3.] You should honor them, *by being followers of them, so far as they are followers of Christ.*** So in 1 Cor. 4:16, "Be followers of me, even as I am of Christ." Chapter 11:11; Heb. 13:7; 2 Thes. 3:7; Phil. 3:7. All these scriptures bespeak you to be followers of them as they are followers of Christ. **Oh, it is an honor to faithful ministers, when their people are like them in knowledge, wisdom, love, humility, holiness!**

Plutarch said of Demosthenes that he was excellent at praising the worthy acts of his ancestors—but not so at imitating them. Ah, many in these days are excellent at praising and commending the holy and gracious actings of their ministers—but not so at imitating them!

**[4.] You must honor them *by bearing them upon your hearts***

***when you appear before the Lord in the mount.*** Eph. 6:13, 19; 2 Thes. 3:1-2; 1 Thes. 5:25; Col. 1:2, 4; Heb. 13:8; Acts 12:5. All these scriptures do bespeak Christians to bear their faithful ministers upon their hearts when they are a-wrestling with God. None usually are opposed as they. Their wants are many, their weaknesses are more, their work is great, their strength is small. Oh pray, pray more and more for them; yes, pray believingly, pray affectionately, pray fervently, pray unweariedly—that they may speak from the heart to the heart, that they may speak things which are seasonable and suitable to the capacities and conditions of his people. They can tell when they lack your prayers, and when they enjoy your prayers; did you pray more for them, they might do more for your internal and eternal good, than now they do.

**[5.] *Lastly, You must honor them by adhering to them, and abiding with them in all their trials, afflictions, and tribulations that do or shall attend them.*** It is brave to own them in a storm, to own them when others disown them, when others oppose them, and act highly against them. Paul looked upon himself as much honored by Onesiphorus owning of him in his chains. "May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus." 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

Chrysostom says of Christians, "That they would not be kept from visiting the confessors in prison, although it was forbidden with many threatening terrors, and it was great danger to them." [The saints in the primitive times did so stick and cleave to those who were in bonds, that the very heathen admiringly cried out, "Look how the Christians love one another."]

But to draw to a close, you have heard that the office of a faithful minister is honorable, and you have heard what honor is due unto them. Let me therefore desire you all to take heed of scorning, despising, and despising of those who are faithful, who are qualified according to gospel rules. That is a sad word, 2 Chron. 36:15-18. God sent his messengers early and late to reclaim them—but they mocked the messengers of God, and

despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until there was no remedy, nor no healing. David never played such a harsh part all his days, as he did to the Ammonites that despitefully used his ambassadors, as you may see at large in 2 Sam. 10.

The Romans sacked the famous city of Corinth, and razed it to the ground, for a little discourtesy they offered to their ambassadors. [Ambassadors are inviolable by the law of nations, and the least indignity offered to them is to be as severely punished as if it had been offered to the person of that prince whom they represent.] And they slew many of the Illyrians and the Tarentines for misusing of their ambassadors. And do you think that the Lord is not as tender of the credit and honor of his faithful ministers, and that he will not avenge the affronts, wrongs, and injuries which are done unto them? Surely he will. "This is what the Lord Almighty says—I will send war, famine, and disease upon them and make them like rotting figs—too bad to eat. Yes, I will pursue them with war, famine, and disease, and I will scatter them around the world. In every nation where I send them, I will make them an object of damnation, horror, contempt, and mockery. **For they refuse to listen to me, though I have spoken to them repeatedly through my prophets.**" Jeremiah 29:17-19

"Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah—Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and laws, which are contained in the whole law that I commanded your ancestors and which I gave you through my servants the prophets. But the Israelites would not listen. They were as stubborn as their ancestors and refused to believe in the Lord their God. They rejected his laws and the covenant he had made with their ancestors, and they despised all his warnings. They worshiped worthless idols and became worthless themselves. They followed the example of the nations around them, disobeying the Lord's command not to imitate them." 2 Kings 17:13-15

Now mark, though these temporal judgments are not visible among us—yet spiritual judgments, which are the worst of judgments, are very visible. Though there is no sword, no famine, no pestilence—yet there is spiritual madness, spiritual drunkenness, spiritual giddiness. Oh the

blind minds, the corrupt judgments, the hard hearts, the seared consciences, which are to be found among the professors of this age! As there are no mercies to spiritual mercies—so there are no judgments to spiritual judgments. Jer. 13:12; Ezek. 23:33; 1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15. Oh the slightness, the coldness, the deadness, the barrenness, which is abroad in the world! God suits his judgments to men's sins; the greatest sins are always attended with the greatest judgments. In these days men sin against more glorious means, greater love, more clear light, more tender affections of mercy, etc, than formerly; and therefore God gives men up to more sad and dreadful spiritual judgments than formerly.

They say when Hercules drew up Cerberus from hell, he led him in a chain, and he went quietly until he came to the horizon and saw the peeping of the light—but then he pulled so strongly that he almost pulled the conqueror and all back again. Ah it is sad when men had rather live in darkness, and die in darkness, and go to hell in darkness—rather than see the light, enjoy the light, and walk in the light! Many fret at the light, and at those who bring it, as the Ethiopians once a year solemnly curse the sun. Such souls stand in much need of pity and prayer.

And thus, according to my weak measure, I have given out what God has given in from this scripture, and shall follow it with my prayers, that it may be a word of life and power both to writer, reader, and hearer. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria in Aeternum.*

## **APPLES OF GOLD**

by Thomas Brooks, 1660

Apples of Gold for Young Men,  
and a Crown of Honor for Old Men

## The Young Man's Work, and the Old Man's Reward

"The hoary head is a crown of glory—if it be found  
in a way of righteousness." Proverbs 16:31

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A commendable thing for young men to be really godly early

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## **The Epistle Dedicatory**

To all young people, especially those who begin to turn their faces towards Zion.

Dear Hearts,

"A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" Proverbs 15:23. "It is" often "like apples of gold in pictures of silver," Proverbs 25:11. Many times such a word is sweet, precious, pleasing, delectable, and strong in its operation. A company of near friends dining together one Sabbath day, one who was at table, to prevent impertinent discourse, said "that it was a question whether they would all go to heaven or not," which struck them all into sober-mindedness, and caused everyone to enter into a serious consideration with themselves. One thought, if any of this company go to hell, it must be I; and so thought another and another, and indeed so thought almost everyone then present; and through the mercy and blessing of God this speech so wrought upon the spirits of most of them, that it proved the first instrumental means of their conversion.

I have my hopes, through grace, that this treatise, though it be sown in weakness, yet by the blessing of the Most High upon it, it may rise in power, and be an instrumental means of the winning of souls to Christ, which is my highest ambition in this world; and therefore I have broken through all difficulties and carnal reasonings that might otherwise have stifled this babe in the womb, and kept it from ever seeing of the light.

I have read of an emperor that delighted in no undertakings so much as those which in the esteem of his counselors and captains were deemed most difficult and impossible. If they said such or such an enterprise would never be accomplished, it was argument enough to him to make the adventure; and he usually prospered, he seldom miscarried.

I have never found greater and choicer blessings to attend any of my poor weak labors, than those which have been brought forth into the world through the greatest straits and difficulties.

Valerius Maximus reports, that one telling a soldier going to war against the Persians—that they would hide the sun with their arrows, he answered, *We shall fight best in the shade*. Nothing should discourage nor dishearten a soldier of Christ, 2 Tim. 2:3-4. Christ says to all his soldiers (as the Black Prince his father said to him, fighting as it were in blood to the knees, and in great distress), *Either vanquish or die!* Men of no resolution, or of weak resolution, will be but little serviceable to the good of souls. Such watchmen as will be free from the blood of souls, and be serviceable to the interest of Christ in turning sinners from darkness to light, must be men of spirit and resolution.

I remember Austin begins one of his sermons thus: "To you is my speech, O young people, in the flower of age, in the danger of the mind."

So say I, to you, O young people! do I dedicate the ensuing treatise, and that,

First, Because the matter contained therein does primarily and eminently concern you.

And secondly, Because of an earnest desire that I have of your internal and eternal welfare.

And thirdly, Because of some late impulses that have been upon my spirit to leave this treatise in your hands as a legacy of my love, and as a testimony and witness of my great ambition to help forward your everlasting salvation.

And fourthly, Because there is most hope of doing good among you, as I evidence more at large in the following treatise.

And fifthly, To countermine the great underminer of your souls, whose great design is to poison you, and to possess you, in the morning of your days.

Sixthly, To provoke others that are more able and worthy to be more serviceable to you in declaring themselves fully on this very subject, which none yet have done that I know of, though it be a point of as great

concern to young people especially, as any I know in all the Scriptures, Eph. 4:14.

Seventhly, and lastly, Because there are very many who lie in wait to deceive, corrupt, and poison your minds with God-dishonoring, Christ-denying, conscience-wasting, and soul-damning opinions, principles, and blasphemies.

I have read of one who boasted and gloried in this, that he had spent thirty years in corrupting and poisoning of youth. Doubtless, many wretches, many monsters there be among us, who make it their business, their glory, their all—to delude and draw young people to those dangerous errors and blasphemies that lead to destruction. **Error and folly**, says one very well, **are the knots of Satan wherewith he ties children to the stake to be burned in hell.**

There isa truth in what the tragedian said long since, "poison is commonly drunk out of a cup of gold." So is an error soonest taken into the judgment and conscience, from people of the fairest carriage and smoothest conversations.

Error is so foul an hag, that if it should come in its own shape, a man would loathe it, and fly from it as from hell.

If Jezebel had not painted her face, she had not gotten so many young doating adulterers to have followed her to their own ruin.

Ah! young men, young men—the blessing of the Lord upon your serious and diligent perusal of this treatise may be a happy means to preserve you from being ensnared and deluded by those monsters "who compass sea and land to make proselytes for hell," Mat. 23:15.

And thus I have given you the reasons of my dedicating this treatise to the service of your souls. I would willingly presume that it will be as kindly taken—as it is cordially tendered. I hope none of you into whose hands it may fall, will say as one Antipater, king of Macedonia, did; when one presented him with a book treating of happiness, his answer was, *I have no time for this.*

Ah! Young men and women, young men and virgins, as you desire the everlasting welfare of your souls; as you would escape hell and come to heaven; as you would have a saving interest in Christ, a pardon in your bosoms; as you would be blessed here and glorious hereafter; find time, make time—to read over and over the following treatise, which is purposely calculated for your eternal good.

But before I go further, I think it needful, in some respects, to give the world some further account of other **reasons or motives which have prevailed with me to appear once more in print**; and they are these:

**First**, Having preached a sermon occasionally upon these words, on which this following discourse is built, I was earnestly implored by some worthy friends, to print the sermon. I did as long as in modesty I could, withstand their desires, judging it not worthy of them; but being at last overcome, and setting about the work, the breathings and comings in of God were such as has occasioned that one sermon to multiply into many. Luther tells us, that when he first began to turn his back upon popery, he intended no more but to withstand popish pardons and selling indulgences; yet neither would God or his enemies let him alone until he resolved with Moses not to leave a hoof of popery unopposed, Exod. 10:26, etc. God many times in the things of the gospel, carries forth his servants beyond their intentions, beyond their resolutions. But,

**Secondly**, The kind acceptance and good quarter that my other pieces have found in the world, and those signal and multiplied blessings that have followed them; to the winning of many over to Christ, and to the building up of others in Christ—has encouraged me to present this treatise to the world, hoping that the Lord has a blessing in store for this

also. Gracious experiences are beyond notions and impressions; they are very quickening and encouraging.

**Thirdly,** That I might in some measure make up other neglects, whose age, whose parts, whose experiences, whose graces—has long called upon them to do something considerable in this way, and that they may be provoked by my weak attempt to do better, and to make up what is lacking through my invincible infirmities and spiritual wants and weaknesses, which are so many as may well make a sufficient apology for all the defects and weaknesses that in this treatise shall appear to a serious judicious eye. But,

**Fourthly,** The love of Christ and souls has constrained me to it. As there is an *attractive* virtue, so there is a *compulsive* virtue in divine love. Love to Christ and souls will make a man willing to spend and be spent. He who prays himself to death, who preaches himself to death, who studies himself to death, who sweats himself to death—for the honor of Christ and good of souls—shall be no loser in the end. Divine love is like a rod of myrtle, which, as Pliny reports, makes the traveler who carries it in his hand—that he shall never be faint or weary. Divine love is very operative; if it does not work, it is an argument it does not exist at all. Divine love, like fire, is not idle—but active. He who loves, cannot be barren. Love will make the soul constant and abundant in well-doing. *God admits none to heaven, says Justin Martyr—but such as can persuade him by their works, that they love him.* The heathen Seneca has observed—that God does not love his children with a weak, womanish affection—but with a strong, masculine love; and certainly, those who love the Lord strongly, who love him with a masculine love—they cannot but lay out their *little all* for him and his glory. But,

**Fifthly,** I observe that Satan and his instruments are exceeding busy and unwearied in their designs, attempts, and endeavors in these days to corrupt and poison, to defile and destroy the young, the tender, the most hopeful, and most flourishing plants among us.

Latimer told the clergy in his time, that if they would not learn diligence and vigilance from the prophets and apostles, they should learn it from the devil, who goes up and down his dioceses, and acts by an untiring

power—seeking whom he may destroy. When the wolves are abroad, the shepherd should not sleep—but watch; yes, double his watch, remembering that he had better have all the blood of all the men in the world upon, him than the blood of one soul upon him by his negligence, or otherwise.

Satan is a lion, not a lamb; a roaring lion, not a sleepy lion; not a lion standing still—but a lion going up and down. As not being contented with the prey—the many millions of souls he has got—"he seeks whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. His greatest design is to fill hell with souls; which should awaken every one to be active, and to do all that may be done to prevent his design, and to help forward the salvation of souls.

Chrysostom compares good pastors—to fountains that ever send forth waters, or conduits that are always running, though no pail be put under. But,

***Sixthly*** and lastly, I know the whole life of man is but *an hour* to work in; and the more work any man does for Christ on earth, the better pay he shall have when he comes to heaven. Every man shall at last "reap as he sows." Opportunities of doing service for Christ, and souls, are more worth than a world; therefore I was willing to take hold on this, not knowing how soon "I may put off this earthly tabernacle;" and remembering, that as there is no believing nor repenting in the grave, so there is no praying, preaching, writing, nor printing in the grave; we had need to be up and doing, to put both hands to it, and to do all we do with all our might, knowing that "the night is coming, wherein no man can work." *A Christian's dying day is the Lord's pay-day*; that is, a time to receive wages, not to do work.

And thus I have given the world a true account of the reasons that moved me to print the following discourse. Before I close up, I desire to speak a word to young people, and another to aged people, and then I shall take leave of both.

My request **to you who are in the primrose of your days** is this—If ever the Lord shall be pleased so to own and crown, so to bless and follow this following discourse, as to make it an effectual means of turning you to

the Lord, of winning you to Christ, of changing your natures, and converting your souls—for such a thing as that I pray, hope, and believe—that then you would do two things for me.

*First*, That you would never cease bearing of me upon your hearts when you are in the mount, that I may be very much under the pourings out of the Spirit, that I may be clear, high, and full in my communion with God, and that I may be always close, holy, humble, harmless, and blameless in my walkings with God, and that his work may more and more prosper in my hand.

*Secondly*, That you would by word of mouth, letter, or some other way, acquaint me with what the Lord has done for your souls—if he shall make me a spiritual father to you. Do not hide his grace from me—but acquaint me how he has made the seed that was sown in weakness, to rise in power upon you, and that

*(First)* That I may do what I can to help on that work begun upon you; that your penny may become a pound, your mite a million, your drop an ocean.

*(Secondly)* That I may the better improve some impressions that have been upon my own spirit since I began this work.

*(Thirdly)*, That my joy and thankfulness may be increased, and my soul more abundantly engaged to that God, who has blessed the day of small things to you, 1 Thes. 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 9:2. Ponder these scriptures—2 Cor. 7:3-4, 13; Philip. 2:2; Phil. 4:1; Philem. 7; 2 John 3-4—and then be ashamed to declare what the Lord has done for you, if you can.

*(Fourthly)* *It is better to convert one to Christ, than to civilize a thousand*; and will turn more at last to a minister's account in that day, wherein he shall say, "Lo, here am I, and the children that you have given me," Isaiah 8:18. Such a man, with his spiritual children about him, shall look on God with more comfort and boldness, than those that are only able to say, "Lo, here am I, and my many benefices;" "Here am I, and my many ecclesiastical dignities and glories;" "Here am I, and the many hundreds a year that I have given." But,

*(Fifthly and lastly)* The conversion of others is a secondary and more remote evidence of a man's own renovation and conversion. Paul was converted himself before God made him instrumental for others' conversion. God's usual method is, to convert by those who are converted.

I do not remember any one instance in all the Scripture of God's converting any by such who have not been converted first themselves; yet I know his grace is free, and the wind blows where it wills, when it wills, and as it wills.

**To aged people** I have a word.

*First,* To grey-headed **saints**. Ah, friends! ah, fathers! would you see your honor, your happiness, your blessedness? Then look into this treatise, and there you will find what an unspeakable honor it is to be an old disciple, what a glory it is to be godly early, and to continue so to old age.

*Secondly,* To white-headed **sinners** whose spring is past, whose summer is overpast, and who are arrived at the fall of the leaf, and yet have a hell to escape, a Christ to believe in, sins to pardon, hearts to change, souls to save, and heaven to make sure; would such be encouraged from Scripture grounds to repent, believe, and hope, that yet there is mercy for such, let them seriously peruse this treatise, especially the latter part of it, and there they may find enough to keep them from despairing, and to encourage them to adventure their souls upon him who is mighty to save.

There are many things in this treatise that are of use to all, and several things of importance—which are not every day preached nor read. I have made it aspleasurable as timewould permit, that so it might be the more profitable to the reader, and that I might the better take the young man by a holy craft; which is a high point of heavenly wisdom, there being no wisdom to that of winning of souls, 2 Cor. 12:16; Proverbs 11:13. I shall now follow this poor piece with my weak prayers, that it may be so blessed from heaven, as that it may bring in some—and build up others—and do good to all. And so rest,

Your friend and servant in the Gospel of Christ,

Thomas Brooks

### **The explanation of the verse**

*"And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because **in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel** in the house of Jeroboam."* 1Kings 14:13

I shall only stand upon the latter part of this verse, because that affords me matter most suitable to my design.

These words are a commendation of Abijah's life. When Abijah was a *boy*, verse 3, 12, when he was in his young and tender years, he had the seeds of grace in him, he had the image of God upon him, he could discern between good and evil, and he did that which pleased the Lord.

The Hebrew word translated *boy*, verse 3, is very often applied to such as we call youth, or young men; Exod. 24:5; Num. 11:28; 1 Sam. 2:17, etc.

Of such prudence was Abijah, as that he could choose good and refuse evil. He was a Lot in Sodom, he was good among the bad. The bent and frame of his heart was towards that which was good, when the heart both of his father and mother was set upon evil. Abijah began to be good early. He crossed that pestilent proverb, "a young saint and an old devil." It is the glory and goodness of God that he will take notice of the least good that is in any of his. There was but one good word in Sarah's speech to Abraham, and that was this, *she called him Lord; and this God mentions for her honor and commendation, "She called him Lord,"* 1 Peter 3:6. God looks more upon one grain of wheat, than upon a heap of chaff, upon one shining pearl than upon a heap of rubbish.

God finds a pearl in Abijah, and he puts it into his crown, to his eternal commendation, "*in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel.*" For the words, "*in him there is **found**,*" the Hebrew word *Matsa*, sometimes signifies finding without seeking: Isaiah 65:1, "I am

found of them that sought me not;" so Psalm 116:3, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow." I found trouble which I looked not for; I was not searching after sorrow—but I found it. There is an elegance in the original; "The pains of hell got hold upon me," so we read—but the Hebrew is, "The pains of hell found me." One word signifies both. They found me, I did not find them. "There was *found* in Abijah some good thing towards the Lord," that is there was found in him, without searching or seeking, some good thing towards the Lord. It was plain and visible enough. Men might see and observe it without inquiring or seeking. They might run and read some good thing in him towards the Lord.

Secondly, The word sometimes signifies finding by seeking or inquiry: Isaiah 55:6, "Seek the Lord while he may be found," etc. So upon search and inquiry there was found in Abijah, though young, "*some good thing toward the Lord.*"

Thirdly, Sometimes the word notes the obtaining of that which is sufficient: Joshua 17:16; Num. 11:22; Judges 21:14. In Abijah there was that good in him towards the Lord, which was sufficient to evidence the work of grace upon him, sufficient to satisfy himself and others of the goodness and happiness of his condition, though he died in the prime and flower of his days, etc.

*"In him there is found some **good** thing toward the Lord God of Israel."*  
The Hebrew word *Tob*, that is here rendered good, signifies,

First, That which is right and just: 2 Sam. 15:3, "See your matters are good and right," that is just and right.

Secondly, That which is profitable: Deut. 6:11, "Houses full of all good things," that is houses full of all profitable things.

Thirdly, That which is pleasing: 2 Sam. 19:27, "Do what is good in your eyes," *that is* do what is pleasing in your eyes.

Fourthly, That which is full and complete: Gen. 15:15, "You shall be buried in a good old age," *that is* you shall be buried when your age is full

and complete.

Fifthly, That which is joyful and delightful: 1 Sam. 25:8, "We come in a good day," *that is* we come in a joyful and delightful day.

Now put all together, and you may see that *there was found in Abijah, when he was young, that which was right and just, that which was pleasing and profitable, and that which was matter of joy and delight.*

In the words you have two things that are most considerable.

First, ***That this young man's goodness was towards the Lord God of Israel.*** Many there are that are good, nay, very good towards men, who yet are bad, yes, very bad towards God. Some there are who are very kind to the creature—and yet very unkind to their Creator. Many men's goodness towards the creature is like the rising sun—but their goodness towards the Lord is like a morning cloud, or as the early dew, which is soon dried up by the sunbeams, Hosea 6:4; but Abijah's goodness was *towards the Lord*, his goodness faced the Lord, it looked towards the glory of God.

Two things makes a good Christian, good actions and good aims; and though *a good aim does not make a bad action good*, as in Uzzah, yet *a bad aim makes a good action bad*, as in Jehu, whose justice was approved—but his policy punished, the first chapter of Hosea, and the fourth verse. Doubtless Abijah's actions were good, and his aims good, and this was indeed his glory, that his goodness was "towards the Lord."

It is recorded of the Catanenses, that they made a stately monument, of kingly magnificence, in remembrance of two sons, who took their aged parents upon their backs, and carried them through the fire, when their father's house was all in a flame. These young men were good towards their parents; but what is this compared to Abijah's goodness "towards the Lord"? etc. A man cannot be good towards the Lord, but he will be good towards others; but a man may be good towards others, who is not good towards the Lord. Oh that men's practices did not give too loud a testimony every day to this assertion! etc.

Secondly, *He was good among the bad*. He was good "in the house of Jeroboam." It is in fashion to seem at least to be good among the good; but to be really good among those that are bad, that are eminently bad, argues not only a truth of goodness—but a great degree of goodness. This young man was good in the house of Jeroboam, who made all Israel to sin; who was evil, who was very evil, who was stark evil; and yet Abijah, as the fish which live in the salt sea are fresh—so though he lived in a sink, a sea, of wickedness, yet he retained his "goodness towards the Lord."

They say roses grow the sweeter when they are planted by garlic. They are sweet and rare Christians indeed who hold their goodness, and grow in goodness, where wickedness sits on the throne; and such a one the young man in the text was.

To be wheat among tares, corn among chaff, pearls among cockles, and roses among thorns—is excellent.

To be a Jonathan in Saul's court, to be an Obadiah in Ahab's court, to be an Ebed-melech in Zedekiah's court, and to be an Abijah in Jeroboam's court—is a wonder, a miracle.

To be a Lot in Sodom, to be an Abraham in Chaldea, to be a Daniel in Babylon, to be a Nehemiah in Damascus, and to be a Job in the land of Uz —is to be a saint among devils; and such a one the young man in the text was.

The poets affirm that Venus never appeared so beautiful as when she sat by black Vulcan's side. Gracious souls shine most clear when they be set by black-conditioned people. Stephen's face never shined so angelically, so gloriously—as before the council where all were wicked and malicious. So Abijah was a bright star, a shining sun, in Jeroboam's court, which for profaneness and wickedness was a very hell.

The words that I have chosen to insist upon will afford us several observations—but I shall only name one, which I intend to prosecute at this time, and that is this, namely: **That it is a very desirable and commendable thing for young men to be really godly early.**

Dear friends! since I yielded to your desires, and set about this work, I begun to consider that I had never heard nor read of any that had treated on this subject; also I seriously considered of the usefulness of it, especially in these times, wherein so many young people have their faces towards Zion; which considerations, with the breaking in of God upon me beyond my expectation, has occasioned that sermon you heard to swell into a little treatise, which in all love I present unto you. The very same things that sounded in your **ears**--I here present to your **eyes**, with enlargements and additions to what I first intended. The pains have been mine; the profit that will redound to you and others, into whose hands it may fall, I hope will be such as will turn to all our accounts in the day of Christ.

I have read of an emperor's son who used to say, *The longer the cooks are preparing the meal--the better will be the cheer*; his meaning was, the longer he waited for the empire, the greater it would be. The longer you have waited for this discourse, the better I desire it may prove. It would have been in your hands long before this, if others that should have made more haste had not been more to blame than myself; yet I know it is not a child so late born, that I need question your fathering of it. And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified, Acts 20:32.

Your servant in the work of Christ,  
Thomas Brooks

**Doctrine. That it is a very desirable and commendable thing for young men to be really godly early.**

Other scriptures speak out this to be a truth, besides what you have in the text to confirm it. "**Josiah** was eight years old when he became king, and

he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn aside from doing what was right. During the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David. Then in the twelfth year, he began to purify Judah and Jerusalem, destroying all the pagan shrines, the Asherah poles, and the carved idols and cast images." 2 Chronicles 34:1-3.

It was **Obadiah's** honor that he feared the Lord from his youth, 1 Kings 18:3; and **Timothy's** crown that he knew the Scripture from a child, 2 Tim. 1:1, 5, 15; and John's joy that he found children walking in the truth, 2 John 4-5; this revived his good old heart, and made it dance for joy in his bosom. To spend further time in the proving of this truth, would be but to light candles to see the sun at noon.

The grounds and reasons of this point, namely, that it is a very desirable and commendable thing for young men to be really godly early, are these that follow:

*Reason 1. First, **Because the Lord commands it; and divine commands are not to be disputed—but obeyed.*** In the 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes, and the first verse, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, *I find no pleasure in them.*" Remember **now!** I say, *now!* *Now* is an atom which will puzzle the wisdom of a philosopher, the skill of an angel, to divide. *Now* is a monosyllable in all learned languages: "Remember *now* your Creator." Remember him presently, instantly, for you do not know what a day, what an hour—may bring forth! You can not tell what deadly sin, what deadly temptation, what deadly judgment, may overtake you—if you do not now, even *now*, "remember your Creator."

**"Remember** now your Creator." Remember to know him, remember to love him, remember to desire him, remember to delight in him, remember to depend upon him, remember to get a saving interest in him, remember to live to him, and remember to walk with him. "Remember now your Creator;" the Hebrew is Creators—Father, Son, and Spirit. To the making of man, a council was called in heaven, in the first of Genesis,

and 26th verse. "Remember your Creators:" Remember the *Father*, so as to know him, so as to be inwardly acquainted with him. Remember the *Son*, so as to believe in him, so as to rest upon him, so as to embrace him, and so as to make a complete resignation of yourself to him. Remember the *Spirit*, so as to hear his voice, so as to obey his voice, so as to feel his presence, and so as to experience his influence, etc.

"Remember now your Creator in ***the days of your youth.***" He does not say in the time of your youth—but "in the **days** of your youth," to note, that our life is but as a few days. It is but as a vapor, a span, a flower, a shadow, a dream; and therefore Seneca says well, that "though death is before the old man's face, yet it may be as near the young man's back," etc.

Man's life is the shadow of smoke, the dream of a shadow. One doubts whether to call it a *dying life*, or a *living death*.

Ah! young men, God commands you to be godly early. Remember, young men, that it is a dangerous thing to neglect any of his commands, who by another command—is able to command you into nothing, or into hell. To act or run cross to God's command, though under pretense of revelation from God, is as much as a man's life is worth, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings, 13:24, etc.

Let young men put all their carnal reasons, though ever so many and weighty, into one scale; and God's absolute command in the other, and then write Tekel upon all their reasons—"they are weighed in the balance and found too light."

Ah, sirs! what God commands must be put in speedy execution, without denying or delaying, or disputing the difficulties which attend it. Most young men in these days do as the heathens: when their gods called for a man, they offered a candle; or, as Hercules, offered up a painted man instead of a living man. When God calls upon young men to serve him with the primrose of their youth, they usually put him off until they are overtaken with trembling joints, clouded eyes, fainting hearts, failing hands, and feeble knees; but this will be bitterness in the end, etc.

***Reason 2. Because they have means and opportunities of being godly early.***

Never had men better means and greater opportunities of being good, of doing good, and of receiving good—than now. Ah, Lord! how knowing, how believing, how holy, how heavenly, how humble—might young men be, were they true to their own souls. Young men might be godly, very godly, yes, eminently godly, would they but improve the means of grace, the tenders of mercy, and the knockings of Christ, by his word, works, and Spirit.

The ancients painted *opportunity* with a hairy forehead—but bald behind, to signify, that while a man has opportunity before him, he may lay hold on it—but if he allow it to slip away, he cannot pull it back again.

How many young men are now in everlasting chains, who would give ten thousand worlds, had they so many in their hands to give—to enjoy but an opportunity to hear one sermon more, to make one prayer more, to keep one Sabbath more—but cannot! This is their hell, their torment; this is the scorpion that is still biting, this is the worm that is always gnawing. Woe! woe! to us, that we have neglected and trifled away those golden opportunities that once we had to get our sins pardoned, our natures changed, our hearts bettered, our consciences purged, and our souls saved, etc.

I have read of a king, who having no child to succeed him, espying one day a well-favored youth, took him to court, and committed him to tutors to instruct him, providing by his will, that if he proved fit for government, he should be crowned king; if not, he should be bound in chains and made a galley-slave. Now when he grew to years, the king's executors, perceiving that he had sadly neglected those means and opportunities, whereby he might have been fit for government, called him before them, and declared the king's will and pleasure concerning him, which was accordingly performed, for they caused him to be fettered, and committed to the galleys. Now what tongue can express how much he was affected and afflicted, with his sad and miserable state, especially when he considered with himself—that now he is chained, who might have walked at liberty; now he is a slave, who might have been a king. The

application is easy.

Ah! young men! young men! shall *Satan* take all opportunities to tempt you? shall the *world* take all opportunities to allure you? shall *wicked men* take all opportunities to ensnare you, and to undo you? and shall Christian friends take all opportunities to better you? and shall God's faithful messengers take all opportunities to save you? and will you, will you "neglect so great salvation"? Heb. 2:3. Plutarch writes of Hannibal, that when he could have taken Rome—he would not; and when he would have taken Rome—he could not. Many, in their youthful days, when they might have mercy, Christ, pardon, heaven—they will not; and in old age, when they would have Christ, pardon, peace, heaven—they cannot, they may not. God seems to say, as Theseus said once, 'Go, and tell Creon, Theseus offers you a gracious offer. Yet I am pleased to be friends, if you will submit; this is my first message; but if this offer prevail not, look for me to be up in arms.'

***Reason 3. Because, when they have fewer and lesser sins to answer for and repent of—multitudes of sins and sorrows are prevented by being godly early.***

**The more we number our days—the fewer sins we shall have to number!** As a copy is then safest from blotting when dust is put upon it, so are we from sinning when, in the time of our youth, we remember that we are but dust. The *tears of young penitents* do more scorch the devils than all the flames of hell; for hereby all their hopes are blasted, and the great underminer countermined and blown up. The devil's bids us to tarry—*there is time enough to repent*. God bids repent early, in the morning of your youth, for then your sins will be fewer and lesser. Well! young men, remember this: he who will not at the first-hand buy godly counsel cheap, shall at the second-hand buy repentance ever dear.

Ah! young men! young men! if you do not begin to be godly early, those sins that are now as jewels sparkling in your eyes, will at last be millstones about your necks, to sink you forever! Among many things that Beza, in his last will and testament, gave God thanks for, this was the first and chief, that God, at the age of sixteen years, had called him to the knowledge of the truth, and so prevented many sins and sorrows that

otherwise would have overtaken him, and have made his life less happy and more miserable. Young saints often prove old angels—but old sinners seldom prove godly saints, etc.

*Reason 4. **Because TIME is a precious talent which young men must be accountable for.*** The sooner they begin to be godly, the more easy will be their accounts, especially as to *that great talent of time*. Cato and other heathen held that account must be given, not only of our labor—but also of our leisure. At the great day, it will appear that those who have spent their time in mourning over sin, have done better than those who have spent their time in dancing; and those who have spent many days in pious humiliation, than those who have spent many days in idle recreations.

I have read of a devout man who, when he heard a clock strike, he would say, *Here is one hour more past, which I have to answer for!* Ah! young men, as time is very **precious**, so it is very **short**. Time is very swift; it is suddenly gone. In the 9th of Job, and the 25th verse, "My life passes more swiftly than a runner. It flees away." The Hebrew word translated "more swiftly than a runner," signifies anything that is light, because light things are quick in motion.

The ancients emblemed time with wings, as it were, not running—but *flying*. Time is like the sun, which never stands still—but is continually a-running his race. The sun did once stand still, yes, went back—but time never did. Time is still running and flying! It is a bubble, a shadow, a dream. Can you seriously consider of this, young men, and not begin to be godly early? Surely you cannot. Sirs! if the whole earth whereupon we tread were turned into a lump of gold, it would not be able to purchase one minute of time. Oh! the regrettings of the damned for misspending precious time! Oh! what would they not give to be free, and to enjoy the means of grace one hour! Ah! with what attention, with what intention, with what trembling and melting of heart, with what hungering and thirsting—would they hear the word! Time, says Bernard, would be a precious commodity in hell, and the selling of it most gainful, where for one day a man would give ten thousand worlds, if he had them. Young men, can you in good earnest believe this, and not begin to be godly early?

Ah! young men and women, as you love your precious immortal souls, as you would escape hell—and come to heaven; as you would be happy in life—and blessed in death, and glorious after death; don't spend any more of your precious time in drinking and gabbing, in carding, dicing, and dancing! Don't **trifle** away your time, don't **swear** away your time, don't **whore** away your time, do not **lie** away your time—but begin to be godly early, because time is a talent that God will reckon with you for. Ah! young men and women, you may reckon upon **years**, many years yet to come, when possibly you have not so many **hours** to make ready your accounts. It may be *this night* you may have a summons, and then, if your time is done, and your work for eternity to be begun—in what a sad case will you be. Will you not wish that you had never been born?

Seneca was accustomed to jeer the Jews for their ill husbandry, in that they lost one day in seven, meaning their Sabbath. Oh that it were not too true of the most of professors, both young and old, that they lose not only one day in seven—but several days in seven.

Sirs! **Time let slip—cannot be recalled.** The foolish virgins found it so, and Saul found it so, and Herod found it so, and Nero found it so. The Israelites found it so; yes, and Jacob, and Josiah, and David, though godly men, yet they found it so to their cost.

The Egyptians draw *the picture of time with three heads*: the first of a *greedy wolf*, gaping, for time past, because it has ravenously devoured the memory of so many things past recalling; the second of a *crowned lion*, roaring, for time present, because it has the principality of all actions, for which it calls loud; the third of a *deceitful dog*, fawning, for time to come, because it feeds some men with many flattering hopes to their eternal undoing. Ah! young men and women, as you would give your accounts at last with joy, concerning this talent of time, with which God has trusted you, begin to be godly early, etc.

**Reason 5. Because they will have the greater comfort and joy when they come to be old.**

The 71st psalm, 5, 17, 18, compared, "For you have been my hope, O

Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth. Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come."

Polycarp could say, when old, "Thus many years have I served my Master Christ, and hitherto has he dealt well with me." If early converts live to be old—there is no joy compared to their joy. Their joy will be the greatest joy, a joy like to the joy of harvest, a joy like to their joy who divide the spoil. Their joy will be soundest joy, the weightiest joy, the holiest joy, the purest joy, the strongest joy, and the most lasting joy! Isaiah 9:3. The carnal joy of the wicked, the glistening golden joy of the worldling, and the flashing joy of the hypocrite—is but as the crackling of thorns under a pot—compared to the joy and comfort of such, who, when old, can say with godly Obadiah, that they "feared the Lord from their youth." If, when you are young, your eyes shall be full of tears for sin—when you are old, your heart shall be full of joys. Such shall have the best wine at last!

Oh! that young men would begin to be godly early, that so they may have the greater harvest of joy when they come to be old, etc. It is sad to be sowing your seed—when you should be reaping your harvest; it is best to gather in the summer of youth—to store up for the winter of old age.

***Reason 6. Because an eternity of felicity and glory hangs upon those few moments which are allotted to us.***

It was a good question, which the young man proposed, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Luke 10:25. I know I shall be eternally happy—or eternally miserable; eternally blessed—or eternally cursed; eternally saved—or eternally damned, etc.

"Oh! what shall I do to inherit eternal life!" My cares, my fears, my troubles—are all about eternity! No time can reach eternity, no age can extend to eternity, no tongue can express eternity. Eternity is that one perpetual day which shall never have end; what shall I do, what shall I not do—that I may be happy to all eternity?

I am now young, and in the flower of my days; but who knows what a day

may bring forth? The greatest weight hangs upon the smallest wires, an eternity depends upon those few hours I am to breathe in this world. Oh! what cause have I therefore to be godly early—to know God early—to believe early—to repent early—to get my peace made and my pardon sealed early—to get my nature changed, my conscience purged, and my interest in Christ cleared early—before eternity overtakes me—before my hour-glass of time runs out—before my sun sets—before my race finishes—lest the dark night of eternity should overtake me, and I made miserable forever!

I have read of one Myrogenes, who, when great gifts were sent unto him, he sent them all back again, saying, *I only desire this one thing at your master's hand—to pray for me that I may be saved for eternity.* Oh! that all young men and women, who make earth their heaven, pleasures their paradise, that eat the fat and drink the sweet, that clothe themselves richly, and crown their heads with rose-buds; that they would seriously **consider** of eternity, so as to **hear** as for eternity, and **pray** as for eternity, and **live** as for eternity, and **provide** as for eternity! Luke 15:12-20. That they might say with that famous painter Zeuxis, *I paint for eternity.* We do all for eternity, we believe for eternity, we repent for eternity, we obey for eternity, etc.

Oh! that you would not make those things eternal for punishment, which cannot be eternal for use.

Ah! young men and women, God calls, and the blood of Jesus Christ calls, and the Spirit of Christ in the gospel calls, and the rage of Satan calls, and your sad state and condition calls, and the happiness and blessedness of glorified saints calls; these all call aloud upon you to make sure a glorious eternity, before you fall into that dreadful ocean of eternal misery! *All your eternal good depends upon the short and uncertain moments of your lives;* and if the thread of your lives should be cut before a happy eternity is made sure, woe to you that ever you were born! Do not say, O young man, that you are young, and hereafter will be time enough to provide for eternity, for eternity may be at the door, ready to carry you away forever. Every day's experience speaks out eternity to be as near the young man's back as it is before the old man's face.

Oh grasp today the diadem of a blessed eternity, lest you are cut off before the morning comes! **Though there is but one way to come into this world—yet there is a thousand thousand ways to be sent out of this world.** Well! young men and women, remember this, as the motions of the soul are quick, so are the motions of divine justice quick also; and if you will not hear the voice of God today, if you will not provide for eternity today—God may swear tomorrow that you shall never enter into his rest, Heb. 3:7-8, 15-16, 18-19.

**It is a very sad and dangerous thing to trifle and dally with God, his word, his offers, our own souls, and eternity.** Therefore, let all young people labor to be godly early, and not to let Him who is goodness itself alone—until he has made them godly, until he has given them those hopes of eternity that will both make them godly and keep them godly; that will make them happy, and keep them happy—and that forever.

If all this will not do, then know that before long those fears of eternity, of misery—which beget that monster Despair, which, like Medusa's head, frightens with its very aspect, and strangles hope, which is the breath of the soul, will certainly overtake you; as it is said, *other miseries may wound the spirit—but despair kills it dead.* My prayer shall be, that none of you may ever experience this sad truth—but that you may all be godly in good earnest, early, which will yield you two heavens—a heaven on earth, and a heaven after death!

***Reason 8. Because you do not begin to live, until you begin to be really godly.***

Firstly, until you begin to be godly—you are dead God-wards, and Christ-wards, and heaven-wards, and holiness-wards. Until a man begins to be really godly, he is really dead, and that first in respect of *working*; his works are called dead works, Heb. 9:14. The most glittering services of unregenerate people are but dead works, because they proceed not from a principle of spiritual life, and they lead to death, Romans 6:23, and leave a sentence of death upon the soul, until it be washed off by the blood of the Lamb.

Secondly, he is dead in respect of honor; he is dead to all privileges, he is

not fit to inherit mercy. Who will set the crown of life upon a dead man? The crown of life is only for living Christians, Rev. 2:10. The young prodigal was dead until he begun to be godly, until he begun to remember his father's house, and to resolve to return home: "My son was dead—but is alive," Luke 15:24; and "the widow that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives," 1 Tim. 5:6.

When Joshaphat asked Barlaam how old he was, he answered, forty-five years old; to whom Joshaphat replied, You seem to be seventy. True, says he, if you reckon ever since I was born; but I count not those years which were spent in vanity.

Ah, sirs! You never begin to live until you begin to be godly, in good earnest. There is the life of **vegetation**, and that is the life of plants; secondly, there is the life of **sense**, and that is the life of beasts; thirdly, there is the life of **reason**, and that is the life of man; fourthly, there is the life of **grace**, and that is the life of saints; and this life you do not begin to live until you begin to be godly. If "a living dog is better than a dead lion," as the wise man speaks, Eccles. 9:4, and if a fly is more excellent than the heavens, because the fly has life, which the heavens have not, as one says, *what a sad, dead, poor nothing is that person, who is a stranger to the life of grace and goodness—who is dead even while he is alive!*

Most men will bleed, sweat, part with an estate, yes, with a limb, ay, limbs, yes, and many a better thing, namely, the honor of God and a good conscience—to preserve their natural lives; as he cries out, *Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery, so long as you spare my life!* And yet how few, how very few, are to be found who make it their work, their business—to attain to a life of holiness, or to begin to be godly early, or to be dead to the world and alive to God—rather than to be dead to God and alive to the world. This is for a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation—that *natural life is so highly prized, and spiritual life so little regarded*, etc.

***Reason 9. Because the promise of finding God, of enjoying God, is made over to an early seeking of God.***

Proverbs 8:17, "I love those who love me, and those who seek me early shall find me." or, as the Hebrew has it, "those who seek me in the morning shall find me." By the benefit of the morning light we come to find the things we seek. *Shahhar* signifies to seek inquisitively, to seek diligently, to seek timely in the morning. As the Israelites went early in the morning to seek for manna, Exod. 16:21, and as students rise early in the morning to get knowledge; so says wisdom, those who "seek me in the spring and morning of their youth, shall find me."

Now, to seek the Lord early is to seek the Lord ***firstly***. God has in himself all the good of angels, of men, and universal nature; he has all glories, all dignities, all riches, all treasures, all pleasures, all comforts, all delights, all joys, all beatitudes. God is that one infinite perfection in himself, which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures, and therefore he is firstly to be sought. *Abstracts* do better express him, than *concretes* and *adjectives*; he is being, bounty, power, wisdom, justice, mercy, goodness, and love itself—and therefore worthy to be sought before all other things. *Seek first the good things of the mind*, says philosophy, and does not divinity say as much?

Again, To seek early is to seek ***opportunely***, to seek while the opportunity does present: Judges 9:33, "You shall rise early, and set upon the city," that is, "you shall opportunely set upon the city."

Such there have been who, by having a glass of water opportunely, have obtained a kingdom, as you may see in the story of Thaumastus and king Agrippa.

Ah! young men and women, you do not know but that by an early, by an opportune, seeking of God, you may obtain a kingdom that shakes not, and glory that passes not away, Heb. 12:28.

There is a season wherein God may be found: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near," Isaiah 55:6; and if you slip this season, you may seek him and miss him: "Though they cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them;" "When you make many prayers, I will not hear;" "Then shall they cry unto the Lord—but he will not hear;" "Then shall they call upon me—but I will not answer; they shall seek me

early—but shall not find me." This was Saul's misery: "The Philistines are upon me, and God will not answer me," 1 Sam. 28:15. It is justice that they should seek and not find at last, who might have found had they but sought seasonably and opportunely, etc.

Again, To seek early is to seek **earnestly, affectionately**: "With my soul have I desired you in the night; yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early," Isaiah 26:9. The Hebrew word signifies both an earnest and an early seeking. In the morning the spirits are up, and men are earnest, lively, and affectionate.

Ah! such a seeking shall certainly be crowned with finding: "My voice shall you hear in the morning, O Lord! in the morning will I direct [Heb. *marshal*]my prayer unto you, and will look up" [Hebrew, *look out like a watchman*]. "Let all those who put their trust in you rejoice, let them ever shout for joy; because you defend them" [Hebrew, "*you covered over, or protected them*"]. "Let those also who love your name be joyful in you: for you, Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor will you compass him [Hebrew, "*crown him*"] as with a shield." None have ever thus sought the Lord—but they have, or certainly shall find him: "Seek and you shall find," Mat. 7:7; "your hearts shall live that seek God," Psalm 69:32; "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," Jas. 5:16, or, as the Greek has it, "The working prayer of a righteous man avails much." That prayer that sets the whole man a-work will work wonders in heaven, in the heart, and in the earth. Earnest prayer, like Saul's sword and Jonathan's bow, never returns empty.

One speaking of Luther, who was a man very earnest in prayer, said, *This man could have what he would of God*, etc.

Again, to seek early is to seek **chiefly, primarily, after** this or that thing. What we first seek, we seek as chief. Now, to seek the Lord early is to seek him primarily, chiefly; in the 63d psalm, and the 1st verse, "You are my God—early will I seek you," that is, I will seek you as my choicest and my chief good. God is *Alpha*, the fountain from whence all grace springs; and *Omega*, the sea to which all glory runs; and therefore early and primarily to be sought. God is a perfect good, a solid good. That is a **perfect** good—to which nothing can be added; that a **solid** good—from

which nothing can be spared. Such a good God is, and therefore early and chiefly to be sought.

God is a **pure** and **simple** good; he is a light in whom there is no darkness, a good in whom there is no evil, 1 John 1:5. The goodness of the creature is mixed, yes, that little goodness that is in the creature is mixed with much evil; but God is an **unmixed** good; he is good, he is pure good, he is all over good, he is nothing but good. God is an **all-sufficient** good: "Walk before me, and be upright: "I am God all-sufficient," in the 17th of Genesis and the first verse. Augustine said, "He has all—who has the haver of all." God has in himself all **power** to defend you, all **wisdom** to direct you, all **mercy** to pardon you, all **grace** to enrich you, all **righteousness** to clothe you, all **goodness** to supply you, and all happiness to crown you.

God is a **satisfying** good, a good that fills the heart and quiets the soul, Cant. 2:3. In the 33d of Genesis, and the 11th verse, "I have enough," says godly Jacob; "I have all," says Jacob, for so the Hebrew has it, *I have all*, I have all comforts, all delights, all contents, etc. "In having nothing, I have all things, because I have Christ; having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward," says one. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is to be found in one piece of gold, so all the petty excellencies which are scattered abroad in the creatures—are to be found in God. Yes, all the whole volume of perfections, which is spread through heaven and earth, is epitomized in him. No good below him that is the greatest good, can satisfy the soul. A good wife, a good child, a good name, a good estate, a good friend, cannot satisfy the soul. These may please—but they cannot satisfy. "All abundance, if it be not my God, is to me nothing but poverty and want," said one. "Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever." Psalm 73:25-26.

Ah! that young men and women would but in the morning of their youth seek, yes, seek early, seek earnestly, seek affectionately, seek diligently, seek primarily, and seek unweariedly this God, who is the greatest good, the best good, the most desirable good; who is a suitable good, a pure good, a satisfying good, a total good, and an eternal good.

***Reason 10. Because the time of youth is the choicest and fittest time for service.***

Now your parts are lively, senses fresh, memory strong, and nature vigorous. The days of your youth are the *spring* and *morning* of your time, they are the first-born of your strength; therefore God requires your youth, as well as your old age; the wine of your times as well as the lees—as you may see typified to you in the first-fruits, which were dedicated to the Lord, and the first-born, Exod. 23:16, Num. 3:13. The time of youth is the time of salvation, it is the acceptable time; it is your summer, your harvest-time. O young man! therefore do not sleep—but up and be doing; awaken your heart, rouse up your soul, and improve all you have; put out your reason, your strength, your all—to the treasuring up of heavenly graces, precious promises, divine experiences, and spiritual comforts, against the winter of old age. And then old age will not be to you an evil age—but as it was to Abraham, "a good old age," Gen. 15:15; do not put off God with fair promises, and large pretenses, until your last sands are running out, and the days of old age have overtaken you.

That is a sad word of the prophet, "Cursed be the deceiver, which has in his flock a male, and yet offers to the Lord a corrupt thing," Mal. 1:14. Ah! young men and women, who are like the almond tree; you have many males in the flock, your *strength* is a male in your flock, your *time* is a male in the flock, your *reason* is a male in the flock, your *parts* are a male in the flock, and your *gifts* are a male in the flock. Now, if he is cursed who has but one male in his flock, and shall offer to God a corrupt thing, a thing of no worth, of no value, how will you be cursed and cursed—cursed at home, and cursed abroad, cursed temporally, cursed spiritually, and cursed eternally—who has many males in your flock, and yet deals so unworthily, so fraudulently, and false-heartedly with God, as to put him off with *the dregs of your time and strength*, while you spend the primrose of your youth in the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, Mat. 21:20.

The fig-tree in the Gospel, which did not bring forth fruit timely and seasonably—was cursed, to the amazement of all. The time of youth is the time and season for bringing forth the fruits of righteousness and

holiness; and if these fruits are not brought forth in their season, you may justly fear, that the curses of heaven will secretly and insensibly soak and sink into your souls, and then woe! woe! to you that ever you were born. The best way to prevent this hell of hells, is to give God the *cream* and *flower* of your youth—your strength, your time, your talents. Vessels that are early seasoned with the savor of life never lose it, Proverbs 22:6.

***Reason 11. Because death may suddenly and unexpectedly seize upon you; you have no lease of your lives.***

Youth is as fickle as old age. The young man will find many graves of his length, in in the graveyard. As green wood and old logs meet in one fire—**so young sinners and old sinners meet in one hell and burn together.** When the young man is in his spring and prime, then he is cut off and dies; "One person dies in prosperity and security, the very picture of good health. Another person dies in bitter poverty, never having tasted the good life. Both alike are buried in the same dust, both eaten by the same worms." Job 21:23-26. David's children die when young, so did Job's and Jeroboam's, etc. Every day's experience tells us—that the young man's life is as much a vapor as the old man's is. "All flesh is grass!" Isaiah 40:6.

I have read of an Italian poet, who brings in a healthy young man, rich and powerful; discoursing with *death* in the likeness of a *mower*, with his scythe in his hand, cutting down the life of man. "*And will you not spare a young man?*" says the youth. "*I spare none!*" says death. Man's life is but a day, a short day, a winter's day. Ofttimes the sun goes down upon a man before it be well up. Your day is short, your work is great, your journey long—and therefore you should rise early, and set forward towards heaven early—as that man does, who has a long journey to go in a winter's day.

"You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath." Psalm 39:5. The life of man is absolutely **SHORT**. The life of man is comparatively short, and that if you compare man's life now to what he might have reached had he continued in innocency. Sin brought in death; death is a fall—which came in by a fall. Or if you compare man's life now to what they did reach to

before the flood: then people lived six, seven, eight, nine hundred years, Gen. 5; or if you compare men's days with the days of God, which are eternal; or if you compare the days of man to the days of eternity.

Ah! young men, young men! can you seriously consider of the brevity of man's life—and trifle away your time, the offers of grace, your precious souls, and eternity? Surely you cannot, surely you dare not, if you do but in good earnest ponder upon the shortness of man's life. It is recorded of Philip, king of Macedon, that he gave a pension to one to come to him every day at dinner, and to cry to him, ***Remember you are but mortal!***

Ah! young men and old had need be often put in mind of their mortality; they are too apt to forget that day, yes, to put far from them the thoughts of that day. I have read of three that could not endure to hear that bitter word **death** mentioned in their ears; and surely this age is full of such monsters.

And as the life of man is very short, so it is very **UNCERTAIN**: now well, now sick; alive this hour, and dead the next. Death does not always give warning beforehand; sometimes he gives the mortal blow suddenly; he comes behind with his dart, and strikes a man at the heart, before he says, "Have I found you, O my enemy?" 1 Kings 21:20. Eutychus fell down dead suddenly, Acts 20:9; death suddenly arrested David's sons and Job's sons; Augustus died in a compliment, Galba with a sentence, Vespasian with a jest; Zeuxis died laughing at the picture of an old woman which he drew with his own hand; Sophocles was choked with the seed in a grape; Diodorus the logician died for shame that he could not answer a witty question propounded at the table by Stilpo; Joannes Measius, preaching upon the raising of the woman of Nain's son from the dead, within three hours after died himself.

Ah! young men and women, have you not cause, great cause, to be godly early? for death is sudden in his approaches. **Nothing more sure than death! Nothing more uncertain than life!** Therefore know the Lord early, turn from your sins early; lay hold on the Lord, and make peace with him early, that you may never say, as Caesar Borgias said when he was sick unto death, "When I lived," said he, "I provided for everything

but death; now I must die, and am unprovided to die," etc.

***Reason 12. Because it is ten to one, if ever they are converted—they will be converted when they are young.***

God usually begins with such early—whom he has had thoughts of love and mercy towards them from everlasting. The instances cited to prove the doctrine confirms this argument; and if you look abroad in the world, you shall hardly find one saint among a thousand but dates his conversion from the time of his youth. It was the young ones who got through the wilderness into Canaan, Num. 26. If the tree does not bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit in the *spring*, it is commonly dead all the year after. If, in the spring and morning of your days, you do not bring forth fruit to God—it is a hundred to one that you shall never bring forth fruit to God when the evil days of old age shall "overtake you, wherein you shall say you have no pleasure," Eccles. 12:1. For, as the son of Sirach observes, if you have gathered nothing in your youth, what can you find in your age? It is rare, very rare, that God sows and reaps in old age. Usually God sows the seed of grace in youth—which yields the harvest of joy in age.

**Though true repentance is never too late—yet late repentance is seldom true.** Millions are now in hell, who have flattered themselves with the thoughts of repentance in old age. The Lord has made a promise *to* late repentance—but where has he made a promise *of* late repentance? Yes, what can be more just and equal, that such should seek and not find—who might have found but would not seek; and that he should shut his ears against their late prayers—who have stopped their ears against his early calls? Proverbs 1:24-32. The ancient warriors would not accept an old man into their army, as being unfit for service; and do you think that God will accept of your dry bones—when Satan has sucked out all the marrow? What master, will take such into his service—those who have all their days served his enemies? and will God? will God? The Circassians, a kind of mongrel Christians, are said to divide their life between sin and devotion, dedicating their youth to rapine, and their old age to repentance. If this is your case, I would not be in your case for ten thousand worlds!

I have read of a certain great man that was admonished in his sickness to repent, who answered, that he would not repent yet, for if he should recover, his companions would laugh at him; but growing sicker and sicker, he was again admonished to repent—but then he told them that it was too late, for now, said he, I am judged and condemned.

***Reason 13. Because if not converted while young, they will never attain to the honor of being old disciples.*** (Next chapter)

## Chapter 2

### **The great honor it is to be an old disciple —shown in seven particulars.**

Now this honor none reach to—but such as are converted *early*—but such as turn to the Lord in the *spring* and *morning* of their youth. It is no honor for an old man to be in baby clothes; nor for an old man to be a babe in grace. An childish old man is a sad and shameful sight. Oh! but it is a mighty honor to be a man, when he is old, that he can date his conversion from the morning of his youth. Now that it is an honor to be an old disciple, I shall prove by seven particulars. As,

***Particular 1. All men will honor an old disciple.*** Proverbs 16:31, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." God requires that the aged should be honored: Lev. 19:32, "You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man" (the *old* man here is by some expounded the *wise* man), "and fear your God, I am the Lord." Hoariness is only honorable when found in a way of godliness. A white head, accompanied with a holy heart, makes a man truly honorable. There are two glorious sights in the world: the one is, a **young** man walking in his uprightness; and the other is, an **old** man walking in ways of righteousness. It was Abraham's honor that he went to his grave in a good old age, or rather, as the Hebrew has it, *with a good*

*grey head*, Gen. 25:8. Many there are, who go to their graves with a grey head—but this was Abraham's crown, that he went to his grave with a *good* grey head. Had Abraham's head been never so grey, if it had not been godly, it would have been no honor to him. A hoary head, when coupled with an unsanctified heart, is rather a curse than a blessing. When the head is as white as snow, and the soul as black as hell, God usually gives up such to the greatest scorn and contempt. "The old men are treated with contempt." Lam. 5:12, and this God had threatened long before. "The Lord will bring a distant nation against you from the end of the earth, and it will swoop down on you like an eagle. It is a nation whose language you do not understand, a fierce and heartless nation that shows no respect for the old and no pity for the young." Deut. 28:49-50.

I have read of Cleanthes, who was accustomed sometimes to chide himself. Ariston wondering thereat, asked him, *Whom are you chiding?* Cleanthes laughed, and answered, *I chide an old fellow, who has grey hairs indeed—but lacks understanding, and prudence worthy of them.* The application I will leave to the grey heads and grey beards of our time, who have little else to commend them to the world but their hoary heads and snowy beards.

**Particular 2. God usually reveals himself most to old disciples, to old saints.** Job12:12, "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding." God usually manifests most of himself to aged saints. They usually pray most and pay most, they labor most and long most after the choicest manifestations of himself and of his grace; and therefore he opens his bosom most to them, and makes them of his cabinet council. Gen. 18:17-19, "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; for I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." Abraham was an old friend, and therefore God makes him both of his court and council.

We usually open our hearts most freely, fully, and familiarly—to old friends. So does God to his ancient friends. Ah, what a blessed sight and enjoyment of Christ had old **Simeon**, that made his very heart to dance in him! "Now, Lord, let you your servant depart in peace, according to

your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation," etc., Luke 2:29. I have seen him, who is my light, my life, my love, my joy, my crown, my heaven, my all; therefore now "Let your servant depart in peace," verses 26-28. So **Anna**, when she was eighty-four years old, was so filled with the discoveries and enjoyments of Christ, that she could not but declare what she had tasted, felt, seen, heard, and received from the Lord. She was ripe and ready to discover the fullness, sweetness, goodness, excellency, and glory of that Christ whom she had long loved, feared, and served. So **Paul** lived in the light, sight, and sweet enjoyments of Christ, when he was aged in years and in grace, Philip. 4:5,7,9. So, when **John** had that glorious vision of Christ among the golden candlesticks, and those discoveries and manifestations of the ruin of Rome, the fall of antichrist, the casting the beast and false prophet into a lake of fire, the conquest of the kingdoms of the world by Christ's bow and sword, the binding up of Satan, and the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven—when he was old, when he was aged in years and in grace.

The Lord speaks many a secret in the ears of saints, of old Christians, which young Christians are not acquainted with, as that phrase imports, 2 Sam.7:27, "You, O Lord God Almighty, have revealed to your servant;" so you read it in your books—but in the Hebrew it is, "Lord, you have revealed this *to the ear* of your servant." Some wonder how that word "to the ear" comes to be left out in your books, in which indeed the emphasis of the verse lies. We will tell many things in an old friend's ear, which we will not acquaint young ones with. So does God many times whisper to an old disciple in the ear, and acquaints him with such things that he hides from those who are of younger years. And by this you may see what an honor it is to be an old disciple.

***Particular 3. An old disciple, an old Christian—he has got the art of serving God, the art of religion; got the art of hearing, the art of praying, the art of meditating, the art of repenting, the art of believing, the art of denying his natural self, his sinful self, his religious self.***

All trades have their mystery and difficulty—so has the trade of Christianity. Young Christians usually bungle in pious works—but old Christians conduct themselves like workmen that need not be ashamed. A

young carpenter gives more blows and makes more chips—but an old artist does the most and best work. A young Christian may make most noise in pious duties—but an old Christian makes the best work. A young musician may play more quick and nimble upon an instrument than an old one—but an old musician has more skill and judgment than a young. The application is easy, and by this you may also see what an honor it is to be an old Christian, etc.

*Particular 4. An old disciple, an old Christian, is rich in spiritual experiences.* Oh! the experiences that he has of the ways of **GOD**, of the workings of God, of the word of God, of the love of God! "I write to you, *fathers*, because you have known him who is from the beginning." 1 John 2:14.

Oh! the divine stories that old Christians can tell of the power of the word, of the sweetness of the **WORD**, of the usefulness of the word! Psalm 119:49-50, as a light to lead the soul, as a staff to support the soul, as a spur to quicken the soul, as an anchor to stay the soul, and as a cordial to comfort and strengthen the soul!

Oh! the stories that he can tell you concerning the love of **CHRIST**, the blood of Christ, the offices of Christ, the merits of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of Christ, and the influence of Christ!

Oh! the stories that an old disciple can tell you of the indwellings of the **SPIRIT**, of the operations of the Spirit, of the teachings of the Spirit, of the leadings of the Spirit, of the sealings of the Spirit, of the witnessings of the Spirit, and of the comforts and joys of the Spirit!

Oh the stories that an old Christian can tell you of the evil of **SIN**, the bitterness of sin, the deceitfulness of sin, the prevalency of sin, and the happiness of conquest over sin!

Oh! the stories that he can tell you of the snares of **SATAN**, the devices of Satan, the temptations of Satan, the rage of Satan, the malice of Satan, the watchfulness of Satan, and the ways of triumphing over Satan!

As an old soldier can tell you of many battles, many scars, many wounds,

many losses, and many victories, even to admiration; so an old saint is able to tell you many divine stories even to admiration.

Pliny writes of the crocodile, that she **grows** to her last day, Hosea 14:5-7. So aged saints, they grow rich in spiritual experiences to the last. An old Christian being once asked if he grew in goodness, answered, Yes, doubtless I do; for God has said, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree," Psalm 92:12-14, (now the palm tree never loses its leaf or fruit, says Pliny); "he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." A fellow to this promise, Isaiah mentions, "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you." Isaiah 46:3-4

There is nothing more commendable in fullness of age—than fullness of knowledge and experience. Nor is there anything more honorable—than to see ancient Christians very much acquainted with the Ancient of days, Dan. 7:9, 13-22.

It is a brave sight to see ancient Christians like the almond tree. Now the almond tree does flourish and is full of blossoms in the winter of old age; for as Pliny tells us, the almond tree does blossom in the month of January. Experimental religion is far beyond mere notions and impressions. A **sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue**. No man so rich, so honorable, so happy as the old disciple, who is rich in spiritual experiences; and yet there is no Christian so rich in his experiences but he would be richer.

As Julianus said, that when he had one foot in the grave, he would have the other in the school; so, though an old disciple has one foot in the grave, yet he will have the other in Christ's school, that he may still be treasuring up more and more divine experiences. And by this also you see what an honor it is to be an old disciple, etc.

**Particular 5. An old disciple is very stout, courageous, firm, and fixed in his resolution.** An old Christian is like a pillar, a rock; nothing can move him, nothing can shake him, "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken." Psalm 62:1-2 What is sucked in in infancy—will abide in old age. Old soldiers are stout and courageous; nothing can daunt nor discourage them. When Joshua was a hundred and ten years old, oh how courageous and resolute was he! Joshua 24:15, 29, "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. Soon after this, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110."

Ah! none so courageous, none so divinely fearless, none so careless in evil days—as ancient Christians. An old Christian knows that that good will do him no good—which is not made good by perseverance; his resolution is like that of Gonsalvo, who protested to his soldiers, showing them Naples, that he had rather die one foot forwards, than to have his life secured for long, by one foot of retreat. Shall such a man as I am flee? said undaunted Nehemiah, chapter 6:11. He will courageously venture life and limb—rather than by one foot of retreat, discredit profession with the reproach of fearfulness. It was a brave, magnanimous speech of Luther, when dangers from opposers did threaten him and his associates, *Come, says he, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm, and then let them do their worst.*

When Polycarpus was eighty-six years old, he suffered martyrdom courageously, resolutely, and undauntedly.

When one of the ancient martyrs was very much threatened by his persecutors, he replied, *There is nothing of things visible, and nothing of things invisible—which I fear. I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—come what will.*

Old disciples, old soldiers of Christ—have the heart and courage of

Shammah, one of David's worthies, who stood and defended the field when all the rest fled, 2 Sam. 23:11-12. The Hebrews call a young man *Nagnar*, which springs from a root that signifies to *shake off*, or to *be tossed to and fro*, to note how fickle and how *constant in inconstancy* young men are, Mat. 19:20-22. They usually are either of no resolution for good, or of weak resolution; they are too often won with a nut, and lost with an apple. But now, aged Christians in all earthquakes—they stand fast, "like mount Zion, which cannot be removed." And by this also you may see what an honor it is to be an old disciple, an old Christian.

***Particular 6. An old disciple, an old Christian, is prepared for death; he has been long a-dying to sin, to the world, to friends, to self, to relations, to all—and no man so prepared to die as he who thus daily dies.***

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." Revelation 22:12

An old disciple has lived sincerely to Christ, he has lived eminently to Christ, he has lived in all conditions, and under all changes, to Christ; he has lived exemplarily to Christ, he has lived long to Christ—and therefore the more prepared to die and be with Christ. An old disciple has a crown in his eye, a pardon in his bosom, and a Christ in his arms—and therefore may sweetly sing it out with old Simeon, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace," Luke 2:29. As Hilary said to his soul, *Soul, you have served Christ this seventy years, and are you afraid of death? Go out, soul, go out.*

"Many a day," said old Cowper, "have I sought death with tears, not out of impatience, distrust, or perturbation—but because I am weary of sin, and fearful to fall into it." Nazianzen calls upon the king of terrors, *Devour me! Devour me!* And Austin, when old, could say, *Shall I ever die? Or shall I die at all? Yes. Why, then, Lord, if ever—why not now?* So when Modestus, the emperor's lieutenant, threatened to kill holy Basil, he answered, *If that is all, I fear not; yes, your master cannot more pleasure me than in sending me unto my heavenly Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten.*

Said old Stephen Martial a little before his death—*I have not so lived that I should now be afraid to die; but this I can say, I have so learned Christ that I am not afraid to die.* Old Christians are made no more worried to die—than to dine. It is nothing to die when the Comforter stands by, Isaiah 57:1-2.

Old disciples know that to die is but to lie down in their beds; they know that their dying day is better than their birthday; and this made Solomon to prefer his coffin before his crown; the day of his dissolution before the day of his coronation, Eccles.7:1.

The ancients were accustomed to call the days of their death *Natalia*, not dying days—but *birthdays*.

The Jews to this day, call their graves—the houses or places of the living. Old Christians know that death is but an entrance into life; it is but a Passover, a jubilee; it is but the Lord's gentleman-usher to conduct them to heaven; and this prepares them to die, and makes death more desirable than life. By this you may see that it is an honor to be an old disciple.

***Particular 7. An old disciple, an old Christian, shall have a great reward in heaven.***

Old Christians have done much and suffered much for Christ; and the more any man does or suffers for Christ here—the more glory he shall have hereafter. It was the saying of an old disciple upon his dying bed, "He is come, he is come"—meaning the Lord—"with a great reward for a little work." Agrippa having suffered imprisonment for wishing Caius emperor, the first thing Caius did when he came to the empire, was to advance Agrippa to a kingdom; he gave him also a chain of gold, as heavy as the chain of iron that was upon him in prison. And will not Christ richly reward all his suffering saints? Surely he will! Christ will at last pay a Christian for every prayer he has made, for every sermon he has heard, for every tear he has shed, for every morsel he has given, for every burden he has borne, for every battle he has fought, for every enemy he has slain, and for every temptation that he has overcome.

Cyrus, in a great expedition against his enemies, the better to encourage his soldiers to fight, in an oration that he made at the head of his army, promised upon the victory, to make every foot-soldier a horseman, and every horseman a commander, and that no officer that did valiantly should be unrewarded. But what are the rewards of Cyrus compared to the rewards that Christ our General promises to his soldiers? Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and have sat down with my Father in his throne." As there is no King compared to Christ, so there are no rewards to Christ's rewards. His rewards are the greatest rewards. He gives kingdoms, crowns, thrones! He gives grace and glory! Psalm 84:11.

It is said of Araunab, renowned for his bounty, that he had only a subject's purse--but a king's heart. But Jesus Christ has a king's purse as well as a king's heart--and accordingly He gives!

And as Christ's rewards are the greatest rewards, so his rewards are the surest rewards: "He is faithful, who has promised," 1 Thes. 5:24.

Antiochus promised often—but seldom gave; upon which he was called, in way of derision, *a great promiser*. But Jesus Christ never made any promise—but he has or will perform it, 2 Cor. 1:20, nay, he is often better than his word, 1 Cor. 2:9, he gives many times more than we ask. The man sick of the palsy asked but health, and Christ gave him health and a pardon to boot, Mat.9:2. Solomon desired but wisdom, and the Lord gave him wisdom, and honor, and riches, and the favor of creatures, as paper and pack-thread into the bargain, 2 Chron. 1:10-15. Jacob asked him but clothes to wear, and bread to eat, and the Lord gave him these things, and riches, and other mercies into the bargain.

Christ does not measure his gifts by our petitions—but by his own riches and mercies. Gracious souls many times receive many gifts and favors from God that they never dreamt of, nor dared presume to beg, which others extremely strive after and go without.

The prodigal desires no more but the place of a hired servant—but he is entertained as a son, he is clad with the best robe, and fed with the fatted calf, he has a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet, rich supplies more

than he deserved, Luke 15:19-25. Jacob's sons, in a time of famine, desired only grain, and they return with grain and money in their sacks, and with good news too—Joseph is alive, and governor of all Egypt, Gen. 42.

The rewards which men give are like themselves--fickle and inconstant, they are withering and fading. As Christ's rewards are greater and surer than other rewards--so they are more durable and lasting than other rewards. The kingdom which He gives is a kingdom that can never be shaken; the treasures which He gives are incorruptible treasures; and the glory that He gives is glory which never fades away!

Xerxes crowned his statesman in the morning—and beheaded him in the evening of the same day!

And Andronicus, the Greek emperor, crowned his admiral in the morning, and then took off his head in the afternoon!

Rossensis requested that a cardinal's hat be sent him—but his head was cut off before it came to him. Most may say of their crowns as that king said of his, O crown! more *noble* than *happy*. It was a just complaint which long ago was made against the heathen gods—they could give their favorites great gifts—but they could not maintain them in the possession of them. The world may give you great things—but the world cannot maintain you in the possession of them; but the great things, the great rewards that Christ gives his people—he will forever maintain them in the possession of them, otherwise heaven would not be heaven, glory would not be glory. Now by all these things you see that it is a very great honor to be an old disciple, an old Christian; and this honor you will never attain to, except you begin to be really godly early, except in the morning of your youth you return to the Lord, and get a saving interest in him.

I shall now come to make some **USE** and **APPLICATION** of this weighty truth to ourselves.

You see, beloved, that it is the great duty and concernment of young men to be really godly early. If this be so, then,

*Use 1. First, **This truth looks sourly and sadly upon such young men who are only seemingly good, who make some shows of goodness—but are not right towards God at the root.***

As Joash, when he was young, he seemed to have good things in him towards the Lord, while godly Jehoiada lived; but when Jehoiada was dead, Joash's goodness was buried with him, 2 Chron. 24:1-6, 13-16.

Ah! how many in these days, that have been seemingly good, have turned to be nothing, very nothing, yes, stark nothing!

It is said of Tiberius, that while Augustus ruled, he was no ways tainted in his reputation; and that, while Drusus and Germanicus were alive, he feigned those virtues which he had not, to maintain a good opinion of himself in the hearts of the people; but after he had got himself out of public sight, there was nothing in which he was not faulty, no crime to which he was not accessory.

Oh! that this were not applicable to many young people in these days, who have made great shows and taken upon them a great name, who have begun to outshine the stars—but are now gone out like so many candles which had burned out—to the dishonor of God, the reproach of the gospel, the grief of others, and the hazard of their own souls.

It was a custom of old, when any was baptized, the minister delivered a white garment to be put on, saying, *Take this white vestment, and see you bring it forth without spot at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ;* whereupon one Maritta baptizing one Elpidophorus, who, when he was grown up, proved a profane wretch, he brings forth the white garment, and holding it up, shakes it against him, saying, *This linen garment, Elpidophorus, shall accuse you at the coming of Christ, which I have kept by me as a witness of your apostasy.*

Ah! young men and women, your former professions will be a sad witness against you in the great day of our Lord Jesus, except you repent and return in good earnest to the Lord, Proverbs 14:14.

Oh! it had been better that you had never made profession, that you had

never set your faces towards heaven, that you had never pretended to love God and Christ, that you had never known the way of righteousness; than, after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment.

Cyprian, in his sermon *de lapsis*, reports of many who, forsaking the faith, were given over to evil spirits and died fearfully.

Oh! the delusions and the Christ-dethroning, conscience-wasting, and soul-undoing opinions and principles that many young ones, who once were hopeful ones—are given up to! That dreadful scripture seems to be made good in power upon them: "O Lord, the hope of Israel—all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water." Jer. 17:13. To begin well and not to proceed, is but to aspire to a higher pitch—that the fall may be the more desperate. *Backsliding is a wounding sin*, Hos. 4:14. You read of no armor for the back, though you do for the chest, Eph.6:11-18. He who is but *seemingly good* will prove at last *exceeding bad*. 2 Tim. 3:13, "They wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

The wolf, though he often disguises and closely hides his nature, yet he will one time or other show himself to be a wolf.

In the days of Hadrian the emperor, there was one *Ben-cosbi*, who, gathering a multitude of Jews together, called himself *Ben-cocuba*—the son of a star, applying that prophecy to himself, Num. 23:17; but his mask was taken off, his hypocrisy discovered, and he found to be *Bar-chosaba*—the son of a lie. This age has afforded many such monsters—but their folly is discovered, and their practices abhorred. This was the young man's commendation in the text, "That there was found in him some real good towards the Lord."

**Use 2. This truth looks sourly and sadly upon such young men who are so far from having good things in them towards the Lord—that they give themselves up to those youthful lusts and vanities which are dishonoring, provoking, and displeasing to the Lord—who roar and revel, and gad, and game, and dice, and drink, and carouse, and what not.** These make work with a

witness for repentance, or hell, or the physician of souls.

I shall but touch upon **the evils of youth** in the next chapter, and then come to my main point.

### Chapter 3.

#### **The Evils of Youth**

***Evil 1. The first evil which mostly attends youth, is PRIDE.***

Pride of heart, pride of apparel, pride of parts, 1 Tim. 3:6. Young men are apt to be proud of health, strength, friends, relations, wit, wealth, wisdom. Two things are very rare: the one is, to see a young man humble and watchful; and the other is, to see an old man contented and cheerful.

Bernard says, that pride is the *rich* man's delusion, and experience every day speaks out pride to be the *young* man's delusion. *God*, said one, *had three sons—Lucifer, Adam, and Christ; the first aspired to be like God in power, and was therefore thrown down from heaven; the second to be like him in knowledge, and was therefore deservedly driven out of Eden when young; the third did altogether imitate and follow Him in his goodness, mercy, and humility, and by so doing obtained everlasting inheritance.*

Remember this, young men, and as you would get a paradise, and keep a paradise—get humble, and keep humble. Pride is an evil that puts men upon all manner of evil. Accius the poet, though he were a dwarf, yet would be pictured tall of stature.

Psaphon, a proud Lybian, would needs be a god, and having caught some parrots, he taught them to speak and prattle: *'The great god Psaphon!'*

Menecrates, a proud physician, wrote thus to king Philip: *Menecrates is a god, to Philip a king.*

Proud Simon in Lucian, having got a little wealth, changed his name from Simon to Simonides, for that there were so many beggars of his kin; and set the house on fire wherein he was born, that nobody should see it.

What sad evils Pharaoh's pride, and Haman's pride, and Herod's pride, and Belshazzar's pride, put them upon, I shall not now mention.

Ah! young men, young men, had others a window to look into your breasts, or did your hearts stand where your faces do, you would even be afraid of yourselves, you would loathe and abhor yourselves.

Ah! young men, young men, as you would have God to keep house with you, as you would have his mind and secrets made known to you, as you would have Christ to delight in you, and the Spirit to dwell in you, as you would be honored among saints, and attended and guarded by angels—get humble, and keep humble!

Tertullian's counsel to the young converts of those times was excellent: "Clothe yourselves," said he, "with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, and with the purple of modesty; so shall you have God himself to be your suitor."

***Evil 2. The second evil that youth is subject to is, sensual PLEASURES and delights.***

"Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see; *but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment!*" Ecclesiastes 11:9. The wise man, by an *ironical concession*, bids him to be happy, etc., sin, etc. *You are willful, and resolved upon taking your pleasure—go on, take your fill.* This he speaks by way of mockage and bitter scoff, etc. "*But know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment!*"

So "Samson threw a party at Timnah, as was the custom of the day." Judges 14:10. The hearts of young men usually are much given up to pleasure. I have read of a young man, who was very much given up to pleasures; he standing by the godly Ambrose, and seeing his excellent

death, turned to other young men by him, and said, "Oh, that I might live with you, and die with him."

Sensual pleasures are like to those locusts, Rev.9:7, the crowns upon whose heads are said to be only as it were such, or such in appearance, and *like gold*. Buy in verse 10, it is said there were—not *as it were*—but really—*stings in their tails*.

Sensual pleasures are but seeming and appearing pleasures—but the pains which attend them are true and real. He who delights in sensual pleasures, shall find his greatest pleasures become his bitterest pains.

The heathens looked upon the back parts of pleasure, and saw it going away from them, and leaving a sting behind.

Pleasures pass away as soon as they have wearied out the body, and leave it as a bunch of grapes whose juice has been pressed out; which made one to say, *I see no greater pleasure in this world than the contempt of pleasure*.

Julian, though an apostate, yet professed that the pleasures of the body were far below a noble man; and Tully says, he is not worthy of the name of *man*—who would entirely spend one whole day in pleasures. It is better not to desire pleasures, than to enjoy them. "I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" Ecclesiastes 2:1-2. The interrogation bids a challenge to all the masters of mirth, to produce any one satisfactory fruit which it affords, if they could.

Xerxes, being weary of all pleasures, promised rewards to the inventors of new pleasures, which being invented, he nevertheless remained unsatisfied. As a bee flies from flower to flower and is not satisfied, and as a sick man moves from one bed to another, from one seat to another, from one chamber to another for ease, and finds none; so men given up to sensual pleasures go from one pleasure to another—but can find no contentment, no satisfaction in their pleasures. "Everything is so weary and tiresome! No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No

matter how much we hear, we are not content!" Eccles. 1:8. There is a *curse of unsatisfiability*, which lies upon the creature. Honors cannot satisfy the ambitious man, nor riches the covetous man, nor pleasures the voluptuous man. Man cannot take off the weariness of one pleasure by another, for after a few evaporated minutes are spent in pleasures, the body presently fails the mind, and the mind the desire, and the desire the satisfaction, and all the man.

Pleasures seem **solid** in the pursuit; but are mere **clouds** in the enjoyment.

**Pleasure is a beautiful harlot sitting in her chariot**—The four WHEELS are pride, gluttony, lust, and foolishness. The two HORSES are prosperity and abundance. The two DRIVERS are idleness and security. Her ATTENDANTS and followers are guilt, grief, shame, and often death and damnation!

Many great men, and many strong men, and many rich men, and many hopeful men, and many young men, have come to their damnation by her; but never any enjoyed full satisfaction and contentment in her. Ah! young men, young men, **avoid this harlot, 'pleasure'**—and come not near the door of her house!

And as for LAWFUL pleasures, let me only say this--it is your wisdom only to *touch* them, to *taste* them, and to use them as you use *medicines*--to occasionally fortify yourselves against maladies.

When Roger Ascham asked Lady Jane Grey how she could forego such pleasurable pastimes, she smilingly answered, *All the sport in the park is but a shadow of that pleasure I find in this book*—having a good book in her hand.

Augustine, before his conversion, could not live without those pleasures which he delighted much in. But after his nature was changed, and his heart graciously turned to the Lord, he said, "Oh! how sweet is it to be without those sweet delights!"

Ah! young men, when once you come to experience the goodness and

sweetness that is in the Lord, and in his word and ways, you will then sit down and grieve that you have put more wine in the cup of pleasure, than oil in the lamp of holiness.

**There are no pleasures so delighting, so satisfying, so ravishing, so engaging, and so abiding--as those which spring from union and communion with God--as those which flow from a from a humble and holy walking with God!**

***Evil 3. The third sin of youth is RASHNESS.***

They many times know little and fear less, and so are apt rashly to run on, and run out often to their hurt—but more often to their hazard. "Exhort young men to be sober-minded or discreet," Titus 2:6. They are apt to be rash, to be Hotspurs. As you may see in Rehoboam's young counselors, who counseled him to tell the people, 1 Kings 12:8-11, who groaned under their burdens, that "his little finger was thicker than his father's loins, and that he would add to their yoke; and that whereas his father had chastised them with whips, he would chastise them with scorpions." This rash counsel proved Rehoboam's ruin; yes, David himself, though a godly man, yet being in his warm blood and young, how sadly was he overtaken with rashness! "For I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept me from hurting you, that if you had not hurried out to meet me, not one of Nabal's men would be alive tomorrow morning." 1 Samuel 25:34. And this he binds with an oath. Because the master was foolishly wilful, the innocent servants must all be harmed; and because Nabal had been niggardly of his bread, David would be prodigal of his blood.

Ah! how unlike a Christian, yes, how below a man does David carry it when his blood is boiling, and he is a captive to rashness and passion! Rashness will admit of nothing for reason—but what unreasonable SELF shall dictate for reason. As sloth seldom brings actions to good birth, so rashness makes them always abortive before well formed. A rash spirit is an ungodlike spirit; a rash spirit is a weak spirit, it is a harmful spirit. "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit," or as the Hebrew will bear, is of a cool spirit, not rash and hot, ready at every turn to put out his soul in wrath, Proverbs 17:27. Rashness unmans a man, it will put a man upon things below manhood. Erostratus, an obscure base fellow, did in

one night by fire destroy the temple of Diana at Ephesus, which was two hundred and twenty years in building, by all Asia, at the cost of so many princes, and beautified with the labors and cunning of so many excellent workmen. The truth is, there would be no end were I to discover the many sad and great evils that are ushered into the world by that one evil, **rashness**, which usually attends youth, etc.; and therefore, young men, decline it, and arm yourselves against it, etc.

***Evil 4. The fourth sin that ordinarily attends on youth is, Mocking and scoffing at pious men and pious things.***

They were young ones that scoffingly and scornfully said to the prophet, "Go up, you bald-head; go up, you bald-head," 2 Kings 2:23-24. And the young men derided and mocked Job: "But now those who are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction," etc., Job. 30:1, 12-15. And oh! that this age did not afford many such monsters, who are notable, who are infamous in this black art of scoffing and deriding the people of God, and the ways of God!

The Athenians once scoffed at Sylla's wife, and it had well near cost the destruction of their city, he was so provoked with the indignity; and will you think it safe to scoff at the people of God, who are the spouse of Christ, who are as the apple of his eye, who are the signet on his right hand, his portion, his pleasant portion, his inheritance, his jewels, his royal diadem? Ah! young men, young men! will you seriously consider how sadly and sorely he has punished other scoffers and mockers, and by his judgments on them, be warned never more to scoff at the people of God or his ways?

Julian the emperor was a great scoffer of Christians; but at last he was struck with an arrow from heaven, that made him cry out—*O Galilean*, meaning our Savior Christ, *you have overcome me*. Felix, for one malicious scoff, did nothing day and night but vomit blood, until his unhappy soul was separated from his wretched body. Pherecydes was consumed by worms alive, for giving religion but a nickname. Lucian, for barking against religion like a dog, was, by the just judgment of God,

devoured by dogs. Remember these dreadful judgments of God on scoffers, and if you like them, then mock on, scoff on; but know, that justice will at last be even with you, nay, above you.

***Evil 5. The fifth and last evil that I shall mention that attends and waits on youth is, LUSTFULNESS and sexual immorality.***

Which occasioned aged Paul to caution his young Timothy to "flee youthful lusts," 2 Tim. 2:22. Timothy was a chaste and chastened piece; he was much sanctified and mortified; his graces were high, and corruptions low; he walked up and down this world with dying thoughts, and with a weak, distempered, declining, dying body; his heart was in heaven, and his foot in the grave; and yet youth is such a slippery age, that Paul commands him to flee, to run from, youthful lusts. Though Timothy was a godly man, a weak, sickly man, a marvelous temperate man, drinking water rather than wine, yet he was but a man, yes, a young man; and therefore Paul's counsel and command is, that he "flee youthful lusts."

And Solomon, who had sadly experienced the slipperiness of youth, gives this counsel: "Put away the evils of your flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity," Eccles. 11:10. He was a young man that followed the harlot to her house; he was young in years, and young in knowledge, Proverbs 7:7-11, etc. Salazer says upon the words: That was a happy age which afforded but one simple young man among many, whereas late times afford greater store. Ah! too many of the youths of this age, instead of flying from youthful lusts, they eagerly pursue after youthful lusts.

Chrysostom, speaking of youth, says, it is hard to be ruled, easy to be drawn away, apt to be deceived, and standing in need of very strict reins.

The ancients did picture youth like a young man naked, with a veil over his face; his right hand bound behind him, his left hand loose, and Time behind him pulling one thread out of his veil every day; intimating that young men are void of knowledge, and blind, unfit to do good, ready to do evil; until time, by little and little, makes them wiser. Well! young man, remember this, that the least sparklings and kindlings of lusts will, first or last, cost you groans and griefs, tears and terrors enough.

These five are the sins that usually are waiting and attending on youth; but from these the young man in the text was by grace preserved and secured, which is more than I dare affirm of all into whose hand this treatise shall fall. But though these five are the sins of youth—yet they are not all the sins of youth; for youth is capable of and subject to all other sins whatever; but these are the special sins that most usually wait and attend on young men when they are in the spring and morning of their youth.

I shall now hasten to the main *use* that I intend to dwell upon, and that is as **an EXHORTATION to all young people**.

Ah, sirs! as you regard the glory of God, the good of your bodies, the joy of your Christian friends, and the salvation of your own souls—be exhorted and persuaded to be really godly early. It was the praise and honor of Abijah, that there was found in him some good thing towards the Lord in the primrose of his childhood.

Oh! that it might be your honor and happiness to be really godly early, that it might be to you a praise and a name, that in the morning of your youth you have begun to seek the Lord, and to know and love the Lord, and to get a saving interest and propriety in the Lord. Now that this exhortation may stick and take, I beseech you seriously to weigh and ponder these following motives or considerations:

*Motive* (1). First consider, ***It is an honor to be godly early***. A young saint is like the morning star; he is like a diamond in a gold ring. It is mentioned as a singular honor to the believing Jews, that they first trusted in Christ; "that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ," Eph. 1:12. This was their praise, their crown, that they were first converted and turned to Christ and Christianity. So Paul, mentioning Andronicus and Junia, does not omit this circumstance of praise and honor, that they were in Christ "before him," Romans 16:7. "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."

And so it was the honor of the house of Stephanas, that they were the first-fruits of Achaia, 1 Cor. 16:15. It was their glory that they were the first that received and welcomed the gospel in Achaia. It is a greater honor for a young man to outwrestle sin, Satan, temptation, the world, and lust, than ever Alexander the Great could attain unto. It was Judah his praise and honor, that they were first in fetching home David their king, 2 Sam. 19:15.

Ah, young men and women! it will be your eternal praise and honor if you shall be before others, if you shall be the first among many, who shall know the Lord and seek the Lord; who shall receive the Lord, and embrace him; who shall cleave to the Lord, and serve him; who shall honor the Lord, and obey him; who shall delight in the Lord, and walk with him.

The Romans built *Virtue's* and *Honor's* temple close together, to show that the way to honor was by virtue; and, indeed, there is no crown compared to that which godliness sets upon a man's head: all other honor is fading and withering. *Adoni-bezek*, a mighty prince, is suddenly made live with with the dogs, Judges 1:7; and *Nebuchadnezzar*, a mighty conqueror, turned a-grazing among the oxen, Dan. 4:28; and *Herod*, reduced from a conceited god to be the most loathsome of men, living carrion, arrested by the vilest of creatures, upon the wish of his affronted Creator, Acts 12:23; and *Haman*, feasted with the king one day, and made a feast for crows the next, Esther. 7:10. I might tell you of Bajazet and Belisarius, two of the greatest commanders in the world, and many others, who have suddenly fallen from the top of worldly honor and felicity, into the greatest contempt and misery—but I shall not at this time. But that honor that arises from men's being gracious early, is such honor that the world can neither give nor take; it is honor, it is a crown that will still be green and flourishing; it is honor that will bed and board with a man, that will abide with a man under all trials and changes, that will go to the grave, that will go to heaven with a man.

Ah, sirs! it is no small honor to you, who are in the spring and morning of your days, that the Lord has left upon record several instances of his love and delight in young men. He chose *David*, a younger brother, and passes by his elder brothers, 1 Sam. 16:11-13; he frowns upon Esau, and passes

by his door, and sets his love and delight upon *Jacob* the younger brother, Romans 9:12-13; he kindly and lovingly accepts of *Abel's* person and sacrifice, and rejects both *Cain's* person and sacrifice, though he was the elder brother, Gen. 4:3-6. Among all the disciples, *John* was the youngest and the most and best beloved, John 13:23. There was but one "young man" that came to Christ, and he came not aright, Mark 10:19-21; and all the good that was in him was but some moral good, and yet Christ loved him with a love of pity and compassion. The Greek word signifies, to speak friendly and deal gently with one; and so did Christ with him, all which should exceedingly encourage young men to be godly early, to be gracious in the morning of their youth. No way to true honor like this—but,

*Motive (2).* Secondly, consider, ***Christ loved poor sinners and gave himself for them, when he was in the prime of his age (being supposed to be about thirty-three), and will you put him off with the worst of your time?***

Ah! young men, young men, Christ gave himself up to death, he made himself an offering for your sins, for your sakes, when he was in the prime and flower of his age. Why then should you put off Christ to your old age? Did he die *for* sin in the prime of his age? and will not you die *to* sin in the prime of your age? Did he offer himself for you in the spring and morning of his years? and will not you offer up yourselves to him in the spring and morning of your years? Romans 12:1-2. Oh give Christ no cause to say, *"I died for you early—but you have not lived to me early. I was early in my suffering for you—but you have not been early in your returning to me. I made haste to complete your redemption—but you have made no haste to make sure your vocation and election, 2 Pet. 1:10. I stayed not, I lingered not—but soon suffered what I was to suffer, and quickly did what was to be done for your eternal welfare—but you have stayed and lingered, like Lot in Sodom, Gen. 19:16, and have not done what you might have done in order to your everlasting good. In the primrose of my days, I sweat for you, I wept for you, I bled for you, I hung on the cross for you, I bore the wrath of my Father for you—but you have not in the primrose of your days sweat under the sense of divine displeasure, nor wept over your sins, nor mourned over me,*

*whom you have so often grieved and pierced, Zech. 12:10. I could not be quiet nor satisfied until I had put you into a capacity, into a possibility of salvation, and yet you are well enough quieted and satisfied, though you do not know whether ever you shall be saved."*

Ah, sirs! how sad would it be with you, if Jesus Christ should secretly thus expostulate with your consciences in this your day. Oh! how terrible would it be with you, if Christ should thus visibly plead against you in his great day.

Ah! young men, young men and women, who have souls much left of God, blinded by Satan, and hardened in sin, 2 Cor. 3, 4, can hear Jesus Christ speaking thus to them: *"I suffered for sinners early, I laid down a ransom for souls early, I pacified my Father's wrath early, I satisfied my Father's justice early, I merited grace and mercy for sinners early, I brought in an everlasting righteousness upon the world early, etc."* I say, who can hear Jesus Christ speaking thus, and his heart not fall in love and league with Christ, and his soul not unite to Christ and resign to Christ, and cleave to Christ, and forever be one with Christ—except it be such that are forever left by Christ? Well, remember this—**the more vile Christ made himself for us, the more dear he ought to be unto us.**

Ah! young men, remember this, when Christ was young, he was tempted and tried; when he was in the morning of his days, his wounds were deep, his burden weighty, his cup bitter, his suffering painful, his agony and torment above conception, beyond expression; when he was young, that blessed **head** of his was crowned with thorns; and those **eyes** of his, which were purer than the sun, were put out by the darkness of death; and those **ears** of his which now hear nothing but hallelujahs of saints and angels, were filled with the blasphemies of the multitude; and that blessed beautiful **face** of his, which was fairer than the sons of men, was spit on by beastly filthy wretches; and that gracious **mouth** and tongue, which spoke as never any man spoke, was slandered and accused of blasphemy; and those **hands** of his, which healed the sick, which gave out pardons, which swayed a scepter in heaven and another on earth, were nailed to the cross; and those **feet**, which were beautiful upon the mountains, which brought the glad tidings of peace and salvation into the

world, and which were like unto fine brass, were also nailed to the cross. All these great and sad things did Jesus Christ suffer for you in the prime and flower of his days, and oh! what an unspeakable provocation should this be to all young ones, to give up themselves early to Christ, to serve, love, honor, and obey him early, even in the spring and morning of their youth.

*Let the thoughts of a crucified Christ, says one, be never out of your mind, let them be food and drink unto you, let them be your sweetness and consolation, your honey and your desire, your reading and your meditation, your life, death, and resurrection.*

*Motive (3).* The third motive or consideration to provoke you to begin to be godly early, is this, namely, ***That it is the best and choicest way in the world—to be rich in gracious experiences early—which are the best riches in all the world.*** As he who sets up for himself early is in the most hopeful way to be rich early, so he who is godly in good earnest early, he is in the ready way, the highway of being rich in grace and rich in goodness. They usually prove men of great insight and great experience. God loves to show these his "beauty and his glory in his sanctuary." He delights to cause "his glory and his goodness to pass before" such. These shall find all his "paths drop marrow and fatness." For these "the Lord Almighty will make a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." These shall have all kinds of "pleasant fruits" laid up "at their gates for their well-beloved." None have so many choice pledges of Christ's love, nor so many sweet kisses of Christ's mouth, nor so many embraces in Christ's arms—as those souls which are godly early.

Oh the grace, the goodness, the sweetness, the fatness that Christ is still a-dropping into their hearts! Christ will make their hearts his largest treasury, he will lay up most of his heavenly treasure in their souls. There he will store up mercies new and old; there he will treasure up all plenty, rarity, and variety; there he will lay up all that heart can wish or need require. Oh the many drops of myrrh which fall from Christ's fingers upon their hearts! Oh the many secrets that Christ reveals in their ears! Oh the many love-letters that Christ sends to these! Oh the many visits that he gives to these! Oh the turns, the walks, that he has in paradise

with these! There are none in the world for experience and intelligence, compared to these. Ah! young men, young men, as you would be rich in the best riches, begin to be godly early! As there is no riches to spiritual riches, so there is no way to be rich in these riches—but by beginning to be godly, in good earnest, early.

As for worldly riches, the godly have always despised them, and preferred a contemplative life above them! The prophet calls them "thick clay," which will sooner break the back than lighten the heart; they cannot better the soul, they cannot enrich the soul, Hab. 2:6. Ah! how many threadbare souls are to be found under silken cloaks and gowns! How often are worldly riches like hangmen, they hide men's faces with a covering, that they may not see their own end, and then they hang them! And if they do not hang you, they will shortly leave you, they "make themselves wings and fly away!" Proverbs 23:5. When one was commending the riches and wealth of merchants, I do not love that wealth, said a heathen, that hangs upon ropes; if they break, the ship miscarries, and all is lost. *He is rich enough, says Jerome, who lacks not bread, and high enough in dignity that is not forced to serve.*

"This world's wealth, that men so much desire,  
May well be likened to a burning fire,  
Whereof a little can do little harm,  
But profit much our bodies well to warm;  
But take too much, and surely you shall burn;  
So too much wealth, to too much woe does turn."

It was an excellent saying of Lewis of Bauyer, emperor of Germany, Such goods are worth getting and owning—as will not sink or wash away if a shipwreck happens—but will wade and swim out with us. We see such are the spiritual riches that will attend those who, in the spring and morning of their youth, shall know the Lord and serve the Lord, and get an interest in the Lord; and thus much for the third motive.

*Motive (4).* The fourth motive to provoke young ones to be really godly early is, to consider that ***The present time, the present day, is the only season that you are sure of.***

Time **past** cannot be recalled, and **time to come** cannot be ascertained: "Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Heb. 3:15; "Behold, *now* is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. 6:2. Some there are who trifle away their time, and fool away their souls and their eternal salvation. To prevent this, the apostle beats upon the present opportunity, because if that be once past, there is no recovering of it. Therefore, as the mariner takes the first fair wind to sail, and as the merchant takes his first opportunity of buying and selling, and as the farmer takes the first opportunity of sowing and reaping—so should young men take the present season, the present day, which is their day, to be godly towards the Lord, to seek him and serve him, and not to put off the present season, for they know not what another day, another hour, another moment, may bring forth.

That *door of grace* which is open today may be shut tomorrow; that *golden scepter of mercy* which is held forth in the gospel this day may be taken in the next day; that love that this hour is upon the bare knee entreating and beseeching young men to break off their sins by repentance, "to return to the Lord, to lay hold on his strength, and be at peace with him," may the next hour be turned into wrath, Isaiah 27:4-5.

Ah! the noble motions that have been lost, the good purposes that have withered, the immortal souls that have miscarried—by putting off the present season, the present day. Paul discoursing before Felix of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come, Acts 24:25, and in this discourse striking at two special vices that Felix was particularly guilty of, he falls a-trembling, and being upon the rack to hear such doctrine, he bids Paul "depart for that time, and he would call for him at a convenient season." Here Felix neglects his present season, and we never read that ever after this he found a convenient time or season to hear Paul make an end of the subject he had begun. So Christ made a very fair offer to the young man in the Gospel, "Go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven," Mat. 19:21-24. Here Christ offers heavenly treasures for earthly treasures, unmixed treasures for mixed treasures, perfect treasures for imperfect treasures, satisfying treasures for unsatisfying treasures, lasting treasures for fading treasures; but the young man slips his opportunity, his season, and goes away

sorrowful, and we never read more of him.

Ah! young men, young men, do not put off the present season, do not neglect the present day. There is no time yours but the present time, no day yours but the present day; and therefore do not deceive yourselves and feed yourselves with *hopes of time to come*, and that you will repent—but not yet; and lay hold on mercy—but not yet; and give up yourselves to the Lord next week, next month, or next year, for that God that has promised you mercy and favor upon the day of your return, he has not promised to prolong your lives until that day comes.

Ah! young men, young men, you say you will become godly before you die—but if you are not godly today, you may die tomorrow, nay, justice may leave him to be his own executioner tomorrow, who will not repent, nor seek the Lord today.

I have read of a certain young man, who, being admonished of the evil of his way and course, and pressed to leave his wickedness by the consideration of death, judgment, and eternity that was a-coming, he answered, '*Why do you tell me of these things? I will do well enough; for when death comes, I will speak but three words, and all will be fine.*' And so still he went on in his sinful ways—but one day while on horseback, coming to a bridge, to go over a deep water, the horse stumbled, and he let go the bridle, and gave up himself and horse to the waters, and was heard to say these three words, *Devil take all!* Here was three dreadful words indeed, and an example, with a witness, for all young men to beware, who think to repent with a three-word repentance at last.

Otho, the emperor, slew himself with his own hands—but slept so soundly the night before, that the grooms of his chamber heard him snore.

Young men, I will suppose you to be good accountants; now if you please to count the number and mark the age of the sacrifices in the Old Testament, you shall find more kids and lambs offered, than goats and old sheep. You have no lease of your lives, you are not sure that you shall live to Isaac's age, to live until your eyes wax dim, Gen. 27:1; you are not

sure that you shall live to Jacob's years, and die leaning upon the top of a staff, Heb. 11:21. You read of those who "die in their youth, and whose lives are among the unclean," Job 36:14. Do not the present season slip away, neglect not this day of grace, let not Satan keep your souls and Christ any longer asunder, by telling of you that you are too young, that hereafter will be time enough. Austin tells us, that by this very temptation the devil kept him off from receiving of Christ, from closing with Christ seven years together; he could no sooner think of inquiring after Christ, of getting a saving interest in Christ, of leaving off his sinful courses, etc.—but Satan would be still a-suggesting, '*You are too young to leave your drunkenness, you are too young to leave your Delilahs, to leave your harlots;*' until at last he cried out, '*Why may I not repent today? and lay hold on Jesus Christ today?*' etc. Ah! young men, this is your day, this is your season; if you will not now hearken and obey, you may perish forever.

Caesar had a letter given him by Artemidorus that morning he went to the senate, wherein notice was given him of all the conspiracy of his murderers, so that with ease he might have prevented his death—but neglecting the reading of it, was slain; he slipped his season, and dies for it. Ah! how many for slipping gracious seasons and opportunities, have died forever! Soul-opportunities are more worth than a thousand worlds; mercy is in them, grace and glory is in them, heaven and eternity is in them.

*Motive (5).* Fifthly, To provoke you to be godly early, consider, ***How just it is with God to reserve the dregs of his wrath for those who reserve the dregs of their days for him.***

How can a husband embrace that wife in her old age, who has spent all the time of her youth in following after strangers? Will any man receive such into his service, who has all their days served his enemies, and received such wounds, blows, and bruises, that renders them unfit for his service?

Ah! young men, young men, do not thus "foolishly and unwisely requite the Lord," Deut. 32:6, for all his patient waiting, his gracious wooing, and his merciful dealing with you. Ah! do not put off God to old age; for old,

lame, and sick sacrifices rarely reach as high as heaven. Is not old age very unteachable? in old age are not men very unable to take in, and as unable to give out? In old age, oftentimes, men are men—yet not men; they have eyes—but see not; ears—but hear not; tongues—but speak not; feet—but walk not. An aged man is but a living mortuary.

Now how unlovely, how unfitting, how unworthy, nay, how incensing, how provoking a thing must this needs be—when men will dally with God, and put him off until their senile days have overtaken them, until their *spring* is past, their *summer* overpast, and they arrived at the *fall* of the leaf, yes, until *winter* colors have stained their heads with gray and hoary hairs! How provoking this is, you may see in those sad words of Jeremiah: Jer. 22:21-22, "I spoke unto you in your prosperity; but you said, I will not hear: this has been your manner from your youth, that you obey not my voice." But will God tolerate this behavior at their hands? No! Therefore it follows in the next verse, "Surely you shall be ashamed and confounded for all your wickedness."

Oh! that young men would let this scripture lie warm every morning upon their hearts, that so they may not dare to put off God and provoke him to their own eternal misery. Though you are young and in your strength, yet are you stronger than God, can you overcome him? If you will needs be a-provoking, provoke those who are your matches, and do not contend with him who is mightier than you, who can command you into nothing, or into hell at pleasure!

*Motive (6).* Sixthly, consider, ***That the sooner you are godly on earth, the greater will be your reward in heaven.***

The sooner you are gracious, the more at last you will be glorious. You read in the Scripture of a reward, of a great reward, and of a full reward. Now those who are godly early—who know, seek, serve, and love the Lord in the spring and morning of their youth, they are in the fairest way of gaining the greatest and the fullest reward.

And this I shall make clear by that which follows.

(1.) *First, The sooner any man begins to be really godly, the*

***more good he will do in this world.*** Now, the more good any man does on earth, the more glory he shall have in heaven. Therefore, my beloved brethren, "Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain," 1 Cor. 15:58.

Man's wages, man's reward—shall be according to his works. He who does most work here—shall have most reward hereafter. God will at last proportion the one to the other—the reward to the work. "He who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully," 2 Cor. 9:6. Though no man shall be rewarded *for* his works, yet God will at last measure out happiness and blessedness to his people *according to* their service, faithfulness, diligence, and work in this world, Romans 2:5-7. Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace at the full; glory is nothing else but a bright constellation of graces; happiness is nothing but the quintessence of holiness. Grace and glory differ in degree, not kind. Grace and glory differ very little; the one is the seed, the other is the flower; grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant; and a man may as well plead for equal degrees of grace in this world, as he may plead for equal degrees of glory in the other world. Surely the more grace here, the more glory hereafter; and the more work Christians do on earth, the more glory they shall have in heaven; and the sooner men begin to be godly, the more good they will do in this world; and the more they do here, the more they shall have hereafter. Philosophers seem to weigh our virtues with our vices, and according to the preponderation of either, denominate us godly or bad, and so deliver us up to reward or punishment.

No man can commend good works magnificently enough, says Luther, for one work of a Christian is more precious than heaven and earth; and therefore all the world cannot sufficiently reward one good work. And in another place, says the same author, If I might have my desire, I would rather choose the lowest work of a country Christian or poor maid, than all the victories and triumphs of Alexander the Great, and of Julius Caesar.

And, again, whatever the saints do, though never so small and lowly, it is great and glorious; because they do all in faith and by the word, says the

same author. To prevent mistakes, you must remember, that the works that Jesus Christ will reward at last are supernatural works: they are:

1. works of God;
2. wrought from God;
3. for God;
4. in God;
5. according to God.

They are works which flow from supernatural principles, and they are directed to supernatural ends, and performed in a supernatural way. Now the sooner a man begins to be godly, the more he will abound in these good works; and the more doubtless any man abounds in such good works on earth, the greater reward he shall have in heaven. Yet it must not be forgotten that the best actions, the best works of hypocrites, and all men out of Christ, are but *splendida peccata*, splendid and shining sins, beautiful abominations. And as the phoenix in Arabia gathers sweet odoriferous sticks together, and then blows them with her wings, and burns herself with them, so many a carnal professor burns himself with his own good works, that is, by his expecting and trusting to receive that by his works, which is only to be received and expected from Jesus Christ. Though all that man can do towards the meriting of heaven is no more than the lifting up of a trifle towards the meriting of a kingdom, yet such a proud piece man is, that he is ready enough to say with proud Vega, *I will not have heaven of free cost*.

A proud heart would gladly have that of debt, which is merely of grace, and desires that to be of purchase which God has intended to be of free mercy; which made one to say, that he would swim through a sea of brimstone, that he might come to heaven at last; but he who swims not there through the sea of Christ's blood, shall never come there. Man must swim there, not through brimstone—but through Christ's blood, or he miscarries forever.

(2.) Again, ***the sooner a man begins to be godly, the more serviceable he will be to others, and the more he will arouse others to good.*** Now, all the good that you provoke others to by counsel or carriage, by life or example, shall be put down to your account; just as all the sins that men provoke others to, is put down to their accounts.

David did but send a letter concerning the death of Uriah, and the charge comes, "*You had slain Uriah with the sword,*" 2 Sam.12: 8-9. The more I stir up others to sow, the more at last I shall reap, Isaiah 38:3, Neh. 13:14. The sooner a man begins to be godly, the more good he will do, the more serviceable he will be in the town or city where he dwells, in the family where he lives, among his relations, wife, children, kindred, servants, etc., with whom he converses.

The sooner a man begins to be gracious, the sooner and the more useful will his arts, his parts, his gifts, his graces, his mercies, his experiences, his life, his labors, his prayers, his counsels, his examples—be to all who are with him, to all who are about him.

*We learn—that we may teach*, is a proverb among the Rabbis. And I do therefore lay in and lay up, says the heathen, that I may draw forth again, and lay out for the good of many.

Ah! young men, young men! as you would be useful and serviceable to many, begin to be godly early, and to lay in and lay up and lay out early, for the profit and advantage of others. Augustine accounted nothing his own that he did not communicate to others. The bee does store her hive, out of all sorts of flowers for the common benefit. It is a base and unworthy spirit for a man to make himself the center of all his actions. The very heathen man could say that a man's country, and his friends, and others, challenge a great part of him. And indeed the best way to do ourselves good is to be a-doing good to others; the best way to gather is to scatter. "He who sows liberally shall reap liberally," 2 Cor. 9:6. "The liberal soul shall be made fat," Proverbs 11:25.

It is fabled of Midas, that whatever he touched he turned it into gold. It is certain that a liberal hand, a liberal heart, turns all into gold, into gain, as Scripture and experience do abundantly evidence. Now, if you put all these things together, nothing is more evident than that those who begin to be godly early are in the ready way, the high way, to be high in heaven when they shall cease from breathing on earth. And therefore, young men, as you would be high in heaven, as you would have a great reward, a full reward, a massy, weighty crown—oh labor to be godly early; labor to get acquainted with the Lord, and an interest in the Lord, in the spring

and morning of your days!

*Motive (7).* The seventh motive or consideration to provoke and incite you to be godly early, is to consider, ***That the Lord is very much affected with your seeking of him, and following after him—in the spring and morning of your youth.***

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying—I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown," Jer. 2:2.

Ah! how kindly, how sweetly did the Lord take this at their hands, that they followed him in their youth, while their "bones were full of marrow," while they were strong and fit for service, while nature was fresh, lively, and vigorous. In the law, God called for the *first* of all things; he required not only the first-fruits—but the very first of the first: "The first of the first fruits of your land, you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God," Exod. 23:19. God is the first being, the first good, and therefore deserves the first of the first, and the best of the best; the first and the best is not too good for him, who is goodness itself. God, in Leviticus 2:14, is so passionately set upon having the first of the first, that he will not wait until the green ears of corn be ripe—but will have the green ears of corn dried in the fire, lest he should lose his longing.

As many young women and sickly children cannot wait until the fruit is ripe—but must have it while it is green; even so, says God, my heart, my desires, are so vehemently set upon the first-fruits, the first things, that I cannot wait, I cannot satisfy myself without them. What would God teach us by all this—but to serve him with the first-fruits of our age, the primrose of our childhood, the morning of your youth. God has given you of the best—do not put him off with the worst, with the worst of your time, the worst of your days, the worst of your strength, lest he swear in his wrath that "you shall never enter into his rest," Heb. 3:18.

*Motive (8).* The eighth motive or consideration to provoke you to be godly early, to seek and serve the Lord in the morning of your youth, is to consider, that ***This may be a special means to prevent many black temptations; and an encouragement to withstand all***

***temptations that you may meet with from a tempting devil and a tempting world.***

An early turning to the Lord will prevent many temptations to despair, many temptations to neglect the means openly, to despise the means secretly; many temptations about the being of God, the goodness, faithfulness, truth and justice of God; temptations to despair, temptations to lay violent hands on a man's self. Temptations to question all that God has said, and all that Christ has suffered, arises many times from men's delaying and putting off of God to the last; all which, with many others, are prevented by a man's seeking and serving of the Lord in the spring and morning of his youth.

It is reported of the deer of Scythia, that they teach their young ones to leap from bank to bank, from rock to rock, from one turf to another, by leaping before them; by which means, when they are hunted, no beast of prey can ever capture them. Just so, when people exercise themselves in godliness when they are young, when they leap from one measure of holiness to another, when they are in the morning of their days, Satan, that mighty hunter after souls, may pursue them with his temptations—but he shall not overtake them, he shall not prevail over them. As you see in Moses, Joseph, Daniel, and the three Hebrew children, these knew the Lord, and gave up themselves to the Lord in the prime and primrose of their youth, and these were all temptation-proof, Heb. 11, Gen. 39, Dan. 3. Satan and the world pursued them—but could not overtake them. When the devil and the world had done their worst, the young men's bows abode in strength, and their hands were made strong to resist by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, Gen. 49:23-24. Said that young convert when tempted—*I am not the man that I was.*

Luther tells of a young virgin that used to resist all temptations with this—*I am a Christian.* Early converts may say, when tempted, as Luther did—*Tell me not, Satan, what I have been—but what I am and will be.* Or as he in the like case, *Whatever I was, I am now in Christ a new creature, and that is it which troubles you.* Or as he—*The more desperate my disease was, the more I admire the physician.* Yes, you may yet strain it a peg higher, and say, *The greater my sins were—the greater is my honor;* as the devils which once Mary Magdalene had—are mentioned for her

glory. When Pyrrhus tempted Fabricius the first day with an elephant, so huge and monstrous a beast, as before he had not seen, the next day with money and promises of honor, he answered, *I fear not your **force**; I am too wise for your **fraud**.*

Ah! young men, young men, as you would be free from the saddest and darkest temptations, and as you would be armed against all temptations, oh labor as for life to be godly early! seek and serve the Lord in the morning of your youth. No way like this for the preventing earthquakes, heartquakes, stormy days, and winter nights, etc.

*Motive (9).* The ninth motive or consideration to stir up young men to be godly early, to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of their youth, is, ***To consider the worth and excellency of souls.***

A soul is a spiritual, immortal substance; it is capable of the knowledge of God, it is capable of union with God, of communion with God, and of a blessed and happy fruition of God, Mat. 19:28; Acts 7:59-60; Philip. 1:23.

Christ left his Father's bosom for the good of souls; he assumed man's nature for the salvation of man's soul. Christ prayed for souls, he sweat for souls, he wept for souls, he bled for souls, he hung on the cross for souls, he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath for souls, he died for souls, he rose again from death for souls, he ascended for souls, he intercedes for souls, and all the glorious preparations that he has been a-making in heaven these sixteen hundred years is for souls, Heb. 2:13-16; Isaiah 63:3; John 14:1-3.

Ah! young men, young men, do not play the courtier with your precious souls. The courtier does all things late; he rises late, dines late, sups late, goes to bed late, repents late.

Ah! sirs, the good of your souls is before all, and above all other things in the world; to be first regarded and provided for, and that partly because it is the best and more noble part of man, and partly because therein mostly and properly is the image of God stamped, and partly because it is the first converted, and partly because it shall be the first and most glorified.

Ah! young men, young men, if they be worse than infidels, that make no provision for their families, 1 Tim. 5:8; what monsters are those who make not provision for their own souls! This will be bitterness in the end.

Caesar Borgias being sick to death, lamentably said, "When I lived, I provided for everything but death; now I must die, and am unprovided to die." This was a dart at his heart, and it will at last be a dagger at yours, who feast your bodies—but starve your souls; who make liberal provision for your ignoble part—but no provision for your more noble part.

If they deserve a hanging, who feast their slaves, and starve their wives; who make provision for their enemies—but none for their friend; how will you escape hanging in hell, who make provision for everything, yes, for all your lusts—but make no provision for your immortal souls? James 4:2-3; Hos. 7:13-14. We hate the Turks for selling Christians for slaves, and what shall we think then, of those who sell themselves, their precious souls—for toys and trifles which cannot profit? who practically say, what once a profane nobleman of Naples verbally said, namely—that he had two souls in his body, one for God, and another for whoever would buy it.

Ah! young men, young men, do not pawn your souls, do not sell your souls, do not exchange away your souls, do not trifle and fool away your precious souls! They are jewels, more worth than a thousand worlds, yes, than heaven and earth. If they are safe—all is safe; but if they are lost—all is lost: God lost, and Christ lost, and the society of glorious angels and blessed saints lost, and heaven lost—and that forever! Granetensis tells of a woman who was so affected with souls' miscarryings, that she besought God to stop up the passage into hell with her soul and body, that none might have entrance.

Ah that all young people were so affected with the worth and excellency of their souls, and so alarmed with the hazard and danger of losing their souls, as that they may in the spring and morning of their days inquire after the Lord, and seek him, and serve him with all their might, that so their precious and immortal souls may be safe and happy forever. But if all this will not do, then in the last place,

*Motive (10). Tenthly, Consider, young men, **That God will at last***

***bring you to a reckoning.*** He will at last bring you to judgment.

"Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment," Eccles.11:9. In these words you have two things:

(1.) An ironic concession; he bids him "Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see." He yields him what he would have, by an irony, by way of mockage and bitter scoff. Now you are young and strong, lively and lusty, and your bones are full of marrow; you are resolved to be proud and scornful, to indulge the flesh, and to follow your delights and pleasures. Well! take your course if you dare, or if you have a mind to it, if your heart be so set upon it. ""Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see."

(2.) The second is a warning, or a sad and severe premonition: "But know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment." "God **will** bring you;" these words import two things: first, the unwillingness of youth to come to judgment; secondly, the unavoidable nature that youth must come to judgment; but how soon you shall be brought to judgment, is only known to God.

Augustine confesses in one of his books, that as long as his conscience was gnawed with the guilt of some youthful lust he was once ensnared with, the very hearing of a day of judgment, was even a hell to him.

Histories tell us of a young man, who being for some capital offence condemned to die, grew grey in one night's space, and was therefore pitied and spared.

Ah! young men, young men—may the serious thoughts of this great day put you upon breaking off the sins of your youth; and the dedicating of yourselves to the knowledge, love, and service of the Lord, in the spring and flower of your days. Ah! young men, consider the errors of your lives,

the wickedness of your hearts, the sinfulness of your ways, and that strict account that before long you must be brought to before the judge of all the world.

The heathens themselves had some kind of dread and expectation of such a day; and therefore, when Paul spoke of judgment to come, Felix trembled, though a heathen, Acts 24:25.

The bringing into judgment is a thing which is known by reason, and is clear by the light of nature; therefore, in Austria, one of the nobles dying, who had lived ninety-three years, and had spent all his life in pleasures and delights, never being troubled with any infirmity, and this being told to Frederick the emperor, *From hence, says he, we may conclude the soul's immortality; for if there is a God who rules this world, as divines and philosophers teach, and that he is just no one denies; surely there are other places to which souls after death do go, and receive for their deeds either reward or punishment, for here on earth, we see that neither rewards are given to the good, nor punishments to the evil.*

Ah, young men! "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," 2 Cor. 5:9-11, and the terror of this day, oh! that you would be persuaded to flee from the wrath to come, to cast away the idols of your souls, to repent and be converted in the primrose of your youth, that your sins may be blotted out when "the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," Acts 3:19, or else woe! woe! to you that ever you were born!

I have read a story of one who, being risen from the dead, and being asked in what condition he was, he made answer, *No man does believe, no man does believe, no man does believe.* And being further asked what he meant by that repetition, he answered, *No man does believe how exactly God examines, how strictly God judges, how severely he punishes.* Oh that the ways of most young people did not declare to all the world that they do not, and that they will not believe the dread and terror of that day that will admit of no plea, nor place for apology or appeal! The highest and last tribunal can never be appealed from, or repealed.

Now if, for all that has been said, you are resolved to spend the flower of your days, and the prime of your strength—in the service of sin and the

world; then know that no tongue can express, no heart can conceive that trouble of mind, that terror of soul, that horror of conscience, that fear and amazement, that weeping and wailing, that crying and roaring, that sighing and groaning, that cursing and howling, that stamping and tearing, that wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth—which shall certainly attend you, when God shall bring you into judgment—for all your looseness and lightness, for all your wickedness and wantonness, for all your profaneness and baseness, for all your neglect of God, your grieving the Comforter, your trampling under foot the blood of a Savior, for your despising of the means, for your prizing earth above heaven, and the pleasures of this world above the pleasures which are at God's right hand.

Oh! how will you wish in that day when your sins shall be charged on you—when justice shall be armed against you—when conscience shall be gnawing within you—when the world shall be a flaming fire about you—when the gates of heaven shall be shut against you—and the flame of hell ready to take hold of you—when angels and saints shall sit in judgment upon you, and forever turn their faces from you—when evil spirits shall be terrifying of you—and Jesus Christ forever disowning of you; how will you, I say, wish in that day—that you had never been born, or that you might now be unborn, or that your mothers' wombs had been your tombs! Oh, how will you then wish to be turned into a bird, a beast, a stock, a stone, a toad, a tree! How you sill say, *Oh that our immortal souls were mortal! Oh that we were nothing! Oh that we were anything but what we are!*

I have read a remarkable story of a king who was depressed and sad, and wept; which, when his brother saw, he asked him why he was so pensive? Because, says he, I have judged others, and now I must be judged myself. And why, says his brother, are you now so sad about this? it will, happily, be a long time before that day comes, and besides that, it is but a slight matter. The king said little about it for the present. Now, it was a custom in that country, when any had committed treason, there was a trumpet sounded at his door in the night time, and he was next day brought out to be executed. Now, the king commanded a trumpet to be sounded at his brother's door in the nighttime, who, awakening out of his sleep, when he

heard it, arose, and came quaking and trembling to the king. How now? says the king; why are you so affrighted? I am, says he, accused of treason, and next morning I shall be executed. Why, says the king to him again, are you so troubled at that, knowing that you shall be judged by your brother, and for a matter that your conscience tells you you are clear of? How much more, therefore, may I be afraid, seeing that God shall judge me, and not in a matter that my conscience frees me of—but of that whereof I am guilty? And beside this, if the worst comes—it is but a temporary death you shall die—but I am liable to death eternal, both of body and soul. I will leave the application to those young people that put this day afar off, and whom no arguments will move to be godly early, and to acquaint themselves with the Lord in the morning of their youth.

But now to those young men and women who begin to seek, serve, and love the Lord in the primrose of their days—the day of judgment will be to them like music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart. This day will be to them "a day of refreshing," a "day of redemption," a day of vindication, a day of coronation, a day of consolation, a day of salvation; it will be to them a marriage-day, a harvest-day, a pay-day. Now the Lord will pay them for all the prayers they have made, for all the sermons they have heard, for all the tears they have shed. In this great day Christ will remember all the individual offices of love and friendship showed to any of his people. Now he will mention many things for their honor and comfort that they never minded, now the least and lowest acts of love and pity towards his shall be interpreted as a special kindness shown to himself. Now the crown shall be set upon their heads, and the royal robes put upon their backs; now all the world shall see that they have not served the Lord for nothing. Now Christ will pass over all their weaknesses, and make honorable mention of all the services they have performed, of all the mercies they have improved, and of all the great things that for his name and glory they have suffered.

*Question.* But here an apt question may be moved, namely, **Whether at this great day, the sins of the saints shall be brought into the judgment of discussion, and discovery, or not?** *Whether the Lord will in this day publicly manifest, proclaim, and make mention of the sins of his people, or not?*

I humbly judge, according to my present light, that he will not; and my reasons for it are these, namely:

1. The first is drawn from **Christ's judicial proceedings in the last day**, set down largely and clearly in the 25th of Matthew, where he enumerates only the good works they had done, but takes no notice of the spots and blots, of the stains and blemishes, of the infirmities and enormities, of the weaknesses and wickednesses of his people, Deut. 32:4-6.

2. My second reason is taken from **Christ's vehement protestations that they shall not come into judgment:** John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life." Those words, "shall not come into condemnation," are not rightly translated; the original is, shall not come into judgment, not into damnation. Further, it is very observable, that no evangelist uses this double asseveration but John, and he never uses it but in matters of the greatest weight and importance, and to show the earnestness of his spirit, and to stir us up to better attention, and to put the thing asserted out of all question, and beyond all contradiction; as when we would put a thing forever out of all question, we do it by a double asseveration, *Truly, truly*, it is so, etc.

3. Thirdly, Because his not bringing their sins into judgment does most and best agree with **many precious expressions that we find scattered, asso many shining, sparkling pearls, up and down in Scripture**, as,

*First*, (1.) With those of **God's blotting out the sins of his people:** "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will

not remember your sins." "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins," Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 44:22. Who is this that blots out transgressions? He who has the keys of heaven and hell at his belt, who opens and no man shuts, who shuts and no man opens; he who has the power of life and death, of condemning and absolving, of killing and making alive; he it is who blots out transgressions.

If an under-officer should blot out an indictment, that perhaps might do a man no good, a man might for all that be at last cast by the judge; but when the judge or king shall blot out the indictment with their own hand, then the indictment cannot return. Now this is every believer's case and happiness.

(2.) *Secondly*, To those glorious expressions of **God's not remembering of their sins any more**: Isaiah 43:25, "And I will not remember your sins." "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more," Jer. 31:34. So the apostle, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," Heb. 8:12. And again the same apostle says, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," Heb. 10:17.

The meaning is, their iniquities shall quite be forgiven, I will never mention them more, I will never take notice of them more, they shall never hear more of them from me. **Though God has an iron memory to remember the sins of the wicked—yet he has no memory to remember the sins of the righteous.**

(3.) *Thirdly*, His not bringing their sins into judgment does most and best agree with those blessed expressions of his **casting their sins into the depth of the sea, and of his casting them behind his back**: "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," Micah 7:19. Where sin is once pardoned, the remission stands never to be repealed. Pardoned sins shall never come in account against the pardoned man before God any more, for so much does this borrowed

speech import. If a thing were cast into a river, it might be brought up again; or if it were cast upon the sea, it might be discerned and taken up again; but when it is cast into the *depths*, the bottom of the sea, it can never be buoyed up again.

By the metaphor in the text, the Lord would have us to know the sins pardoned shall rise no more, they shall never be seen more, they shall never come on the account more; he will so drown their sins, that they shall never come up before him the second time.

And so much that other scripture imports: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness, but you have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for *you have cast all my sins behind your back*," Isaiah 38:17. These last words are a borrowed speech, taken from the manner of men, who are accustomed to cast behind their backs such things as they have no mind to see, regard, or remember. A gracious soul has always his sins before his face: "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me;" and therefore no wonder if the Lord cast them behind his back. The father soon forgets and casts behind his back those faults that the child remembers and has always in his eyes; so does the Father of spirits.

(4.) Fourthly, **His not bringing their sins into judgment** does best agree with that sweet and choice expression of God's pardoning the sins of his people: "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me," Jer. 33:8. So Micah: "Who is a God like unto you, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage (as though he would not see it, but wink at it), he retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy," Micah 7:18. The Hebrew word which is here rendered *pardons*, signifies a taking away. When God pardons sin, he takes it clean away: that it should be sought for, yet it could not be found, as the prophet speaks: "In those days, at that time," declares the Lord, 'search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare,' Jer. 50:20; and those words, "and passes by," in the afore-cited 7th of Micah, and the 18th, according to the Hebrew is, and

"passes over;" God passes over the transgression of his heritage, that is, he takes no notice of it.

As a man in a deep muse, or as one that has haste of business, sees not things before him, his mind being busied about other matters, he neglects all to mind his business; as David, when he saw in Mephibosheth the feature of his friend Jonathan, took no notice of his lameness, or any other defect or deformity; so *God, beholding in his people the glorious image of his Son, winks at all their faults and deformities*, which made Luther say, "Do with me what you will, since you have pardoned my sin;" and what is it to pardon sin but not to mention sin? Isaiah 40:1-2.

(5.) Fifthly, **In his not bringing their sins into the judgment of discussion and discovery**, does best agree to those expressions of forgiving and covering: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," Psalm 32:1. In the original it is in the plural, *blessednesses*. So here is a plurality of blessings, a chain of pearls.

The like expression you have in the 85th psalm, and the 2nd verse: "You have forgiven the iniquity of your people, you have covered all their sin." For the understanding of these scriptures aright, take notice that to "cover" is a metaphorical expression. Covering is such an action which is opposed to disclosure. To be covered is to be so hidden as not to appear. Some make the metaphor from filthy, loathsome objects, which are covered from our eyes, as dead carcasses are buried under the ground; some from garments, that are put upon us to cover our nakedness; others from the Egyptians, that were drowned in the Red Sea, and so covered with water; others from a great gulf in the earth, that is filled up and covered with earth injected into it; and others make it in the last place an allusive expression to the mercy-seat, over which was a covering. Now, all these metaphors in the general tend to show this, that **the Lord will not look, he will not see, he will not take notice of the sins he has pardoned, to call them any more to a judicial account.**

As when a prince reads over many treasons and rebellions, and meets with such and such which he has pardoned, he reads on, he passes by, he takes no notice of them: the pardoned person shall never hear more of them, he will never call him to account for those sins more; so here, etc.

When Caesar was painted, he put his finger upon his scar, his wart. God puts his fingers upon all his people's scars and warts, upon all their weaknesses and infirmities, that nothing can be seen but what is fair and lovely: "You are all fair, my love; and there is no spot in you," Cant. 4:7.

(6.) Sixthly, It best agrees to that expression of **not imputing of sin**: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit," Psalm 32:2. So the apostle in that Romans 4:6-8. Now, not to impute iniquity is not to charge iniquity, not to set iniquity upon his score, who is blessed and pardoned, etc.

(7.) Seventhly and lastly, It best agrees with that expression that you have in the 103d Psalm, and the 11th and 12th verses: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." What a vast distance is there between the east and the west! Of all visible latitudes, this is the greatest; and thus much for the third argument. The

4. A fourth argument that prevails with me, to judge that Jesus Christ will not bring the sins of the saints into the judgment of discussion and discovery in the great day, is because **it seems unsuitable to three considerable things, for Jesus Christ to proclaim the infirmities and miscarriages of his people to all the world.**

(1.) First, It **seems to be unsuitable to the glory and solemnity of that day**, which to the saints will be a day of refreshing, a day of restitution, a day of redemption, a day of coronation, as has been already proved. Now how suitable to this great day of solemnity the proclamation of the saints' sins will be, I leave the reader to judge.

(2.) Secondly, **It seems unsuitable to all those near and dear relations that Jesus Christ stands in towards his.** He stands in the relation of a father, a brother, a head, a husband, a friend, an advocate. Now are not all these, by the law of relations, bound rather to hide and keep secret, at least from the world, the weaknesses and infirmities of their near and dear relations? and is not Christ? Is not Christ much more? By how much he is more a father, a brother, a head, a husband,

etc., in a spiritual way, than any others can be in a natural way, etc.

(3.) Thirdly, **It seems very unsuitable to what the Lord Jesus requires of his in this world.** The Lord requires that his people should cast a mantle of love, of wisdom, of silence, and secrecy over one another's weaknesses and infirmities. "Hatred stirs up strifes, but love covers all sins," Proverbs 10:12, 1 Pet. 4:8. Love's mantle is very large; love will find a hand, a plaster to clap upon every sore.

Flavius Vespasianus, the emperor, was very ready to conceal his friends' vices, and as ready to reveal their virtues. So is divine love in the hearts of the saints: "If your brother offends you, go and tell him his fault between him and you alone: if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother," Mat. 18:15. As the pills of reprehension are to be gilded and sugared over with much gentleness and softness, so they are to be given in secret; tell him between him and you alone. Tale-bearers and tale-hearers are alike abominable, heaven is too hot and too holy a place for them, Psalm 15:3. Now will Jesus Christ have us carry it thus towards offending Christians, and will he himself act otherwise? Nay, is it an evil in us to lay open the weaknesses and infirmities of the saints to the world? and will it be an excellency, a glory, a virtue in Christ to do it in the great day? etc.

5. A fifth argument is this: **It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression:** "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense," Proverbs 19:11, or to pass by it, as we do by persons or things we know not, or would take no notice of. Now "it is to his glory to overlook an offense," and will it not much more be the glory of Christ, silently to pass over the transgressions of his people in that great day? The greater the treasons and rebellions are that a prince passes over and takes no notice of—the more is it his honor and glory; and so, doubtless, it will be Christ's in that great day, to pass over all the treasons and rebellions of his people, to take no notice of them, to forget them, as well as to forgive them.

The heathens have long since observed, that in nothing man came nearer to the glory and perfection of God himself, than in goodness and clemency. Surely if it be such an honor to man, "to pass over a transgression," it cannot be a dishonor to Christ to pass over the

transgressions of his people, he having already buried them in the sea of his blood. Again, says Solomon, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," Proverbs 25:2. And why it should not make for the glory of divine love to conceal the sins of the saints in that great day, I know not; and whether the concealing the sins of the saints in that great day will not make most for their joy, and wicked men's sorrow—for their comfort and wicked men's terror and torment—I will leave you to judge, and time and experience to decide. And thus much for the resolution of that great question. Having done with the motives that may encourage and provoke young men to be godly early, to know, love, seek, and serve the Lord, in the spring and morning of their days.

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(1.) First, It **seems to be unsuitable to the glory and solemnity of that day**, which to the saints will be a day of refreshing, a day of restitution, a day of redemption, a day of coronation, as has been already proved. Now how suitable to this great day of solemnity the proclamation of the saints' sins will be, I leave the reader to judge.

(2.) Secondly, **It seems unsuitable to all those near and dear relations that Jesus Christ stands in towards his**. He stands in the relation of a father, a brother, a head, a husband, a friend, an advocate. Now are not all these, by the law of relations, bound rather to hide and keep secret, at least from the world, the weaknesses and infirmities of their near and dear relations? and is not Christ? Is not Christ much more? By how much he is more a father, a brother, a head, a husband, etc., in a spiritual way, than any others can be in a natural way, etc.

(3.) Thirdly, **It seems very unsuitable to what the Lord Jesus requires of his in this world**. The Lord requires that his people should cast a mantle of love, of wisdom, of silence, and secrecy over one another's weaknesses and infirmities. "Hatred stirs up strifes, but love covers all sins," Proverbs 10:12, 1 Pet. 4:8. Love's mantle is very large; love will find a hand, a plaster to clap upon every sore.

Flavius Vespasianus, the emperor, was very ready to conceal his friends' vices, and as ready to reveal their virtues. So is divine love in the hearts of the saints: "If your brother offends you, go and tell him his fault between him and you alone: if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother," Mat. 18:15. As the pills of reprehension are to be gilded and sugared over with much gentleness and softness, so they are to be given in secret; tell him between him and you alone. Tale-bearers and tale-hearers are alike abominable, heaven is too hot and too holy a place for them, Psalm 15:3. Now will Jesus Christ have us carry it thus towards offending Christians, and will he himself act otherwise? Nay, is it an evil in us to lay open the weaknesses and infirmities of the saints to the world? and will it be an excellency, a glory, a virtue in Christ to do it in the great day? etc.

5. A fifth argument is this: **It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression**: "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense," Proverbs 19:11, or to pass by it, as we do by persons

or things we know not, or would take no notice of. Now "it is to his glory to overlook an offense," and will it not much more be the glory of Christ, silently to pass over the transgressions of his people in that great day? The greater the treasons and rebellions are that a prince passes over and takes no notice of—the more is it his honor and glory; and so, doubtless, it will be Christ's in that great day, to pass over all the treasons and rebellions of his people, to take no notice of them, to forget them, as well as to forgive them.

The heathens have long since observed, that in nothing man came nearer to the glory and perfection of God himself, than in goodness and clemency. Surely if it be such an honor to man, "to pass over a transgression," it cannot be a dishonor to Christ to pass over the transgressions of his people, he having already buried them in the sea of his blood. Again, says Solomon, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," Proverbs 25:2. And why it should not make for the glory of divine love to conceal the sins of the saints in that great day, I know not; and whether the concealing the sins of the saints in that great day will not make most for their joy, and wicked men's sorrow—for their comfort and wicked men's terror and torment—I will leave you to judge, and time and experience to decide. And thus much for the resolution of that great question. Having done with the motives that may encourage and provoke young men to be godly early, to know, love, seek, and serve the Lord, in the spring and morning of their days.

I shall now come to those **DIRECTIONS and HELPS** that must, by assistance from heaven, be put in practice, if ever you would be godly early, and serve the Lord in the primrose of your days. Now all that I shall say will fall under these two heads.

*First*, Some things you must carefully and watchfully decline, and arm yourselves against; and

*Secondly*, There are other things that you must prosecute and follow.

*First, **There are some things that you must watchfully decline,** and they are these.*

*Direction, (1). First, If ever you would be godly early, if you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your youth, oh! then, **take heed of putting the day of death far from you,** Amos 6:3, "You push away every thought of coming disaster."*

Young men are very prone to look upon death afar off, to put it at a great distance from them. They are apt to say to death as Pharaoh said to Moses, "Get away from me, and let me see your face no more," Exod. 10:28. If old men discourse to them of death, they are ready to answer, as the high priest did Judas in a different case, Mat 27:4, "What is that to us? look you unto it." We know sickness will come, and death is a debt that we must all pay, but surely these guests are a great way from us; for does not David say, "The days of a man are threescore years and ten"? Psalm 90:10. We have calculated our nativities, and we cannot abate a day, a minute, a moment, of "threescore and ten;" and therefore it is even a death to think of death; there being so great a distance between our birth-day and our dying-day, as we have cast up the account.

Ah! young men, it is sad, it is very sad, when you are so wittily wicked as to say with those in Ezekiel, "the people of Israel are saying—His visions won't come true for a long, long time." Ezek. 12:27.

Ah! young men, young men, by putting far away this day—you gratify Satan, you strengthen sin, you provoke the Lord, you make the work of faith and repentance more hard and difficult, you lay a sad foundation for the greatest fears and doubts.

Ah! how soon may that sad word be fulfilled upon you, "The Lord of that servant (who says his Lord delays his coming) shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder (or cut him off), and appoint him his portion with hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Mat. 24:48-51. When Sodom, when Pharaoh, when Agag, when Amalek, when Haman, when Herod, when Nebuchadnezzar, when Belshazzar, when Dives, when the fool in the Gospel—were all in their prime, their pride, when they

were all in a flourishing state, and upon the very top of their glory—how strangely, how suddenly, how sadly, how fearfully, how astonishingly—were they brought down to the grave, to hell!

Ah young man, who are you? and what is your name or fame? what is your power or place? what is your dignity or glory? that you dare promise yourself an exemption from sharing in as sad a portion as ever justice gave to those who were once very high, who were seated among the stars, but are now brought down to the pit of hell, Isaiah 13:10-17. I have read a story of one that gave a young prodigal a ring with a death's head, on this condition, that he should one hour daily, for seven days together, look and think upon it; which bred a great change in his life.

Ah! young men, the serious thoughts of death may do that for you which neither friends, counsel, examples, prayers, sermons, tears, have not done to this very day. Well! remember this; to labor not to die is labor in vain, and to put this day far from you, and to live without fear of death, is to die living. Death seizes on old men, and lays wait for the youngest. Death is oftentimes as near to the young man's back as it is to the old man's face.

It is storied of Charles the Fourth, king of France, that being one time affected with the sense of his many and great sins, he fetched a deep sigh, and said to his wife, *By the help of God I will now so carry myself all my life long, that I will never offend him more*; which words he had no sooner uttered, but he fell down dead and died.

Do not, young men, put this day far from you, lest you are suddenly surprised, and then you cry out, when too late, "A kingdom for a Christ, a kingdom for a Christ!"

Ah! young men, did you never hear of a young man that cried out, "Oh! I am so sick, that I cannot live, and yet, woeful wretch that I am! so sinful, that I dare not die. Oh that I might live! oh that I might die! oh that I might do neither!" Well! young men, remember this, the frequent, the serious thoughts of death will prevent many a sin, it will arm you against many temptations, it will secure you from many afflictions, it will keep you from doating on the world, it will make you do much in a little time,

it will make death easy when it comes, and it will make you look out early for an unshakable kingdom, for incorruptible riches, and for unfading glory. Therefore do not, Oh do not put the day of death far from you. Take heed of crying *tomorrow, tomorrow*, says Luther; for a man lives forty years before he knows himself to be a fool, and by that time he sees his folly, his life is finished. So men die before they begin to live.

*Direction (2). Secondly, If you would be godly early, then **take heed of leaning to your own understanding.***

This counsel wise Solomon gives to his son (or the young men in his time): "My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not lean on your own understanding," Proverbs 3:1, 5.

Youth is the age of folly, of vain hopes, and overgrown confidence. Ah! how wise might many have been, had they not been wise in their own opinion when young.

Rehoboam's young counselors proved the overthrow of his kingdom. It is brave for youth at all times to be discreet and sober-minded. Three virtues, they say, are prime ornaments of youth, modesty, silence, and obedience.

Ah! young men, keep close in every action to this one principle, namely, in every action resolve to be discreet and wise. Ah! young men, your leaning upon yourselves, or upon others, will in the end be bitterness and vexation of spirit. Young men are very apt to lean on their own wit, wisdom, arts, parts, as old men are to lean on a staff to support them (as the Hebrew word signifies, that is rendered *lean*, in that of Proverbs 3:5). This has been the bane of many a choice wit, the loss of many a brave head, the ruin of many a fine mind.

Ajax thought it was only for cowards and weaklings to lean upon the Lord for support, not for him when he was foiled. Lean not to great parts, lean not to natural or acquired accomplishments, lest you lose them and yourselves too. Leaning to natural or moral excellencies, is the ready way to be stripped of all. Babylon, who was bold bold upon her high towers,

thick walls, and twenty years' provision laid in for a siege, was surprised by Cyrus.

It was said of Caesar, that he received not his wounds from the swords of enemies, but from the hands of friends; that is, from trusting in them. Ah! how many young men have been wounded, yes slain, by trusting to their own understandings, their own abilities!

It was an excellent saying of Austin, *He who stands upon his own strength, shall never stand*. A creature is like a single drop left to itself, it spends and wastes itself presently, but if like a drop in the fountain and ocean of being, it has abundance of security.

Ah! young men, young men, if you will need be leaning, then lean upon precious promises, 2 Peter 1:4, Psalm 27:1; lean upon the rock that is higher than yourselves, lean upon the Lord Jesus Christ, as John did, who was the youngest of all the disciples, and the most beloved of all the disciples, John 21:20, chapter 13:23. John leaned much, and Christ loved him much. Oh lean upon Christ's wisdom for direction, lean upon his power for protection, lean upon his purse, his fullness, for provision, Cant. 8:5; lean upon his eye for approbation, lean upon his righteousness for justification, lean upon his blood for remission, lean upon his merits for salvation. As the young vine, without her wall to support her, will fall and sink, so will you, young men—without Christ putting his everlasting arms under you to support you, and uphold you. Therefore, above all leanings, lean upon him. By leaning on him, you will engage him; by leaning on him, you will gain more honor than you can give; by leaning on him, you may even command him, and make him eternally yours, etc.

*Direction (3).* Thirdly, If you would be godly early, if you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then ***take heed of flatterers and flattery***. Ah! how many young men might have been very godly, who are now exceeding bad, by hearkening to flatterers, and pretending flattery! Flattery undid young Rehoboam, Ahab, Herod, Nero, Alexander, etc. Flatterers are soul-murderers; they are soul-undoers. They are like evil surgeons, who skin over the wound, but never heal it.

The emperor Anastasius' motto was, *Smooth talk proves often sweet*

*poison*. Flattery is the very spring and mother of all impiety; it blows the trumpet, and draws poor souls into rebellion against God, as Sheba drew Israel to rebel against David. It put our first parents upon tasting the forbidden fruit; it put Absalom upon dethroning of his father; it put Haman upon plotting the ruin of the Jews; it put Korah, Dathan, and Abiram upon rebelling against Moses; it makes men call evil good and good evil, darkness light and light darkness, etc. Flattery puts people upon neglecting the means of grace, upon undervaluing the means of grace, and upon despising the means of grace; it puts men upon abasing God, slighting Christ, and vexing the Spirit; it unmans a man; it makes him call black white and white black; it makes a man exchange pearls for pebbles, and gold for counters; it makes a man judge himself wise when he is foolish; knowing, when he is ignorant; holy, when he is profane; free, when he is a prisoner; rich, when he is poor; high, when he is low; full, when he is empty; happy, when he is miserable, Rev. 3:17-18.

Ah! young men, young men, take heed of flatterers; they are the very worst of sinners; they are left by God, blinded by Satan, hardened in sin, and ripened for hell! God declares sadly against them, and that in his word and in his works: in his word, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together, Deut. 29:18-20; Psalm 78:36, 36:1, 3; Job 17:5; Ezek. 12:24; Dan. 11:21, 32, 34. Psalm 12:2-3, "They speak vanity everyone with his neighbor: with flattering lips, and with a double heart, do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things." And as God declares sadly against them in his word, so he has declared terribly against them in his works, as you may run and read in his judgments executed upon Ahab's flattering prophets, and upon Haman, and upon Daniel's princely false accusers, etc. And why, then, will not you stop your ears against those wretches, whom the hand and heart of God is so much against?

Again, as God declares against them, so godly men detest them and declare against them, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together, Psalm 5:8-10; Proverbs 2:16, Proverbs 7:21, Proverbs 28:23; Job 32:21-22; 1 Thes. 2:5, 10. Proverbs 20:19, "Meddle not with him who flatters with his lips." Why so? Why! Because a man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet, Proverbs 29:5. The Hebrew word that

is here rendered flatterer, signifies a soft butter-spoken man, because flatterers use smooth, soft speeches. Also the word signifies "to divide," because a flatterer's tongue is divided from his heart. Flatterers have their nets, and those who give ear to them will be taken to their ruin. A lying tongue hates those who are afflicted by it, and "a flattering mouth works ruin," Proverbs 26:28. A flattering mouth ruins name, fame, estate, body, soul, life.

Valerian, the Roman emperor, used to say, *Not bitter words—but flattering words do all the mischief.*

When Alexander the Great was hit with an arrow in the siege of an Indian city, which would not heal, he said to his flatterers, *You say that I am Jupiter's son—but this wound cries that I am but a man.*

Now shall godly men detest them and abhor them, as they are the pest of pests, the plague of plagues; and will you own them, will you take pleasure in them, to your ruin here and hereafter? The Lord forbid! Oh say to all flatterers, as he to his idols, "Get hence, for what have I more to do with you?" Hosea 14:8.

Nay, once more consider, that not only the good—but the bad, not only the best—but some of the worst of men, have manifested their detestation of flatterers and flattery.

When a court parasite praised Sigismund the emperor above measure, the emperor gave him a sound beating.

When Aristobulus the historian presented to Alexander, the great book that he had written of his glorious acts, wherein he had flatteringly made him greater than he was, Alexander, after he had read the book, threw it into the river Hydaspes, and said to the author, *It were a good deed to throw you after it.*

When the flatterers flattered Antigonus, he cried out, *You lie, you lie in your throat; these virtues that you speak of I have not in me—I am like a leopard, that have ten black spots to one white.*

Augustus Caesar and Tiberius Caesar were deadly enemies to flatterers, insomuch that they would not be called *lords* by their own children.

A good saying is attributed to Trebonianus Gallus, namely, *No flatterer can be a true friend.*

Ah! young men, young men, shall God, shall godly men, shall bad men, detest and declare against flatterers and flattery, and will not you turn a deaf ear upon them, yes, fly from them as from a serpent, and shun them as you would shun hell itself? If you do not, the very heathens but now cited will rise in judgment against you.

Flatterers are the very worst of sinners. The flatterers told Caesar, that his freckles in his face were like the stars in the skies. They bought and sold Aurelius the emperor at pleasure. And Augustus complained, when Varrus was dead, that he had none now left that would deal plainly and faithfully with him.

I have been the longer upon this, out of love to young men's souls, who are so apt to be ensnared in the flatterer's net. If ever you would be good in good earnest, you must abhor flatterers as the first-born of the devil, and as such as are most pernicious to men's happiness both here and hereafter.

It is reported of one Oramazes, that he had *an enchanted egg*, in which, as he boasted himself, he had enclosed all the happiness of the world; but being broken, nothing was found in it but wind. Flatterers are the greatest cheaters, the greatest deceivers in the world.

They say of the crocodile, that when he has killed a man, he will weep over him, as if he were sorry, and did repent for what he had done; the application is easy.

*Direction* (4). Fourthly, If you would be godly early, if you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then ***take heed of engaged affections to the things of the world.***

The young man in the Gospel took many a step towards heaven: "All

these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Mat. 19:16-24. Christ makes a very fair offer to him in the next words: "If you will be perfect, go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." You shall have heaven for earth, a sea for a drop, a treasure for a mite, a crown for a crumb. Ay—but the young man's affections were strongly engaged to the things of the world; and therefore he turns his back upon Christ, and goes away sorrowful, because he had great possessions. Oh the madness, the folly of this young man, who, to enjoy a little temporal felicity, has bid an everlasting farewell to Christ and glory!

In Genesis 13:2, it is said, that Abraham was very *rich* in cattle, in silver, and in gold; the Hebrew word which is here rendered rich, signifies *heavy*; it signifies a burden, to show us that riches are a heavy burden and an hindrance many times to heaven and happiness; and this young man in the Gospel found it so to his eternal undoing. Though the loadstone cannot draw the iron when the diamond is in presence, yet earthly possessions did draw this young man's soul away when Christ the pearl of price was present. The world is a silken net, and this young man found it so; the world is like golden fetters, and this young man found it so; the world is like sweet poison, and this young man found it so; for he had drunk so large a draught of it, that there was no room in his soul for Christ or heaven, for grace or glory.

Some say, that when the serpent Scytale cannot overtake the flying passenger, she does with her beautiful colors so astonish and amaze them, that they have no power to pass away until she have stung them; such a serpent the world proved to the young man in the Gospel; it did so affect him and take him, so amaze him and amuse him, that he could not stir until it stung him to death.

When the moon is fullest, it is furthest from the sun; so the more men have of the world, the further commonly they are from God; and this the young man in the Gospel demonstrated.

Many have ventured life and limb, and many a better thing, to gain the things of this world; and yet, after all, they have got nothing at all. Achan's golden wedge proved a wedge to cleave him; and his stolen

garment—a garment to shroud him.

The whole world is circular, the heart of a man is triangular, and we know a circle cannot fill a triangle; yes, if it is not filled with the Trinity, it will be filled with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world may be resembled to the fruit that undid us all, which was fair to the sight, smooth in handling, sweet in taste—but deadly in effect and operation.

Ah! young men, young men, have none of you found it so?

The world in all its bravery is no better than the cities which Solomon gave to Hiram, which he called *Cabul*, that is to say, displeasing or dirty, 1 Kings 9:13; the world will afford nothing but trivial flowers, surrounded with many briars. Oh the vanity, the uncertainty, the imperfection of all things below! If a man should weigh his pay and his pains together, his miseries and his pleasures together, his joys and his sorrows together, his mercies and his crosses together, his good days and his bad days together, will he not conclude, *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity?*

It was a wise and Christian speech of Charles the Fifth to the Duke of Venice, who, when he had showed him the glory of his princely palace and earthly paradise, instead of admiring it, or him for it, only returned him this grave and serious memento, *These are the things which make us unwilling to die*. It was a good saying of one to a great Lord, upon his showing him his stately house and pleasant gardens, *Sir, you had need make sure of heaven, or else when you die you will be a very great loser*.

Ah! young men, young men, it is only heaven that is above all winds, storms, and tempests; nor has God cast man out of paradise for him to think to find out another paradise in this world. The main reason why many young men doat upon the world is, because they are not acquainted with a greater glory. Men ate acorns until they were acquainted with the use of wheat. The woman had the moon under her feet when she was clothed with the sun, and had a crown of twelve stars upon her head, Rev. 12:1.

Ah! young men, were you but clothed with the Sun of righteousness, and had you a crown set upon your heads by the hand of faith, you would

have all the things of this world—which are as low, bespotted, and mutable as the moon—under your feet, Heb.11: 24-27, 35; Heb. 10:34. Well! young men, as ever you would be godly early, sit loose from the things of this world, be no longer worshipers of this golden calf, and never let the world, that shall be but your servant, become your Lord. Oh! let not the devil and the world have more service for an ounce of gold, than Christ shall have for the kingdom of heaven!

Ah, young men! the world and you must part, or Christ and you will never meet, "you cannot serve God and mammon," Matt. 6:24. The two poles shall sooner meet, than the love of Christ and the love of the world.

*Direction* (5). Fifthly, If you would be godly early, if you would know, seek, and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your youth, then ***take heed early of carnal reason, take heed of consulting with flesh and blood***, Gal. 1:15-16.

Many a hopeful young man has been undone temporally and undone eternally, by hearkening to those evil counselors.

Carnal reason is an enemy, yes, an utter enemy, nay, it is not only an utter enemy—but it is enmity, yes, enmities, Romans 8:7. An enemy may be reconciled—but enmity can never be reconciled. Carnal reason is not only averse—but it is utterly averse to all goodness; it builds strongholds and arguments against the most glorious gospel truths, and accounts the precious things of Christ as a strange thing. Carnal reason will make God and gospel do homage to it. When carnal reason is on the throne, Christ and his truths must all bow or be judged before its bar.

Ah! young men, young men, as ever you would be godly early, stop your ears against all carnal reasonings within you. Carnal reason judges the choicest things of the gospel to be mere foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:23. It is blind, and cannot see how to make a right judgment of Christ, his word, his ways, and yet will control all.

If you are resolved to be still scholars to this master, then you must resolve to be unhappy here and miserable hereafter. But it is safer and better for you to imitate those young men, who in the morning of their

days have graciously, wisely, and resolutely withstood those evil counselors—carnal reason, flesh and blood; Joseph and Moses, Daniel, Shadrach, Mesbach, and Abednego, all these in the primrose of their youth were good at turning the deaf ear to carnal counsel and carnal counselors, Gen. 39:7-11, etc; Heb. 11:24-26; Dan. 1.

Cassianus reports of a young man that had given himself up to a Christian life, and his parents disliking that way, they wrote letters to him to persuade him from it; and when he knew they were letters come from them, he would not open them—but threw them into the fire. This example is worth a following.

Another famous example you have in the story of King Edward the Sixth, when Cranmer and Ridley came to him, and were very earnest to have him give way to his sister to have mass. He stood out and pleaded the case with them, that it was a sin against God, and provoking to the eyes of his glory, etc.—but they still continued to use many carnal arguments to persuade the king, who was but a child about fifteen years of age—but he withstood them a great while; but at length when he saw he could not prevail with all his pleading against those brave men—but that they still continued their suit, he burst out into bitter weeping and sobbing, desiring them to desist. The motioners seeing his zeal and constancy, being overcome, they went away and told one that the king had more divinity in his little finger, than they had in all their bodies.

Ah! young men, it will be your safety and your glory to write after this princely copy, when you are surrounded with carnal reason and carnal counselors, etc.

*Direction (6).* Sixthly and lastly, If you would be godly early, then ***take heed of comparing yourselves with those who are worse than yourselves.***

Young men are very apt to compare themselves with those who are worse than themselves, and this proves a snare unto them, yes, oftentimes their bane, their ruin—as it did the young pharisee in the Gospel, who pleaded his negative righteousness. He was not as other men are, "extortioners, unjust, adulterers," and stood on his comparative goodness, "nor as this

publican;" he stands not only upon his comparisons—but upon his disparisons, being blind at home, and too quick-sighted abroad; he despises and condemns this poor publican, who was better than himself, Luke 18:11-14, making good that saying of Seneca, "The nature of man," says he, "is very apt to use spectacles to behold other men's faults, rather than looking-glasses to behold our own." Such pharisees do justly incur the censure which that sour philosopher passed upon grammarians, that they were better acquainted with the evil of Ulysses than with their own.

Ah! young man, young man, you know, he who drinks poison, though he drinks not so much as another, and he who commits treason, though not so great, so high treason as another—shall yet as certainly be poisoned, and hanged—as he who has drunk a greater quantity of poison, and committed higher acts of treason.

Sirs! do not delude and befool your own souls; if you are not as wicked as others, you shall not be as much tormented as others—but yet you shall beas certainly damned as others; you shall as certain to hell as others; you shall as sure be shut out forever from God, Christ, saints, angels, and all the treasures, pleasures, and glories of heaven, as others, except it be prevented by timely repentance on your side, and pardoning mercy on God's side.

Will you count it madness, O young man! in him who is sick, to reason thus? I am not so sick as such and such, and therefore I will not send to the physician; and in the wounded man to say, I am not so desperately wounded as such and such, and therefore I will not send to the surgeon; and in the traitor to say, I am not guilty of so many foul and heinous treasons as such and such, and therefore I will not look after a pardon; and in the necessitous man to say, I am not so poor as such and such, and therefore I will not welcome a hand of charity? And will you not count it the greatest madness in the world for you to put off your repentance, and your returning to the Lord in the spring and morning of your youth, because that you are not as sinful, as wicked as such and such. If to have a milder punishment in hell than others, will satisfy you, then go on; but if you are afraid of the worm which never dies, and of the fire which never goes out, being like that stone in Arcadia, which being once kindled could not be quenched, oh, then, begin to be godly early! Oh seek and serve the

Lord in the spring and morning of your days!

**To think often of hell, is the best way to be preserved from falling into hell.** Ah! young men, young men, that you would often consider of the bitterness of the damned's torments, and of the pitilessness of their torments, and of the diversity of their torments, and of the easelessness of their torments, and of the remedilessness of their torments, the eternity of their torments. The sinner's delight here is momentary, that which torments hereafter is perpetual. When a sinner is in hell, do you think, O young man! that another Christ shall be found to die for him, or that the same Christ will be crucified again for him, or that another gospel should be preached to him? Surely not!

Ah! why then will you not early return and seek out after the things that belong to your everlasting peace? I have read of Pope Clement the Fifth, that when a young nephew of his died, he sent his chaplain to a necromancer, to know of him how it fared with him in the other world; the conjuror showed him to the chaplain, lying in a fiery bed in hell, which, when the pope understood, he never joyed more, etc.

Ah! young man, that these occasional hints of hell may be a means to preserve you from lying in those everlasting flames.

Bellarmino tells us of a certain advocate of the court of Rome, that being at the point of death, was stirred up by those who stood by, to repent and call upon God for mercy; he, with a constant countenance, and without sign of fear, turned his speech to God, and said, Lord! I have a desire to speak unto you, not for myself—but for my wife and children, for I am hastening to hell, neither is there anything that you should do for me.

Sir Francis Bacon relates how it was a common byword of the Lord Cordes, that he would be content to live seven years in hell, so he might win Calais from the English; but if you, O young man, are given up to such desperate atheism, and carnal apprehensions of hell, I am afraid God will confute you one day by fire and brimstone; but I would willingly hope better things of all those young people, into whose hands this treatise shall fall; and thus you see what things must be declined and avoided—if ever you would be godly early, if ever you would seek and

serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days.

**There are things which must carefully and diligently be practiced, if ever you would be godly early.** I shall instance only in those who are most considerable and weighty; as,

First, If ever you would be godly early, etc., then ***you must labor to be acquainted with four things early.***

*Duty* (1).First, You must labor to acquaint yourselves with the **SCRIPTURE** early. You must study the word early. *David* studied the word in the morning of his days, in the primrose of his youth; and this made him wiser than his enemies, yes, than his teachers; this made him as much excel the ancients, as the sun excels the moon, or as the moon excels the twinkling stars, Psalm 119:97-103. *Timothy* was godly early; and no wonder, for in the primrose of his days he was acquainted with the Scripture; he was nurtured on the word from his childhood, yes, from his infancy, as the word properly signifies. So in that 119th Psalm, the 9th verse, "How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to your word." There is no way to a holy heart and a clean life but by acquainting yourselves with the word early. One has long since observed, that God has bowed down the Scriptures to the capacity even of babes and sucklings, that all excuse may be taken away, and that young men may be encouraged to study the Scripture early. Ah, young men! no histories are comparable to the histories of the Scriptures: 1, for antiquity; 2, rarity; 3, variety; 4, brevity; 5, perspicuity; 6, harmony; 7, verity. All other books cannot equal God's, either in age or authority, in dignity or excellency, in sufficiency or glory.

Moses is found more ancient and more honorable than all those whom the heathens make most ancient and honorable; as Homer, Hesiod, and Jupiter himself, whom the Greeks have seated in the top of their divinity.

The whole of Scripture is but one entire love-letter, despatched from the

Lord Christ to his beloved spouse; and who then but would still be a reading in this love-letter? Like Caecilia, a Roman maiden of noble parentage, who carried always about her the New Testament, that she might still be a-reading in Christ's love-letter, and behold the sweet workings of his love and heart towards his dear and precious ones.

Luther found so much sweetness in the word, in Christ's love-letter, that made him say he would not live in paradise, if he might, without the word; but with the word he could live in hell itself.

The word is like the stone *garamantides*, that has drops of gold in itself, enriching of the believing soul. This the martyrs found, which made them willing to give a load of hay for a few leaves of the Bible in English.

Augustine professes that the sacred Scriptures were his whole delight.

And Jerome tells us of one Nepotianus, who, by long and assiduous meditation on the holy Scriptures, had made his heart the library of Jesus Christ.

And *Rabbi Chiia*, in the *Jerusalem Talmud*, says that in his account all the world is not of equal value with one word out of the law. That which a papist reports lyingly of their sacrament of the mass, namely, that there are as many mysteries in it as there be drops in the sea, dust on the earth, angels in heaven, stars in the sky, atoms in the sunbeams, or sands on the sea-shore, etc., may be truly asserted of the Holy Scriptures.

Oh! the mysteries, the excellencies, the glories that are in the word! Ah! no book to this book; none so useful, none so needful, none so delightful, none so necessary to make you happy and to keep you happy as this. It is said of Caesar, that he had a greater care of his books than of his royal robes; for, swimming through the waters to escape his enemies, he carried his books in his hand above the waters—but lost his robe. Now, what are Caesar's books to God's books?

Ah! young men, young men! the word of the Lord is a light to guide you, a Counselor to counsel you, a comforter to comfort you, a staff to support you, a sword to defend you, and a physician to cure you. The word is a

mine to enrich you, a robe to clothe you, and a crown to crown you. It is bread to strengthen you, and wine to cheer you, and a honeycomb to feast you, and music to delight you, and a paradise to entertain you.

Oh! therefore, before all and above all, search the Scripture, study the Scripture, dwell on the Scripture, delight in the Scripture, treasure up the Scripture! There is no wisdom like Scripture wisdom, no knowledge like Scripture knowledge, no experience like Scripture experience, no comforts like Scripture comforts, no delights like Scripture delights, no convictions like Scripture convictions, no conversion like Scripture conversion.

Augustine hearing a voice from heaven, which bade him take and read, *tolle et lege*, whereupon, turning open the New Testament, he fell upon that place, "Let us walk with decency, as in the daylight: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no plans to satisfy the fleshly desires," Romans 13:13-14. This scripture so sunk into his heart, as that it proved the means of his conversion, as he himself reports. This Augustine, as he was once preaching, his memory failing of him, contrary to his purpose, he fell upon reproving the Manicheans, and by a scripture or two, not before thought of, to confute their heresies, he converted Firmus, a Manichean, as he after acknowledged to Augustine, blessing God for that sermon.

It is reported of one Adrianus, who seeing the martyrs suffer such grievous things in the cause of God, he asked what was that which caused them to suffer such things and one of them named that text, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive—the things which God has prepared for those who love him," 1 Cor. 2:9. And this text was set home with such a power upon him, as that it converted him and made him to profess true religion, and not only to profess it—but to die a martyr for it.

Cyprian was converted by reading the prophecy of Jonah. Junius was converted by reading the first chapter of John the evangelist.

I have read of a scandalous minister that was struck at the heart, and

converted, in reading that scripture: "You then, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?" etc., Romans 2:21.

We read that Paphnutius converted Thais and Ephron, two famous strumpets, from uncleanness, only with this scripture argument, "That God sees all things in the dark, when the doors are fast closed, the windows shut, the curtains drawn," Heb. 4:13.

I have read of a poor man who persuaded a young scholar to leave reading of poetry, etc., and fall upon reading of the Scripture, which accordingly he did; and it pleased the Lord, before he had read out Genesis, to change his heart and to turn him to the Lord in the primrose of his days, he being then but twenty years of age.

I have read of a young lady, called Potamia, of a very illustrious family, who endured very much in her martyrdom, by the extreme cruelty of Basilides her executioner, yet, after her death, he bethinking himself of the holy words and scripture-expressions that were uttered by her, during her cruel torments, became a Christian, and within few days after was himself likewise crowned with martyrdom.

James Andreas, a godly minister, hearing of a Jew that for theft was hanged by the heels, with his head downward; having not seen that kind of punishment, he went to the place where he was hanging between two dogs that were always snatching at him to eat his flesh; the poor wretch repeated in Hebrew some verses of the Psalms, wherein he cried to God for mercy, whereupon Andreas went near to him and instructed him in the principles of Christian religion, about Christ the Messiah, etc., exhorting him to believe in him, and it pleased God so to bless his Scripture exhortations to him, that the dogs gave over tearing of his flesh, and the poor Jew desired him to procure that he might be taken down and baptized, and hung by the neck for the quicker despatch, which was done accordingly.

I might produce other instances—but let these suffice to provoke all young people to a speedy, serious, diligent, and constant study of the Scripture. Ah! sirs, you do not know how soon your blind minds may be enlightened, your hard hearts softened, your proud spirits humbled, your

sinful natures changed, your defiled consciences purged, your distempered affections regulated, and your poor souls saved, by searching into the Scriptures, by reading the Scripture, and by pondering upon the Scripture. You should lay up the manna of God's word in your hearts, as Moses laid up the manna in the golden pot, Heb.9:4. And as Tamar did with the staff and signet that she received from Judah, she laid them up until she came to save her life, and did save her life by it, as you may see in holy story, Genesis 38:18-36. The laying up of the word now, may be the saving of your souls another day.

I have read of little bees, that when they go out in stormy weather, they will carry a little gravel with them, that they may be balanced and not carried away with the wind. Ah! young men, young men, you had need to have your thoughts and hearts balanced with the precious Word, that you may not be carried away with "every wind of doctrine," as many have been in these days, to their destruction and confusion.

Narcissus, a beautiful youth, though he would not love those who loved him, yet afterwards fell in love with his own shadow. Ah, how many young men in these days, who were once lovely and hopeful, are now fallen in love with their own and others' shadows, with high, empty, airy notions, and with strange monstrous speculations—to their own damnation! 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

Holy Melancthon, being newly converted, thought it impossible for his hearers to withstand the evidence of the gospel—but soon after he complained that old Adam was too hard for young Melancthon.

Ah! young men, young men, if you do not in good earnest give up yourselves to the reading, to the studying, to the pondering, to the believing, to the practicing, to the applying, and to the living up to the Scripture—Satan will be too hard for you, the world will be too hard for you, your lusts will be too hard for you, temptations will be too hard for you, and deceivers will be too hard for you, and in the end you will be miserable; and thus much for the first thing, etc.

*Duty (2).* Secondly, If you would be godly early, then you must *acquaint yourselves with **YOURSELVES** early.*

If you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your days, then you must see early how bad you are, how vile, how sinful, how wretched you are. No man begins to be good until he sees himself to be bad. The young prodigal never began to mend, he never thought of returning to his father, until he came to himself, until he began to return into his own soul, and saw himself in an undone condition, Luke 15:12-22.

Ah! young men, young men! You must see yourselves to be children of wrath, to be enemies of God, to be strangers from God, to be afar off from God, from Christ, from the covenant, from heaven; to be sin's servants, and Satan's bond-slaves. The ready way to be found, is to see yourselves lost. The first step to mercy, is to see your misery. The first step towards heaven is to see yourselves near to hell. You won't look after the physician of souls, you won't prize the physician of souls, you won't desire the physician of souls, you won't match with the physician of souls, you won't fall in love, in league with the physician of souls, you won't resign up yourselves to the physician of souls—until you come to see your wounds, until you come to feel your diseases, until you see the symptoms, the plague-sores of divine wrath and displeasure upon you. As the whole do not need the physician, so they do not desire, they do not care for the physician. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Matthew 9:12

Ah! young men, as you would be godly early, begin to acquaint yourselves with your sinful selves early, begin to acquaint yourselves early with your natural and undone condition.

There is a **threefold self**.

(1.) There is a *NATURAL self*; as a man's parts, wit, reason, will, affections, and inclinations, etc.

(2.) A *RELIGIOUS self*; and so a man's duties, graces, obedience, righteousness, holiness, are called one's self.

(3.) There is a *SINFUL self*; and so a man's corruptions, lusts, sinful nature, and dispositions, are called one's self. Now, if ever you would be godly early, you must acquaint yourselves with your sinful selves early.

Demonicus being asked at what time he began to be a philosopher, answered, *When I began to know myself*. So a man never begins to be a Christian until he begins to know himself. And indeed, for a man to know himself, to acquaint himself with himself, is one of the hardest works in all the world. For as the eye can see all things but itself, so most can discern all faults—but their own. Henry the Fourth, emperor of Germany, his usual speech was *many know much—but few know themselves*.

The very heathens did admire that saying as an oracle, *know and be acquainted with your own self*. The main exhortation of Chilo, one of the seven sages, was "Know yourself." And Plato records that this saying of Chilo, "Know yourself," was written in letters of gold upon the portal of Apollo's temple.

Juvenal says that this saying, "Know yourself," came from heaven. Macrobius says that the oracle of Apollo, being demanded what course should be taken for attaining to felicity, answered, *only teach a man to "know himself."*

Thus you see that both divinity and philosophy do agree in this, *that the best and surest way to true felicity is, to know ourselves, to acquaint ourselves with ourselves*.

This duty the apostle charges upon the Ephesians, "Remember that you, being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, that at that time you were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. 2:11-12.

Here are five **withouts**: without Christ, without the church, without the promise, without hope, and without God in the world.

Man in his natural state is afar off, in three ways:

- (1.) In point of opinion and apprehension.
- (2.) In point of fellowship and communion.
- (3.) In point of grace and conversion.

As you would be godly early, dwell much upon your corrupt nature early. Ah! such is the corruption of our nature, that propound any divine good to it, it is received as fire by water; propound any evil, then it is like fire to straw. It is like the foolish lecher, who made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that unctuous matter which the naturalists say sucks and snatches the fire to it, with which it is consumed. Until you come to be sensible of this, you will never begin to be godly; you will never look to have your hearts changed, and your souls saved.

The Ethiopians paint angels black, and devils white, in favor of their own complexion; and they say that if the brute creatures could draw a picture of the divine nature, they would make their shape the copy, and thus they flatter and delude themselves. Take heed, young men, take heed that you do not become cheats upon your own souls; take heed that you be not like those painters who, so as they can make a man's picture mirthful and gaudy, care not to draw it so as to resemble him. It is safest and best, O young man! to know the worst of yourself, and to know yourself as you are in yourself, and not as your own flattering heart, or as other flatterers, may represent you to yourself.

*Duty (3).* Thirdly, If you would be godly early, then you must *acquaint yourselves with **Jesus Christ** early.*

You must know him early. A man never begins to be godly until he begins to know him who is the fountain of all goodness: "This is life eternal, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent," John 17:3.

The knowledge of Christ is the beginning of eternal life; it is the way to eternal life, it is a taste of eternal life, it is a sure pledge and pawn to the soul of eternal life.

The Spaniards say of Aquinas, that he who knows not him knows not anything—but he who knows him knows all things. He who knows Jesus Christ not notionally only—but practically; not apprehensively only—but affectively, he knows all things that may make him happy; but he who knows not Jesus Christ knows nothing which will stand him in goof stead,

when he shall lie upon a dying bed, and stand before a judgment seat.

Justin Martyr relates that when, in his discourse with Trypho, he mentioned the knowledge of Christ as conducing to our happiness and perfection, Trypho's friends laughed at it; but I hope better things of all those into whose hands this treatise shall fall.

Sirs! the sun is not more necessary to the world, nor the eye to the body, nor the pilot to the ship, nor the general to the army, etc., than the knowledge of Christ early is necessary for all those who would be godly early.

Dear hearts, as ever you would be godly early, you must labor, even as for life, to **know and be thoroughly acquainted with these six things concerning Jesus Christ early.**

(1.) *First*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early ***that there is everything in Christ that may encourage you to seek him and serve him, to love him and obey him, to believe on him, and to marry with him.***

If you look upon his names, his natures, his offices, his graces, his dignities, his excellencies, his royalties, his glories, his fulnesses—they all speak out as much.

Are you poor? Why, Christ has gold to enrich you, Rev. 3:18. Are you naked? Christ has white raiment to clothe you. Are you spiritually blind? Christ has eye-salve to enlighten you. Are you in straits? He has wisdom to counsel you. Are you unrighteous? He will be righteousness to you? Are you unholy? He will be holiness and sanctification to you, 1 Cor. 1:30. Are you hungry? He is bread to feed you. Are you thirsty? He is wine and milk to satisfy you. Are you weary? He is a bed to rest you. Are you sick? Why, he is a physician to cure you, etc. *Omne bonum in summo bono*, All good is in the chief good.

The creatures have their particular goodness, health has its particular goodness, and wealth has its particular goodness, and learning has its, and the favor of the creature has its, etc.—but now Jesus Christ he is a

universal good. All the petty excellencies which are scattered abroad in the creatures are united in Christ; yes, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth is epitomized in him. One Christ will be to you instead of all things else, because in him are all good things to be found. Abraham's servant brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold, to win Rebekah's heart to Isaac; so should you, O young men! be often in presenting to your own view all those amiable and excellent things that be in Christ, to win your hearts over to Christ early.

(2.) *Secondly*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early *that Jesus Christ is mighty to save*.

He is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto him, who believe in him, and who cast themselves upon him. The Lord has laid help upon one that is mighty. Christ saves perfectly, thoroughly, perpetually—all who come unto him.

The three tongues that were written upon the cross, in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, to witness Christ to be the king of the Jews, do each of them, in their several idioms, avouch this axiom, that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior; and "a threefold cord is not easily broken." They say of the oil at Rheims, that though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France, yet it never diminishes. Christ is that pot of manna, that cruse of oil, that bottomless ocean, which never fails his people. There is in Christ an all-sufficiency for all creatures at all times, in all places.

*The great Cham* is said to have a tree full of pearls hanging by clusters; but what is the great Cham's tree to Christ, our tree of life, who has all variety and plenty of fruit upon him. The happinesses which come to believers by Christ are so **many**, that they cannot be numbered; so **great**, that they cannot be measured; so **copious**, that they cannot be defined; so **precious**, that they cannot be valued; all which speaks out the fullness and all-sufficiency of Christ.

There is in Christ, a fullness of abundance, and a fullness of redundancy, as well as a fullness of sufficiency.

There is in Christ,

1. The fullness of the Spirit.
2. The fullness of grace.
3. The fullness of the image of God.
4. The fullness of the Godhead.
5. The fullness of glory.

But I must not now open nor dilate on these things, lest I should tire both myself and the reader.

Plutarch, in the life of Phocion, tells us of a certain gentlewoman of Ionia, who showed the wife of Phocion all the rich jewels and precious stones she had. She answered her again, All my riches and jewels is my husband Phocion. So may a penitent sinner say of his blessed Savior—Christ is all my jewels, my riches, my treasures, my pleasures, etc.; his sufficiency is all these, and more than these, to me.

The Spanish ambassador, coming to see the treasury of St. Mark in Venice, which is cried up throughout the world, fell a-groping to find whether it had any *bottom*, and being asked why, answered, *In this among other things, my great Master's treasure differs from yours, in that his has no bottom, as I find yours to have*,—alluding to the mines in Mexico and Potosi. But what are the Spaniard's treasures to Christ's treasures? A man may, without much groping, find the bottom of all earthly treasures—but who can find the bottom of Christ's treasures? Should all created excellencies meet in one glorified bosom, yet they could not enable that glorious God-like creature to sound the bottom of those riches and treasures which are in Christ, Ephes. 3:8; all which speaks out Christ's all-sufficiency; and thus much for the second thing.

(3.) *Thirdly*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early, ***That there is a marvelous willingness and readiness in Christ to embrace, to entertain, to welcome returning sinners, and to show mercy and favor to them.***

The young prodigal did but think of returning to his father, and he ran

and met him, and instead of kicking or killing him, his father kissed him and embraced him, his affections enkindled within him, and his compassions flowed out freely to him, Luke 15:20-22. "Ho! everyone who thirsts—come to the waters; and he who has no money—come, buy and eat, yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," Isaiah 55:1. Nazianzen says: Oh, God *gives* more willingly than others *sell*; if you will but accept, that is all the price; though you have no merits, though you have nothing in yourselves to encourage you, yet will you accept? If you will, all is freely yours; the waters shall be yours to cleanse you, and the milk yours to nourish you, and the bread yours to strengthen you, and the wine yours to comfort you. Here poor sinners are called three times to come: Come, says Christ, come, come, to show how marvelous ready and willing he is that poor sinners should taste of gospel delicacies.

So in John 7:37, "Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink." So in Rev. 22:17, "Let him who is athirst come, and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." So in Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." So in that Luke 14:21, "The master of the house said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Here is no man of quality, of dignity, of worldly pomp or glory, or of any self-sufficiency, that is invited to the feast—but a company of poor, ragged, deformed, slighted, neglected, impoverished, wounded sinners; these are invited to feast with Christ.

Concerning this willingness of Christ, I shall speak more when I come to deal with old sinners in the close of this discourse, and to that I refer you for further and fuller satisfaction concerning the great readiness and willingness of Jesus Christ to entertain returning sinners.

(4.) *Fourthly*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early, ***That Jesus Christ is designed, sealed, and appointed by the Father to the office of a Mediator.***

"Labor not for the food which perishes—but for that doos which endures

to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him has God the Father sealed." God the Father has made Christ's commission authentic, as men do theirs by their seal. It is a metaphor, a simile taken from those who give commissions under hand and seal. God the Father has given it under his hand and seal, that Jesus Christ is the only person that he has appointed and sealed, allowed and confirmed, to the office of our redemption. If Jesus Christ was ever so able to save, and ever so willing and ready to save poor sinners—yet if he were not appointed, designed, and sealed, for that work, the awakened sinner would never look out after him, nor desire union with him, nor interest in him; and therefore it is of very great consequence to know that God the Father has sent and sealed Christ to be a Savior to his people.

"Him has God the Father sealed." Sealed by way of destination and sealed by way of qualification, sealed by his doctrine, sealed by his miracles, sealed by his baptism, sealed by his resurrection—but above all, sealed by his glorious unction. "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." Isaiah 61:1-3, Luke 4:18. Neither saints nor angels are sealed and anointed to the great work of redemption—but the Lord Jesus is. You should always look upon the Lord Jesus as sealed and anointed to the office of a Mediator, and accordingly plead with him.

Ah, Lord! it is your office, as you are a sealed and an anointed Savior and Redeemer—to subdue my sins, to change my nature, to sanctify my heart, to reform my life, and to save my soul; and therefore do it for your name's sake, oh do it for your office' sake, do it for your glory's sake!

"You are anointed with the oil of gladness above your fellows," Psalm 45:7, Heb. 1:9. You have a larger effusion of the Spirit upon you than others; you are anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power after an

extraordinary measure and manner; you are endued with all heroic gifts and excellencies, plentifully, abundantly, transcendently; you are sealed and predestinated; you are invested into this office of Mediatorship under the Father's hand and seal: and therefore where should I go for salvation, for remission, for redemption, for grace, for glory—but to you?

(5.) *Fifthly*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early, ***that there is no way to salvation but by Jesus Christ.***

"Neither is there salvation in any other" (speaking of Christ), "for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12. If ever you are saved, you must be saved by him, and him only; you must not look for another Savior, nor you must not look for a co-Savior; you must be saved wholly by Christ and only by Christ, or you shall never be saved; you must cry out, as Lambert did when he was in the fire, and lifted up his hands, and fingers'-ends flaming, "None but Christ, none but Christ!"

When Augustus Caesar desired the senate to join two consuls with him for the better government of the state, the senate answered, that they held it as a diminution of his dignity, and a disparagement of their own judgment, to join any with so incomparable a man as Augustus. Ah! friends, it is a diminution of Christ's dignity, sufficiency, and glory, in the business of your salvation, to join anything with the Lord Jesus; and it is the greatest disparagement in the world to your own judgments, knowledge, prudence, and wisdom, to yoke any with Christ in the work of redemption, in the business of salvation.

Augustine says, that Marcellina hung Christ's picture and the picture of Pythagoras together; many there are, not only in Rome—but in England (yes, I am afraid in London), who join Christ and their works together, Christ and their prayers together, Christ and their teachers together, Christ and their mournings together, Christ and their hearings together, Christ and their alms together.

Ah, what a poor, what a weak, what an impotent, what an insufficient Savior do these men make Jesus Christ to be! Except these men come off from these things, and come up only to Jesus Christ, in the great business

of salvation, they will as certainly and as eternally perish, notwithstanding their hearing, knowing, and talking much of Christ—as those who never heard of Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, God commands them not to wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together, "neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon you," Deut.22:11. This law was figurative, and shows us that in the case of our justification, acceptance, and salvation—we are not to join our works, our services, with the righteousness of Christ. God abhors a linsey-woolsey righteousness. And as by the letter of this law, in the Hebrews' account, one thread of wool in a linen garment, or one linen thread in a woollen garment, made it unlawful, so the least manner of mixture in the business of justification makes all null and void. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." He who shall mix his righteousness with Christ's, he who shall mix his puddle with Christ's purple blood, his rags with Christ's royal robes, his copper with Christ's gold, his water with Christ's wine, etc., is in the ready way to perish forever.

On earth kings love no consorts; power is impatient of participation. Christ will be Alexander or *Nemo*, nobody; he will be all in all in the business of justification, or he will be nothing at all. We must say of Christ, as it was once said of Caesar, *He may have a companion, etc.—but he must not have a competitor*, 1 Cor. 1:30, Romans 5:19-20.

Let us say of Christ, as the heathen once said of his petty gods, *so long as he had his Jupiter as his friend, he regarded them not*. So, so long as we have our Jesus as our friend, and his righteousness and blood as ours, we shall despise all other things, and abhor the bringing of anything into competition with him. A real Christian cares not for anything that has not something of Christ in it. *He who holds not wholly with Christ, does very shamefully neglect Christ*, says Gregory Nazianzen. (Eph. 3:9-10, Psalm 61:15-16, 19, compared.)

There is no other name, no other nature, no other blood, no other merits, no other person to be justified and saved by—but Jesus Christ. You may

run from creature to creature, and from duty to duty, and from ordinance to ordinance, and when you have wearied and tired out yourselves in seeking ease and rest, satisfaction and remission, justification and salvation, in one way and another, you will be forced after all to come to Christ, and to cry out, *Ah! none but Christ, none but Christ!* Isaiah 55:2, Rom.10:3. Ah! none to Christ, none to Christ; no works to Christ; no duties, no services to Christ; no prayers, no tears to Christ; no righteousness, no holiness to Christ. Well! friends, remember this, that all the tears in the world cannot wipe off meritoriously one sin, nor all the grace and holiness that is in angels and men buy out the pardon of the least transgression. All remission is only by the blood of Christ.

(6.) *Sixthly* and lastly, If you would be godly early, then you must know early, ***that the heart of Jesus Christ is as much set upon sinners now that he is in heaven, as ever it was when he was upon earth.***

Christ is no less loving, less mindful, less desirous of sinners' eternal welfare now he is heaven in a far country—than he was when he lived on earth. Witness his continuing the ministry of reconciliation among poor sinners in all ages; witness the constant treaties, that by his ambassadors and Spirit he still has with poor sinners, about the things of their peace, the things of eternity; witness his continual knockings, his continual callings upon poor sinners by his word, rod, Spirit—to open, to repent, to lay hold on mercy, and to be at peace with him; witness his continual wooing of poor sinners in the face of all neglects and put-offs, in the face of all delays and denials, in the face of all harsh entertainment and churlish answers, in the face of all gainsayings and carnal reasonings, in the face of all the scorn and contempt that wretched sinners put upon him, and witness that plain word, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever," Heb. 13:8. Christ is the same afore time, in time, and after time, he is unchangeable in his essence, in his promises, and in his affections: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come," Rev. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13.

The phrase is taken from the Greek letters, whereof Alpha is the first and Omega is the last. *The first and last letter of the Greek alphabet is a*

*description of me, says Christ, who am before all and after all, who am above all and in all, who am unchangeable in myself, and in my thoughts and good will to poor sinners. Therefore do not, poor souls, entertain any hard thoughts concerning Jesus Christ, as if he was less mindful, less pitiful, and less merciful to poor souls now that he is in heaven, than he was when his abode was in this world.*

And thus I have gone over those six things that you must know concerning Christ early, if ever you be godly early. When Pope Leo lay upon his death-bed, Cardinal Bembo citing a text of Scripture to comfort him, he replied, "Away with these baubles concerning Christ!" But I hope better things of you, and do desire that you will say of all things below this knowledge of Christ that I have opened to you, as that devout pilgrim, who, traveling to Jerusalem, and by the way visiting many brave cities, with their rare monuments, and meeting with many friendly entertainments, would often say, I must not stay here, this is not Jerusalem. Ah! so do you, young men and women, in the midst of all your worldly delights and contents, cry out, *Oh! we must not stay here, this is not Jerusalem, this is not that knowledge of Christ that I must have, if ever I am happy here and blessed hereafter.*

*Duty (4).* Fourthly and lastly, If you would be godly early, then **you must acquaint yourselves with those who are godly early.**

*Direction (1).* First, If you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your youth, then you must begin early to **be much in with those who are much in with Christ, who lie near his heart and know much of his mind.** "He who walks with wise men shall be wise—but a companion of fools shall be destroyed," or, as the Hebrew has it, shall be broken in pieces, as when an army is broken and routed by an enemy. *Walking with the wise, he shall be wise,* for so the original has it. It is not *talking* with the wise—but *walking* with the wise, which will make you wise; it is not your commending and praising of the wise—but your walking with the wise, which will make you wise; it is not your taking a few turns with the wise which will make you wise—but your walking with the wise which will make you wise. There is no getting much good by those who are godly—but by making them your ordinary and constant companions.

Ah, friends! you should do as Joseph in Egypt, of whom the Scripture says, Psalm 105:22 (according to the Hebrew phrase), that he tied the princes of Pharaoh's court about his heart. If ever you would gain by the saints, you must bind them upon your souls, you must labor to have very near, close, and intimate communion with them.

The Jews have a proverb, that two dry sticks put to a green one will kindle it. The best way to be in a flame God-ward, Christ-ward, heavenward, and holiness-ward, is to be among the dry sticks, the kindle-coals, the saints; for as live coals kindle those who are dead, so lively Christians will heat and enliven those who are dead God-wards, Christ-wards, heaven-wards, and holiness-wards. "As iron sharpens iron, so does the face of a man his friend," Proverbs 27:17.

Men's wits, parts, and gifts, and industry, commonly grow more strong, vigorous, and quick, by friendly conference and communion.

And as he who comes where sweet spices and ointments are stirring, carries away a sweet savor with him, so he who converses with those who are godly shall carry away that goodness and sweetness with him which shall render him sweet, desirable, and delectable to others. Polemon, whom Augustine speaks of, who was all for wine and play, etc., became a brave man when he came acquainted with the philosopher's school. So many young men, that have been all for wine and women, for playing and toying, for vanity and folly, have become brave men, precious men, by the company, counsel, and example of those who were gracious.

Doctor Taylor, the martyr, rejoiced that ever he came into prison, because he came there to have acquaintance with that angel of God, John Bradford, as he calls him: so, doubtless, many young people there be that have much cause to rejoice, and forever to bless the Lord, that ever they came acquainted with such and such who fear the Lord, and who walk in his ways, for the good that they have received by them.

Algerius, an Italian martyr, said he had rather be in prison with Cato, than with Caesar in the senate house. Ah! young men, young men, you were better be with the people of God, when they are in the lowest and

most contemptible condition, than with the great wicked ones of the world, when they are in all their royalty and glory. In the day of account you will find that they have made the best market, who have rather chosen to keep company with Lazarus, though in his rags, than they would with others keep company with Dives, though in his purple robes.

Well! young men, remember this, *clothes and company do oftentimes tell tales, in a mute but significant language.* Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you what you are, says the Spanish proverb. Cicero, though a heathen, had rather to have no companion, than a bad one. The Lord grant that this heathen, and others among them, that were of the same mind with him, may never rise up in judgment against any of you, into whose hands this treatise may fall.

And thus I have despatched those four things that you must be acquainted with early, namely, the Scripture, your own hearts and conditions, the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who fear him, if ever you would be godly early.

*Direction (2). Secondly,* If you would be godly early, if you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, Then **you must shun the occasions of sin early.** A man will never begin to be godly, until he begins to decline those occasions that have made him bad: 1 Thes. 5:22, "Abstain from all appearances of evil."

You must shun and be shy of the very appearance of sin, of the very shows and shadows of sin. The word *eidos*, which is ordinarily rendered appearance, signifies kind, or sort; and so the meaning of the apostle seems to be this, "Abstain from all sorts, or the whole kind of evil;" from all that is truly so, be it ever so small.

The least sin is dangerous. Caesar was stabbed with needles, and many have been eaten up by mice and lice.

The least spark may consume the greatest house, the least leak may sink the greatest ship, the least sin is enough to undo your soul; and therefore shun all the occasions that lead unto it.

Job made a covenant with his eyes, Job 31:1; Joseph would not be in the room where his mistress was, Gen. 39:10; and David, when himself, would not sit with vain people, Psalm 26:3-7. As long as there is fuel in our hearts for a temptation, we cannot be secure; he who has gunpowder about him, had need keep far enough off from sparks; he who is either tender of his credit abroad, or comfort at home, had need shun, and be shy of the very show and shadow of sin; he who would neither wound conscience nor credit, God nor gospel, had need hate "the garment spotted with the flesh," Jude 23.

In the law, God commanded his people, not only that they should worship no idol—but that they should demolish all the monuments of them, and that they should make no covenant nor affinity with those who worshiped them, and all lest they should be drawn by those occasions to commit idolatry with them. He who would not *taste* of the forbidden fruit, must not so much as *gaze* on it; and he who would not be bitten by the serpent, must not so much as parley with the serpent.

It is very observable, that in the law, the Nazarite was not only commanded to abstain from wine and strong drink—but also he might not eat grapes, whether moist or dry, or anything that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. But why not these small things, in which there could be no danger of drunkenness? Surely, lest by the contentment of these, he might be drawn to desire the wine, and so be brought on to sin, to break his vow, and so make work for hell, or for the physician of souls. God hereby forbidding the most remote occasions, shows how wary and exactly careful men should be to shun and avoid all occasions, provocations, and appearances of evil; and indeed we had need to keep off from slippery places who can hardly stand fast on dry ground.

He who ventures upon the occasion of sin and then prays, "Lord, lead me not into temptation," is like him that thrusts his finger into the fire, and then prays that it may not be burnt; or like him that is resolved to quench the fire with oil, which, instead of quenching it, is as fuel to feed it and increase it. It is a greater miracle not to fall, being among strong temptations, than it is to raise up the dead; he who would not be defiled, must not touch pitch; he who would not be burnt, must not carry fire in his bosom; he who would not eat the meat, must not meddle with the

broth; he who would not fall into the pit, must not dance upon the brink: "Keep far from a false matter," Exod. 23:7. He who will not fly from the occasions and allurements of sin, though they may seem ever so pleasant to the eye, or sweet to the taste—shall find them in the end more sharp than vinegar, more bitter than wormwood, more deadly than poison.

There is a great truth in that saying of the son of Sirach, "He who loves danger, shall perish therein; he who will not decline danger, shall not be able to decline destruction."

Socrates speaks of two young men that flung away their belts when, being in an idol temple, the lustrating water fell upon them, detesting, says the historian, "the garment spotted by the flesh;" and will you, O young men, play and toy with the occasions of sin? The Lord forbid.

There are stories of several heathens that have shunned and avoided the occasions of sin, and will you dare to venture upon the occasions of sin?

Alexander would not see the woman after whom he might have lusted.

Scipio Africanus, warring in Spain, took New Carthage by storm, at which time a beautiful and noble virgin fled to him for support to preserve her chastity. He being but twenty-four years old, and so in the heat of youth, hearing of it, would not allow her to come into his sight for fear of temptation—but caused her to be restored in safety to her father.

Livia counseled her husband Augustus, not only not to do wrong—but not to seem to do so, etc.

Caesar would not search Pompey's cabinet, lest he should find new matters of revenge.

Plato mounted upon his horse, and judging himself a little moved with pride, did presently light from his horse, lest he should be overtaken with loftiness in riding.

Theseus is said to cut off his golden locks, lest his enemies should take advantage by taking hold of them.

Ah! young men, young men, shall the very heathens thus shun and fly from the occasion of sin, and will not you? will not you who sit under the sunshine of the gospel? These will in the great day of account be sad and sore witnesses against those who dally and play with the occasions of sin.

To prevent carnal worry, Christ sends his disciples to school, to the irrational creatures (Matt. 6:26-32). And to prevent your closing with the occasions of sin, let me send you to school to the like creatures, that you may learn by them to shun and avoid the occasions of sin.

The *Sepiae*, a certain kind of fish, perceiving themselves in danger of taking, by an instinct which they have, they do darken the water, and so many times escape the net which is laid for them.

Geese, they say, when they fly over Taurus they keep stones in their mouths, lest by goggling they should discover themselves to the eagles, which are among the mountains waiting for them. Now, if all these considerations put together will not work you to decline the occasions of sin, I know not what will. There is a truth in that old saying—

He who will no evil do,

Must do nothing belongs thereto.

The Israelites must have no leaven in their houses until the Passover be done, lest they should be tempted to eat of it, Exod. 13.

*Direction (3). Thirdly, If you would be godly early, then **you must remember the eye of God early.***

If you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then you must study **God's omnipresence** early. "Does not he see my ways, and count all my steps?" "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves," Psalm 139:2-14; Job 31:4, 21-22.

I have read that Paphnutius converted two famous young strumpets, Thais and Ephron, from immorality, only with this argument, *that God*

*sees all things in the dark, when the doors are fast, the windows shut, and the curtains drawn.* By this very argument Solomon labors to take off his young men from carnal and sinful courses: "And why will you, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his goings," Proverbs 5:20-21. You may deceive all the world, like that counterfeit Alexander in Josephus his story—but Augustus will not be deceived; he has quicker and sharper eyes.

Ah! young men, young men, you may deceive this man and that, and as easily deceive yourselves—but you cannot deceive him, who is *totus oculus*, **all-eye**. As the eyes of a well-drawn picture are fastened upon you which way soever you turn, so are the eyes of the Lord. I have read of one who, being tempted to adultery, said they could not be private enough, and being carried from room to room, answered, We are not yet private enough, *God is here!*

Ah, friends! His eyes, which are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, compasses your words, your ways, your works, your thoughts, your bed, your table, your bench. The Egyptian hieroglyphic for God was an *eye* on a *scepter*, showing that he *sees* and *rules* all things, Jer. 13:27, 29:23.

Ah, friends! All thoughts, words, hopes, and hearts, are naked, opened, dissected and quartered before that God with whom you have to do. God is very precise and exact in marking and observing what is done by men, that he may render to every man according to his works.

Ah! young men and women, the eye of God should be more to you than all the world besides. Oh that the Scripture might be written with the pen of a diamond upon your hearts. "Should you not fear me? Should you not tremble in my presence?" Jer. 5:22. There is a great truth in that saying of his, *A great necessity of goodness is from hence put into us, because we do all things before the eyes of a judge that sees all things.*

*Direction (4). Fourthly, If you would be godly early, then **you must hearken to the voice of CONSCIENCE early**, 2 Tim. 1:3.*

A man will never begin to be godly until he begins to hearken to what

conscience speaks. So long as a man turns a deaf ear to conscience, he is a safe prisoner to Satan, and a sure enemy to God, Psalm 58:4, John 3:20-21. Ah! how godly might many have been had they but begun early to hearken to conscience!

Ah! young men, do not dally with conscience, do not play, do not trifle with conscience, do not stop your ears against conscience. He who will not in his youth give conscience audience, shall at last be forced to hear such lectures from conscience, as shall make his life a very hell. A sleepy conscience is like a sleepy lion, when he awakes, he roars and tears; so will conscience, Mark 9:22. Conscience is a thousand witnesses for or against a man. He who has long turned the deaf ear to conscience, shall at last find his conscience like Prometheus' vulture, that lies ever a-gnawing. Judas found it so, and Spira found it so, and Blair, a great councillor of Scotland, found it so.

I have read of one *John Hofmeister*, who fell sick in his inn, as he was traveling towards Auspurge in Germany, and grew to that horror of conscience, that they had to bind him in his bed with chains, where he cried out, that he was forever cast off by God, and that the promises that were set before him would do him no good, and all because he had wounded his conscience, and turned a deaf ear to conscience.

Well! young men, if you will not early hearken to conscience, you shall at last hear conscience saying to you, as the probationer disciple said to Christ, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go," Mat.8:19; so says conscience, Sinner, I have called upon you many a thousand times, and told you, that I must by commission be your best friend, or your worst enemy—but you would not hear. Therefore now I will follow you where ever you go. Fast, and I will follow you, and fill you with horrors and terrors. Feast, and I will follow you, and show you such a handwriting upon the wall, as shall cause your countenance to change, your thoughts to be troubled, the joints of your loins to be loosed, and your knees dashed one against another, Dan. 5:5-6. Stay at home, and I will follow you from bed to board. Go abroad, and I will follow you into all places and companies, and you shall know that it is an evil and a bitter thing, that you have so often and so long neglected my calls, and disobeyed my voice, and walked contrary to me. How you shall find a truth in that

saying of Luther, *one drop of an evil conscience swallows up the whole sea of worldly joy.*

Well! young men, there is a day coming wherein a good conscience will be better than a good purse, for then the Judge will not be put off with a suit of compliments or fair words, nor drawn aside with hope of reward; and therefore, as you would be able to hold up your heads in that day, make conscience of hearkening to the voice of conscience in this your day.

*Direction* (5). Fifthly, If you would be godly early, then **you must know early wherein true happiness lies.**

For a man will never begin to be godly until he begins to understand wherein his happiness consists.

The philosophers, speaking of happiness, were divided into two hundred and eighty-eight opinions, everyone intending something, and yet resolving nothing. Therefore the man in Plutarch, hearing them wrangle about man's *summum bonium*, chief good, one placing it in this, and another in that, he went to the market and bought up all that was good, hoping, among all, he should not miss of it—but he did. Many look for happiness in **sin**, others look for it in the **creatures**—but they must all say, *It is not in us*, Isaiah 56:12, Job 28:14: nothing can give what it has not. If the conduit pipe has no water, it can give no water; if a man has no money, he can give no money; if the creatures have no happiness, they can give no happiness. Now this jewel, this pearl, **happiness**, is not to be found in the bosom, in the bosom of creatures. In a word, because I must hasten to a close, man's happiness lies,

*First, In communion with God*, as experience and Scripture demonstrates. "Happy is that people who are in such a case (but give me that word again), yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord," Psalm 144:15. A man whose soul is in communion with God shall find more pleasure in a desert, in a dungeon, in a den, yes, in death—than in the palace of a prince, than in all worldly delights and contents, etc.

*Secondly, In pardon of sin.* "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord

does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit," Psalm 32:1-2. It is not, blessed is the *honorable* man—but blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, blessed is the rich man—but blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, blessed is the *learned* man—but blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, blessed is the *popular* man—but blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, blessed is the *victorious* man—but blessed is the pardoned man. *Do with me what you will, since you have pardoned my sins*, says Luther.

*Thirdly, In a complete fruition and enjoyment of God, when we shall be here no more.* "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Mat. 5:8; "Now they see him but darkly—but in heaven they shall see him face to face; they shall know as they are known," 1 Cor. 13:12. But of these things I have spoken largely elsewhere, and therefore shall satisfy myself with these hints.

*Direction (6). Lastly, If you would be godly early, then you must break your covenant with SIN early.*

You must fall out with your lusts early; you must arm and fence yourselves against sin early, Isaiah 28:15-18. A man never begins to fall in with Christ until he begins to fall out with his sins. Until sin and the soul be two, Christ and the soul cannot be one. Now, to work your hearts to this, you should always look upon sin under these notions:

*Notion (1). First, If you would have the league dissolved between sin and your souls early, then look upon sin under the notion of an ENEMY.* "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul," 1 Peter 2:11. As the viper is killed by the young ones in her belly, so are poor sinners betrayed and killed by their own lusts, that are nourished in their bosoms.

Pittacus, a philosopher, challenged Phlyon the Athenian captain, to single combat—carried a *net* privily, and so caught him, and overcame him. So does sin with poor sinners—the dangerous, pernicious, malignant nature of sin. You may see in the story of the Italian, who first made his enemy deny God, and then stabbed him to the heart, and so at once murdered both body and soul. Sin betrays us into the hand of the devil—as Delilah did Samson into the hands of the Philistines.

Sugared poisons go down pleasantly. Oh! but when they are down, they gall and gnaw, and gripe the very heart-strings asunder; it is so with sin. Ah! souls, have not you often found it so?

When Phocas the murderer thought to secure himself by building high walls, he heard a voice from heaven telling him, that though he built his bulwarks ever so high, yet sin within would soon undermine all.

Ambrose reports of one Theotimus, that having a disease upon his body, the physician told him, that except he abstained from intemperance, drunkenness, uncleanness, he would lose his eyes; his heart was so desperately set upon his sins, that he cries out, then, *farewell, sweet light!* Ah, how did his lusts war both against body and soul!

The "*old man*" is like a treacherous friend, and a friendly traitor. Though it be a hard thing to fight with a man's lusts, yet you must fight or die. **If you are not the death of your sins, they will prove the death of your souls.**

The oracle told the Cyrreans, *they could not be happy, unless they waged war night and day;* no more can we, except we live and die fighting against our lusts.

Ah! young men, can you look upon sin under the notion of an enemy, and not break with it, and not arm against it?

Well! remember this, the pleasure and sweetness which follows victory over sin, is a thousand times beyond that seeming sweetness that is in sin; and as victory over sin is the sweetest victory, so it is the greatest victory. There is no conquest as great as that which is gotten over a man's own corruptions. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city," Proverbs 16:32.

It is noble to overcome an enemy without—but it is more noble to overcome an enemy within; it is honorable to overcome fiery flames—but it is far more honorable to overcome fiery lusts.

When Valentinian the emperor was upon his dying-bed, among all his

victories only one COMFORTED him, and that was victory over his worst enemy, namely, his own naughty heart.

Ah! young men, young men, your worst enemies are within you, and all their plots, designs, and assaults are upon your souls, your most noble part. They know if that citadel be won, all is their own, and you are undone, and shall be their slaves forever; and therefore it stands upon you to arm yourselves against these inbred enemies; and if you engage Christ in the quarrel, you will carry the day; and when you shall lie upon your dying-beds, you will then find that there is no comfort to that which arises from the conquests of your own hearts, your own lusts.

*Notion (2). Secondly*, If you would break covenant with sin, if you would arm and fence yourselves against sin early, then **look upon sin as the soul's BONDS**, Gal. 3:10, John 8:34.

For as bonds tie things together, so does sin tie the sinner and the curse together. It binds the sinner and wrath together, it links the sinner and hell together: "I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts 8:23. Iniquity is a chain, a bond. Now, bonds and chains gall the body, and so does sin the soul; and as poor captives are held fast in their chains, so are sinners in their sins; they cannot redeem themselves by price, nor by power, 2 Tim. 2:26.

Ah! young men, young men! no bondage like soul bondage, no slavery like soul slavery. The Israelites' bondage under Pharaoh, and the Christians' bondage under the Turks, is but the bondage of the body, of the baser and ignoble part of man; but yours is soul bondage, and soul slavery, which is the saddest and greatest of all.

Ah, friends! you should never look upon your sins but you should look upon them as your bonds; yes, as the worst bonds that ever were. All other chains are golden chains, chains of pearl, compared to those chains of iron and brass, those chains of lust, with which you are bound. Ah! who can thus look upon his chains, his sins, and not loathe them, and not labor for freedom from them? Justinus the emperor's motto was, *liberty is invaluable*. If civil liberty is, surely spiritual liberty is much more. If you ask souls who were once in a state of bondage—but are now Christ's

free men, they will tell you so.

It was a good observation of Chrysostom, that Joseph was the free man and his mistress was the servant, when she was at the beck of her own lusts, when she tempted and he refused. Such as live most above sin and temptation, are the greatest freemen; others, who live under the power of their lusts, are but slaves, and in bonds, though they dream and talk of freedom, Titus 3:3.

*Notion (3). Thirdly,* If you would break league with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against it, then **look always upon sin under the notion of FIRE.**

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire," Jude 23. Oh, snatch them out of their sins, as you would snatch a child, a friend, out of the fire, or as the angel snatched Lot out of Sodom—hastily, and with a holy violence. Natural fire may burn the house, the goods, the treasure, the servant, the child, the wife, the body; but this fire burns the soul, it destroys and consumes that noble part which is more worth than all the treasures of a thousand worlds. Every man has a hand and a heart to quench the fire which burns his neighbor's house—but few men have either hands or hearts to quench the fire that burns their neighbor's souls; this is, and this shall be, for a lamentation.

I have read of one who, upon the violence of any temptation to sin, would lay his hand upon burning coals, and being not able to abide it, would say to himself, '*Oh, how unable shall I be to endure the pains of hell*'—and this restrained him from evil. But what is the fire of hell to the fire of sin? Now, to provoke you to look upon sin under the notion of fire, consider with me the sundry resemblances between material and immaterial fire, between corporeal common fire and between this spiritual fire, sin. As,

[1.] *First, Fire is terrible and dreadful.* A ship on fire, a house on fire, oh how dreadful is it! So sin set home upon the conscience is exceeding terrible and dreadful. "My *iniquity* is greater than I can bear." Sin or iniquity is often put for the *punishment* of sin, by a metonymy of the cause for the effect; for sin is the natural parent of punishment. "My iniquity," says Cain, "is so great, and lies so heavy, so terrible and

dreadful upon my conscience, that it cannot be forgiven," Gen. 4:13, and thus he stabs two at once—the mercy of God, and his own soul. So Judas, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood; and he went and hanged himself," Mat. 27:3-5.

As there is no fighting with a mighty fire, so there is no bearing up when God sets home sin upon the conscience; a man will then choose strangling or hanging, rather than living under such wounds and lashes of conscience. Histories abound with instances of this nature; but I must hasten to a close.

[2.] *Secondly, Fire is most dangerous and pernicious* when it breaks forth of the chimney, or of the house; so it is with sin. Sin is bad in the eye, worse in the tongue, worser in the heart—but worst of all in the life. Fire, when out of its proper place, may do much hurt in the house—but when it flames *abroad*, then it does most mischief to others, 2 Sam. 12:9-15.

Sin in the *heart* may undo a man—but sin in the *life* may undo others as well as a man's self. Set a guard upon the *eye*, a greater upon your *heart*—but the greatest of all upon your *life*, Job 30:1, Proverbs 4:23, Eph. 5:15.

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their lewd lives made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach. "Where," said they, "is that good law which they believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they do learn? They read the holy Gospel—and yet are unclean; they hear the apostles' writings—and yet are drunk; they follow Christ—and yet disobey Christ; they profess a holy law—and yet lead impure lives."

But the lives of other Christians have been so holy, that the very heathens observing them, have said, *Surely this is a good God—whose servants are so good.*

**It is noble when the life of a Christian is a commentary upon Christ's life.**

One speaking of the Scripture, says, *they are words to be lived, and*

*practiced, not read only.*

A heathen [Plutarch] advises us to live so circumspectly, as if our enemies did always behold us. And said another [Epictetus], *For shame, either live as Stoics, or leave off the name of Stoics.* Sirs, live as Christians, or lay down the name of Christians.

[3.] Thirdly, **Fire hardens**, it makes the weak and limber clay to become stiff and strong for the potter's use. So sin hardens: it hardens the heart against the commands of God, the calls of Christ, and the wrestlings of the Spirit. And as you see in Pharaoh, the Jews, and most that are under the sound of the gospel, Jer. 5:3; Jer. 19:15; Isaiah 9:13.

Ah! how many has this fire—sin—hardened in these days, by working them to slight soul-softening means, and by drawing them to entertain hardening thoughts of God, and to fall in with soul-hardening company, and soul-hardening principles, and soul-hardening examples of hardened and unsensible sinners, Jer. 2:25; Jer. 18:12. One long since thus complained, that they did more calmly pass by the injuries done to Christ, than those which are done unto themselves. This age is full of such hardened unsensible souls.

[4.] Fourthly, **Fire is a lively active element**, so is sin. Ah! how lively and active was this fire in Abraham, David, Job, Peter, Paul, and other saints! Though Christ by his death has given it its mortal wound, yet it lives, and is and will be active in the dearest saints. Though sin and grace were not born together, neither shall they die together; yet while believers live in this world, they must live together.

One speaks of a fig-tree which grew in a stone-wall, and all means were used to kill it. They cut off the branches and it grew again, they cut down the body and it grew again, they cut it up by the root and still it lived and grew, until they pulled down the stone-wall. Until death shall pull down our stone-walls, sin will live, this fire will burn.

We may say of sin as some say of cats, that they have many lives; kill them and they will live again, kill them again and they will live again; so kill sin once and it will live again, kill it again and it will live again, etc.

Sin oftentimes is like that monster Hydra, cut off one head and many will rise up in its place.

[5.] Fifthly, ***Fire is of a penetrating nature***, it pierces and winds itself into every corner and chink, and so does sin wind itself into our thoughts, words, and works. It will wind itself into our understandings to darken them, and into our judgments to pervert them, and into our wills to poison them, and into our affections to disorder them, and into our consciences to corrupt them, and into our carriages [walk and conversation; conduct or actions] to debase them. Sin will wind itself into every duty and every mercy, it will wind itself into every one of our enjoyments and concernments.

Hannibal having overcome some Romans, put their armor on his soldiers, and so by that policy, they being taken for Romans, won a city. But what are Hannibal's wiles to sin's wiles or Satan's wiles? If you have a mind to be acquainted with their wiles, look over my treatise, called, "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices."

[6.] Sixth and lastly, ***Fire is a devouring, a consuming element***, Psalm 21:9. It turns all fuel into ashes. It is a wolf that eats up all. So sin is a fire that devours and consumes all; it turned Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes; it has destroyed the Chaldean, Persian, and Grecian kingdoms, and will at last destroy the Roman kingdom also. This wolf ate up Samson's strength, Absalom's beauty, Ahithophel's policy, and Herod's glory, etc. It has drowned one world already, and will at last burn another, even this. Oh the hopes, the hearts, the happiness, the joys, the comforts, the souls that this fire, sin, has consumed and destroyed! etc.

Peter Camois, in his *Draught of Eternity*, tells us, that some devout people caused those words of the prophet Isaiah to be written in letters of gold upon their chimney-pieces: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isaiah 33:14.

Ah! young men, young men, I desire that you may always look upon sin under the notion of fire, yes, as such fire as lays the foundation for everlasting fire, for everlasting burnings; and this may work when other

things will not.

I have read of a chaste woman, who being pressured to commit sin with a lewd Russian—that she called for a pan of burning coals, and requested him for her sake to hold his finger in them but one hour. He said this was an extreme and harsh request. She replied that seeing he would not do so much as to put one finger upon the coals for one hour for her—that she could not yield to do that for which she should be tormented, both body and soul, in hell-fire forever. The application is easy, etc.

*Notion (4). Fourthly, If you would break with sin early, if you would arm against sin in the spring and morning of your days, then you should **look upon sin under the notion of a THIEF.***

And, indeed, sin is the greatest thief, the greatest robber in the world. It robbed the angels of all their glory, 2 Pet. 2:4; it robbed Adam of his paradise and felicity, Gen. 3, and it has robbed all mankind of five precious jewels, the least of which was more worth than heaven and earth.

1. Sin has robbed them of the holy and glorious image of God, which would have been engraved upon them, had Adam not fallen into sin.
2. Sin has robbed them of divine sonship--and has made them slaves of Satan.
3. Sin has robbed them of divine friendship--and made them enemies to God.
4. Sin has robbed them of communion and fellowship with God--and made them strangers and aliens to Him.
5. Sin has robbed them of their glory--and made them vile and miserable.

It has robbed many a oration of the gospel, and many a parish of many a happy guide, and many a Christian of the favor of God, the joys of the Spirit, and the peace of conscience.

Oh! the health, the wealth, the honor, the friends, the relations—which

sin has robbed thousands of.

More—It has robbed many of their gifts, their arts, their parts, their memory, their judgment, yes, their very reason, as you may see in Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Ahithophel, Haman, Herod, and those Babylonish princes that accused Daniel.

And so Menippus of Phoenicia, who, having lost his goods, strangled himself. And so Dinarcus Phidon, at a certain loss, cut his own throat. By all which it is most apparent, that sin is the greatest thief in all the world.

Oh! then, who would not break league and covenant with it, and be still in pressing of God to do justice upon it! etc.

*Notion (5). Fifthly*, If you would break with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against sin early, then you must *look upon sin under the notion of a BURDEN*.

And indeed, of all burdens—sin is the heaviest burden in all the world: "For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me," Psalm 40:12. "For my sins have flooded over my head; they are a burden too heavy for me to bear." Psalm 38:4. "Sin is a weight which easily besets us," Heb.12:1. Poor souls; sin is a burden that so troubles them and puzzles them, that so curbs them and girds them, that so presses and oppresses them, as that it wrings many bitter tears from their eyes, and many sad and grievous sighs and groans from their hearts. "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?" Romans 7:24

Again, as sin is a burden to Christians, so it is a burden to **heaven**. It made heaven weary to bear the angels that fell; no sooner had they sinned but heaven groans to be eased of them, and it never left groaning until justice had turned them a-groaning to hell, Jude 6.

Again, as sin is a burden to heaven, so it is a burden to the **earth**. Witness her swallowing up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, their wives, children, goods, servants, etc., Num. 16:26-35. Ah, sinners! your sins

makes the very earth to groan—they make the earth weary of bearing you. Oh, how does the earth groan and long to swallow up those earthly wretches, whose hopes, whose hearts, are buried in the earth! These shall have none of heaven—but enough of earth, when they come to die.

Cornelius a Lapide tells a story, that he heard of a famous preacher, who, showing the bondage of the creature, Romans 8:19-23, brings in the creature complaining thus: *Oh, that we could serve such as are godly; oh, that our substance might be incorporated into godly people, that so we might rise into glory with them; oh, that our substance might not be incorporated into the flesh of sinners, for if it be, we shall go to hell, and would any creatures go to hell? oh, we are weary of bearing sinners! we are weary of serving of sinners!* Thus the creatures groan, thus the creatures complain, the sinner's sins forcing them to it, etc.

Again, sin is a burden to **God**: "Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves," Amos 2:13. By this plain, pithy, country comparison, God shows how sadly he is pressed and oppressed, how sorely he is wearied and tired with those people's sins. Divine patience is even worn out. Justice has lifted up her hand, and will bear with them no longer. God seems to groan under the pressure of their sins, as a cart seems to do under a heavy load. Of this God complains by the prophet Isaiah: "You have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your faults," Isaiah 43:24. I am as weary of your sins as a travailing woman is weary of her pains, says God. Sin was such a burden to God, that he sweeps it off with a sweeping flood, Gen. 7, etc.

Again, sin is a burden to **Christ**: It made him sweat as never man sweat; it made him sweat great drops of clotted or congealed blood, Luke 22:44. Sin put Christ's whole body into a bloody sweat; it made him groan piteously, when he bore our sins in his body on the tree. Sin made his soul heavy even to the death, and had he not been one who was mighty, yes, that was Almighty, he would have fainted and failed under his burden, 1 Pet. 2:24, Isaiah 9:6. And thus you see what a burden sin is to man, to the creatures, to heaven, to earth, to God, to Christ; and therefore, as you would break with sin early, look always upon it as a burden, yes, as the greatest and heaviest burden in all the world, etc.

*Notion (6). Sixthly and lastly, If you would break covenant with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against it early, then you must **look upon it early under the notion of a TYRANT.***

"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and **enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures**. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Titus 3:3. And indeed, sin is the worst and greatest tyrant in the world. Other tyrants can but tyrannize over our bodies—but sin is a tyrant which tyrannizes over both body and soul, as you may see in the sixth and seventh of the Romans. Sin is a tyrant which has a kind of jurisdiction in most men's hearts; it sets up the law of pride, the law of lust, the law of oppression, the law of formality, the law of hypocrisy, the law of carnality, the law of self-love, the law of carnal reason, the law of unbelief—and strictly commands subjection to them, and proclaims fire and sword to all who will not bow down. This saints and sinners, godly men and bad men, do sufficiently experience.

Sin is a tyrant of many thousand years' standing, and though it has had many a wound, and received much opposition—yet still it plays the tyrant all the world over! Oh, the hearts that this tyrant makes to ache! the souls that this tyrant makes to bleed!

Pharaoh's tyranny was nothing to sin's tyranny. This tyrant will not so much as allow his slaves to sleep. They sleep not, except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to sin, Proverbs 4:16. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace to the wicked, says my God," Isaiah 57:20-21.

Other tyrants have been brought down and brought under control by a human power—but this cannot but by a divine. The power of man has brought down many of the tyrants of this world—but it is only the power of Christ that can bring down this tyrant, that can cast down his strongholds, 2 Cor.10:3-6, etc. Therefore, engage Christ in the conflict, draw him into the battle, and in the end the conquest will be yours.

Vitellius, who had been emperor of all the world, yet was driven through the streets of Rome stark naked, and thrown into the river Tiber, etc.

Andronicus the emperor, for his cruelty towards his people, was by them at last shamefully deposed, and, after many contumelies, hanged up by his heels.

Ptolemy was put on a cross; Bajazet in an iron cage; Phocas broken on the wheel; Lycaon cast to the dogs, as well as Jezebel; Attalus thrust into a forge; King Gath into a beer barrel, etc. But none of these who have tamed these tyrants, who have brought down these mighty Nimrods—have been able to tame, to bring under control the tyrants, the sins, the lusts—which have been in their own bosoms. Many a man has had a hand in bringing down of worldly tyrants, who, notwithstanding, have died forever by the hand of a tyrant within, etc.

## Chapter 8.

And thus much for the directions that young men must follow, if they would be godly early, if they would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of their days. I shall now give some **brief answers to the young man's objections.**

**Objection 1.** But some young men may object, and say, *You would have us to be godly early, and to seek and serve the Lord in the primrose of our days. But it may be time enough hereafter to follow this counsel; we are young, and it may be time enough for us to mind these things hereafter, when we have satisfied the flesh so and so, or when we have got enough of the world, and laid up something which will stand us in good stead, and which may oil our joints when we are old.* Now,

To this objection I answer,

1. **First**, *That it is the greatest folly and madness in the world to put off God and the great things of eternity with may-bes.* What tradesman, what merchant, what mariner—so mad, so foolish, so blockish—as to put off a present season, a present opportunity of profit and advantage, upon the account of a may-be? *It may be—I have as good a season; it may be—I shall have as golden an opportunity to get, and to enrich myself as this is; and therefore farewell to this.* No men who are in their right minds will argue thus; and why then should you, especially in the things

that are of an everlasting concernment to you?

I have read of one monarch, a lunatic Italian, who thought that all the kings of the earth were his vassals; and as delirious are they who willfully neglect present seasons of grace, upon the account of a future may-be, *etc.*

2. **Secondly**, I answer, *It may be if you neglected this present season and opportunity of grace, you may never have another.* It may be mercy may never knock again—if you do not open now; it may be Christ shall never be offered to you again—if now you do not close with him, and accept of him; it may be the Spirit will never strive more with you—if now you do resist him and withstand him; it may be a pardon shall never be offered to you again—if now you will not take it now; it may be the gospel shall never sound again in your ears—if now you will not hear it now. Now set one may-be against another maybe, set God's may-be against your own may-be; but,

3. **Thirdly**, *Doubtless there are many thousand thousands now in hell, who have pleased themselves and put off God and the seasons of grace with a may-be, hereafter may be time enough.* It may be when I have gratified such a lust, and when I have treasured so much of the world—I will return, and seek, and serve the Lord. But before this season or opportunity came, justice has cut the thread of their lives, and they are now miserable forever; and now they are still a-cursing themselves, because they have slipped their golden opportunities upon the account of a may-be, *etc.* But,

4. **Fourthly**, and lastly, This putting off God and the present seasons of grace with a may-be, *is very provoking to God, as you may see, if you will but read from the 20th verse to the 33rd of the first of Proverbs.* Nothing stirs and provokes a master more than his servants putting off his service or his commands with a may-be: *"it may be I will, it may be I may do this and that."* Nothing puts a master sooner into a heat, a flame, than this; nor nothing puts God more into a flame than this.

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, where your fathers

tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." Psalm 95:7-11.

"So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" Hebrews 3:7-11.

"As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief." Hebrews 3:15-19.

Read the words, and tremble at the thoughts of a may-be, at the thoughts of putting off of God and the seasons of grace.

I have read of two soldiers who cut off each other's right hand, and then made it an excuse—they were lame, and so could not serve in war. But this did so provoke the king that he sent them both to the gallows. I suppose the reader is not so young but knows how to apply it.

**Objection 2.** *If I should begin to be godly early, and to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of my days, I would lose my friends, I would lose their favors; for they are carnal and worldly, and had rather I should seek after gold than God, the creature than Christ, earth than heaven. etc.* Now to this I answer, Surely you are wrong, for:

1. **First,** *This is the highway, the ready way, to gain the best, the surest, and the soundest friends.* "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him," Proverbs 16:7. When a man

falls in with God, God will work the creatures to fall in with him. Joseph found it so, and Jacob found it so, and Job found it so, the three children found it so, and Daniel found it so, as you all know, who have but read the Scripture. And many in this age, as bad as it is, have found, that the best way to make friends is, first to make God our friend.

Ah! young men, young men, you shall not lose your friends by seeking and serving of the Lord in the spring and morning of your days—but only exchange bad ones for good ones, the worst for the best. He who gives up himself early to the Lord shall have God for his friend, and Christ for his friend, and the angels for his friends, and the saints for his friends. Christ will be to such, first, an omnipotent friend; secondly, an omniscient friend; thirdly, an omnipresent friend; fourthly, an indeficient friend; fifthly, a sovereign friend; sixthly, an immutable friend; seventhly, a watchful friend; eighthly, a loving friend; ninthly, a faithful friend; tenthly, a compassionate friend; eleventhly, a close friend, "There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother," Proverbs 18:24. Such a friend is Christ, and such a friend is as one's own soul, a rare happiness, hardly to be matched. Twelfthly, an universal friend; a friend in all cases and a friend in all places. Christ is so a friend to everyone of his, as if he were a friend to none besides. Hence it is that they say, not only our Lord, our God—but my Lord, and my God. Christ is such an universal friend, as that he supplies the place, and acts the part of every friend, Thirteenthly, "He is our first friend," Psalm 90:1; before we had a friend in all the world he was our friend, Proverbs 8:21. Lastly, he is a constant friend: "Whom he loves, he loves to the end," John 13:1.

Augustus Caesar would not suddenly entertain a league of friendship with any—but was a constant friend to those he loved, *late before I love, as long before I leave*. Where Christ begins to love, he always loves, Jer. 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Now who would not venture the loss of all friends in the world to gain such a friend as this is?

Ah! young men and women, let me say to you what Seneca said to his friend Polibius, *never complain of your hard fortune as long as Caesar is your friend*. So say I; never complain of your loss of friends so long as by losing of them you gain Christ to be your friend.

2. Secondly, *You were better be without their friendship and favor, than to enjoy it upon any sinful and unworthy accounts.* You were better run the hazard of losing your friends and their favor by seeking and serving the Lord in the primrose of your days, than to run the hazard of losing God, Christ, heaven, eternity, and your soul forever by neglecting the things of your peace, Matt. 16:26, Mark 8:36.

Well! young men, remember this, the torments of a thousand hells, were there so many, comes far short of this one voice, to be turned out of God's presence with "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" Matt. 7:23.

Ah, young man, young man! you were better ten thousand thousand times to be cast out of the thoughts and hearts of your carnal friends and relations, than to be cast out of God's presence with cursed Cain, Gen. 4, forever, than to be excommunicated out of "the general assembly of the saints, and congregation of the first-born which are written in heaven," Heb. 12:23; and therefore away with this objection. But,

3. **Thirdly**, *The favor and friendship of such carnal people is very fickle and inconstant; it is very fading and withering.* Now they stroke, and at another time they strike; now they lift up, and at another time they cast down; now they smile, and at another time they frown; now they kiss, and at another time they kill; now they cry, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" and at another time they cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Haman is one day feasted with the king, and the next day made a feast for crows, Esther 7. The princes of Babylon were highly in king Darius his favor one day, and cast into the lion's den the next, Dan.6. The scribes and pharisees that cried up Judas one day, did in effect bid him go and hang himself the next day, Mat. 27:3-5.

Such men's favor and friendship are as Venice glasses, quickly broken, and therefore not much to be prized or minded. Histories abound with instances of this nature. But I must hasten: only remember this, that every day's experience tells us that wicked men can soon turn tables, and cross their books; their favor and friendship is usually like to a morning cloud, or like to Jonah's gourd: one hour flourishing and the next hour withering; and why then should you set your heart upon that which is

more changeable than the moon? But,

4. **Fourthly** and lastly, *Who but a bad man would adventure the loss of the king's favor to gain the favor of his slave? Who but a stark Bedlam would run the hazard of losing the judge's favor upon the bench, to purchase the good will of a prisoner in the dungeon?*

Socrates preferred the king's countenance before his coin; and so must you prefer the favor of God, the countenance of Christ, Psalm 4:6-7, and the things of eternity—above all the favor and friendship of all the men in the world. When your nearest friends and dearest relations stand in competition with Christ, or the things above, you must shake them off, you must turn your backs upon them, and welcome Christ and the things of your peace. He who forsakes all relations for Christ, shall certainly find all relations in Christ; he will be father, friend, husband, child; he will be everything to you, who take him for your great all.

**Objection 3.** *Yes—but I shall meet with many **reproaches** from one and other, if I should labor to be godly early, if I should seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of my youth.* Now, to this I answer,

1. **First**, *What are reproaches, compared to the great things that others have suffered for Christ his gospel, and the maintaining of a good conscience? What is a prick of a pin compared to a stab at the heart? what is a chiding compared to a hanging, a whipping compared to a burning? No more are all the reproaches you can meet with, compared to the great things that others have suffered for Christ's sake.*

Ah, young men! you should be like the Scythian that went naked in the snow; and when Alexander wondered how he could endure it, answered, *I am all forehead.*

So should you in the cause and way of Christ; you should not be ashamed, you should be all forehead, you should be stout and bold.

Colonus, the Dutch martyr, under all his reproaches, called to the judge that had sentenced him to death, and desired him to lay his hand upon his heart, and then asked him, Whose heart did beat fastest—his or the

judge's? All the reproaches in the world should not so much as make a Christian's heart race; they should not in the least trouble him nor disturb him. But,

2. **Secondly**, I answer, *That all the reproaches you meet with in the way of Christ, and for the sake of Christ—they do but add pearls to your crown; they are all additions to your happiness and blessedness.* "If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." 1 Peter 4:14. The more you are reproached for Christ's sake on earth, the greater shall be your reward in heaven; those who are most loaded with reproaches here, shall be most laden with glory hereafter, Mat. 5:11-12. Christ has written their names in golden letters in his book of life—who are written in black letters of reproach for his sake on earth. It was a good saying of Chrysostom: *A reproacher, says he, is beneath a man—but the reproached who bear it well, are equal to angels. Of all crowns, the reproached man's crown will weigh heaviest in heaven.* But,

3. **Thirdly**, I answer, *the best men have been mostly reproached.* David was, Psalm 69:7, 89:50, 119:22, 31:11, 109:25; and Job was, Job 19:3, 20:3, 16:10; and Jeremiah was, Jer. 20:7, 10. Yes, this has been the common portion of the people of God in all ages of the world. In Nehemiah's time it was so: Neh. 1:3, "And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity, are in great affliction and reproach." In David's time it was so, Psalm 79:4, and Psalm 44:13-14; and in Jeremiah's time it was so: Lam. 5:1, "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach." And in Daniel's time it was so: Dan. 9:16, "Your people are become a reproach to all that are about us;" and it was so in the apostle's time: 2 Cor. 6:8, "By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers and yet true;" 1 Tim. 4:10, "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God," etc. And it was so in the primitive times, for when the Christians met together before sunrise to pray, the heathens reported of them that they worshiped the sun, and aspired after monarchy, and committed adulteries and unnatural uncleannesses.

Now, who is troubled, who complains of that which is a common lot—as cold, winter, sickness, death? etc. No more should any complain of

reproaches, it being the common lot of the people of God in all ages. Yes, Christ himself was sadly reproached, falsely accused, and strangely traduced, disgraced, and scandalized. He was called a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners, and judged to use the black art, casting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils, Mat. 9:34,12:24. Christ has suffered the greatest and the worst reproaches; why then should you be afraid to wear that crown of thorns, which Christ has worn before you? There is a great truth in what he said, *he who is afraid to suffer cannot be His disciple—who suffered so much*. If the master has been marked with a black coal, let not the servant think to go free. *I am heartily angry, says Luther, with those who speak of my sufferings as great—which, if compared with that which Christ suffered for me, are not once to be mentioned in the same day*. But,

4. **Fourthly**, I answer, *That all reproachers shall at last be arraigned at the highest bar of justice, for all the reproaches that they have cast upon the people of God*. "Your former friends are very surprised when you no longer join them in the wicked things they do, and they say evil things about you. But just remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead," 1 Pet. 4:4-5.

I am in ecstasy, says Picus Mirandula, to think how profane men rail upon those now, whom one day they will wish they had imitated. It was excellent counsel that the heathen orator gave his hearers, *let us live as those who must give an account of all at last*.

Chrysostom brings in Christ comforting his disciples against reproaches, speaking thus unto them, What! is the wrong grievous to you—that they now call you seducers and conjurors? It will not be long before they shall openly call you the saviors and blessings of the whole world; that time that shall declare all things that are now hid, shall rebuke them for their lying words against you, and shall kindle the splendor of your virtue; so they shall be found liars, evil speakers, false accusers of others; but you shall be more clear and illustrious than the sun, and you shall have all men witnesses of your glory. Such as wisely and humbly bear reproaches now, shall judge reproachers at last. But,

5. **Fifthly**, I answer, *That God does many times, even in this life, judge*

*the reproachers of his people.* "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you," Gen. 12:3, and 2 Sam. 16:11-13. God will even in this life curse those, who curse them that he blesses. Pharaoh found it so, and Saul found it so, and Jezebel found it so, and Haman found it so, and the princes of Babylon found it so, and the Jews find it so to this very day.

And oh the dreadful judgments and curses that God has poured out upon the reproachers of his name, of his Son, of his Spirit, of his word, of his ordinances, and of his people—in these days wherein we live! I might give you many sad instances of such in our days, whose feet justice has taken in the snare, men of abstracted conceits and sublime speculations; and indeed such usually prove the great wise fools, who, like the lark, soars higher and higher, peering and peering, until at length they fall into the net of the fowler; and no wonder, for such people usually are as censorious as they are curious.

**6. Sixthly,** I answer, *Paul rejoices more in his suffering reproaches for Christ's sake, than he did in his being enrapt up in the third heaven:* 2 Cor. 12:10, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." And therefore you have him often a-singing this song, "I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ;" not I Paul, enrapt up in the third heaven. He looked upon all his sufferings as God's love-tokens; he looked upon all reproaches as pledges and badges of his sonship; and therefore joys and glories under all. Christ showed his glory to him in taking him up in the third heaven; and he showed his love to Christ, in his joyful bearing of reproaches for his sake. *Paul rattles his chain, which he bears for the gospel, and was proud of it, as a woman of her ornaments,* says Chrysostom.

Now why should that be matter of trouble and discouragement to you, which was matter of joy and rejoicing to him? Shall he look upon reproaches as a crown of honor—and will you look upon reproaches as a crown of thorns?

Oh! look upon reproach as a royal diadem, look upon it as Christ's badge, and count it your highest ambition in this world to wear this badge for his

sake, who once wore a crown of thorns for your sakes. When Babylas was to die, he required this favor, to have his chains buried with him as the ensigns of his honor. But,

7. **Seventhly**, I answer, *That by a wise and gracious behavior under the reproaches you meet with for Christ's sake, you may be instrumental to win others to Christ.*

*It was a noble saying of Luther, the church converted the whole world by blood and prayer.*

Many have been won to Christ by beholding the gracious carriages of Christians under their sufferings and reproaches for Christ.

We read of Cecilia, a poor virgin, who, by her gracious behavior under all her sufferings and reproaches for Christ, was the means of converting four hundred to Christ.

Adrianus, beholding the gracious, cheerful behavior of the martyrs under all their sufferings and reproaches, was converted to Christ, and afterwards suffered martyrdom for Christ.

Justin Martyr was also converted by observing the holy and cheerful behavior of the saints under all their sufferings and reproaches for Christ. During the cruel persecutions of the heathen emperors, the Christian faith was spread through all places of the empire, because *the oftener they were mown down, says Tertullian, the more they grew.*

And Austin observed, that though there were many thousands put to death for professing Christ, yet they were never the fewer for being slain.

Ah! young men, you may, by a wise and gracious bearing of reproaches for Christ, be instrumental to win others to Christ; and therefore never plead there is a lion in the way. But I must hasten; and therefore,

8. In the **eighth** and last place, consider, *How bravely several of the very heathens have born reproaches; and let that provoke you, in the face of all reproaches, to seek and serve the Lord in the morning of your youth, etc.*

When one came and reproached Xenophon, says he, *You have learned how to reproach, and I have learned how to bear reproach.*

And Aristippus, the philosopher, said, *You are fit to cast reproaches, and I am fit to bear reproaches.*

When one wondered at the patience of Socrates towards one who reviled and reproached him, *If we should meet one, says he, whose body were more unsound than ours, should we be angry with him, and not rather pity him? Why, then, should we not do the like to him whose soul is more diseased than ours?*

Augustus Caesar, in whose time Christ was born, bid Catullus the railing poet to supper, to show that he had forgiven him.

It is a notable example that we find of one Pericles, who, as he was sitting with others in a great meeting, a foul-mouthed fellow bitterly reproached him, and railed all the day long upon him; and at night, when it was dark, the fellow followed him, and railed at him even to his door, and he took no notice of him; but when he came at home, this is all he said, *Friend, it is dark, please let my servant light you home.*

Josephus reports of that Herod that is made mention of in Acts 12:23, that when one Simon, a lawyer, had grievously reproached and scandalized him before the people, he sent for him, and caused him to sit down next to him, and in a kind manner he spoke thus to him: *Tell me, I pray you, what thing you see fault-worthy or contrary to the law in me.* Simon not having anything to answer, besought him to pardon him, which the king did, and was friends with him, and dismissed him, bestowing gifts on him.

Ah! young men, young men, shall the very heathen make nothing of reproaches? shall they bear up so prudently and bravely under the greatest loads of reproaches, and will not you? Will not you, who in your light, in your mercies, and in all gospel engagements, are so highly advanced above them? Oh that none of them may be called to the bar in the great day to witness against any of you into whose hands this treatise

shall fall. And so much by way of answer to the third objection. But,

**Objection 4.** *Fourthly, The young man objects, and says, You press us to be godly early, and to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of our days; but we observe that most men mind not these things—but rather give liberty to themselves to walk in ways that are most pleasing to the flesh; and why, then, should we be singular and odd? We were better do as the most do, etc.* Now to this I answer,

1. *That though bad examples are dangerous to all, yet usually they prove most dangerous and pernicious to young people, who are more easily drawn to follow examples than precepts, especially those examples which tend most to undo them:* 2 Kings 15:9, it is said of Zachariah, the king of Israel, that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam;" he would be as his father was, and do as his father did, whatever came of it.

So the Samaritans, of whom it is said, 2 Kings 17:41, "These nations feared the Lord" (that is, they made some kind of profession of the true religion, as the ten tribes had done), "and served their engraved images too; both their children and their children's children did thus; as did their fathers, so do they unto this day." By evil examples they were both drawn to idolatry, and rooted and confirmed in it. So the main reason why the kingdom and church of Judah were so settled in their idolatry, that there was no hope of reclaiming them, was this, that their children remembered their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills, Jer. 17:1-2. **Tinder is not apter to take fire, nor wax the impression of the seal, nor paper the ink, than youth is to follow ill examples.**

You may see in Radbad, king of Phrisia, who coming to the font to be baptized, asked what was become of his ancestors? answer was made, that they died in a fearful state unbaptized; he replied that he would rather perish with the multitude than go to heaven with a few.

I remember the heathen brings in a young man who, hearing of the adulteries and wickednesses of the gods, said, What! do they so? and shall refuse it? No, I will not. Sinful examples are very drawing and very

encouraging; many have found it so to their eternal undoing. Those who have no *ears* to hear what you say—have many *eyes* to see what you do. Bad princes make bad subjects; bad masters make bad servants; bad parents make bad children; and bad husbands make bad wives. *It is easier for the bad to corrupt the good, than for the good to convert the bad! It is easier to run down the hill with company, than to run up the hill alone!*

I would desire all young men often to remember that saying of Lactantius, *he who imitates the bad cannot be good*. Young men, in these professing times, stand between good and bad examples, as Hercules in his dream stood between virtue and vice. Solicited by both, you must choose who to follow. Oh that you were all so wise as to follow the best. As a woman who has many suitors is very careful to take the best, so should you. Life, heaven, happiness, eternity, hangs upon it.

But before I come to the second answer, let me leave this note or notion with those who make no conscience of undoing others by their examples, namely, *That a more grievous punishment is reserved for those who cause others to sin, than for those who sin by their example*. Thus the serpent was punished more than Eve, and Eve more than Adam. So Jezebel felt a greater and sorer judgment than Ahab.

Friends, you have sins enough of your own, to make you forever miserable; why should you, by giving bad examples to others, make yourselves far more miserable? **The lowest, the darkest, the hottest place in hell, will be for those who have drawn others there by their example**, Mat. 23:15. Dives knew that if his brethren were damned—that he would be double damned, because he had largely contributed to the bringing of them to hell by his wicked example. Therefore he desires that they might be kept out of hell—not out of any love or good will to them—but because their coming there would have made his hell more hot, his torments more insufferable, Luke 16:28. "It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck—than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin." Luke 17:2

2. **Secondly**, I answer, *If you sin with others, you shall suffer with*

*others*; if you will partake of other men's sins, you shall also partake of other men's plagues, Rev. 18:4. Those who have been, like Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity—they shall be brethren in misery. Those who have sinned together impenitently shall be sent to hell jointly—they shall perish together eternally. If you will needs be companions with others in their sins, you shall be sure to be companions with them in their sorrows.

The old world sin together—and are drowned together, Gen. 6; the Sodomites, burning in lusts together—were burnt with fire and brimstone together, Gen. 19. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, they sin together, they murmur and provoke the Lord together—and the earth opens her mouth and swallows them up together, Num. 16:26-34. Pharaoh and his hosts pursue Israel together—and they are drowned in the sea together, Exod. 14. Zimri and Cosbi commit folly, uncleanness together—and Phinehas stabs them both together, Num. 25.

The Hebrew doctors have an insightful parable to this purpose: A man planted an orchard, and, going from home, was careful to leave such watchmen as might both keep it from strangers and not deceive him themselves; therefore he appointed one blind—but strong of his limbs; and the other seeing—but a cripple. These two, in their master's absence, conspired together, and the blind took the lame on his shoulders, and so stole the fruit; their master returning and finding out their subtlety, punished them both together.

So will justice deal with you at last, who sin with others; therefore take heed, young men, of doing as others do. But,

3. **Thirdly**, I answer, *You must not live by examples—but by precepts*. You are not to look so much at what others do, as at what God requires you to do: Exod. 23:2, "You shall not follow a multitude to do evil." Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world;" that is, do not fashion and conform yourselves to the corrupt customs and courses of wretched worldlings, who have made gold their God, and gain their glory. The running cross to a divine command cost the young prophet his life, though he did it under pretense of revelation from God, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings 13, etc. *The command of God must outweigh all authority and example of men* [Jerome].

And we must be as careful in the keeping of a light commandment as an heavy commandment. Says a Rabbi, *Divine commands must be obeyed against all contrary reasonings, wranglings, and examples.*

Ah! young men, you who doat so much upon examples now, will find that a stinging terrifying question, when put home by God or conscience, *Who has required those things at your hands?* Isaiah 1:12. But,

4. **Fourthly**, I answer, *Company and allurements to sin—will be found no sufficient excuse for sin.*

If Eve lays her fault on the serpent, and Adam lays his fault on Eve—God will lay the curse on both. Saul's provocation by his people, and by Samuel's long stay to offer sacrifice, would not exonerate him; but for his disobedience he must lose both his crown and life, 1 Sam. 15:14-15, 26-27. The young man in the Proverbs, though tempted and solicited by the harlot, yet has a dart struck through his heart, Proverbs 7:14-15, 21. Though Jonah did plead God's gracious inclinations to show mercy, and his fear of being disproved; yes, and though he might have pleaded his fear of cruel and savage usage from the Ninevites, whose hearts were desperately set upon wickedness, and his despair of ever doing good upon a people so blinded and hardened, and that they were Gentiles and he a Jew; and why should he then be sent with so strange, so terrible a message to such a people, nothing being more hateful and distasteful to a Jewish palate? But all these pleas and excuses will not bear off the blow. Jonah must be thrown into the sea for all this; yes, he must go to "the bottom of hell," as himself phrases it. It is in vain for the bird to complain—that it saw the corn but not the trap; or for the fish to plead—it saw the bait but not the hook. So it will be in vain for sinners at last, when they are taken in an infernal trap, to plead the company and allurements by which they have been enticed to undo their soul forever.

Dionysius, the Sicilian king, to excuse himself from the present delivery of the golden garment he took from his idol Apollo, answered, *that such a robe as that was could not be at any season of the year useful to his idol, for it would not keep him warm in the winter, and it was too heavy for the summer--*and so put off his idol-god. But the God of heaven, the God of all flesh, will not be put off with any excuses or pretenses, when he

shall try and judge all men. But,

5. **Fifthly** and lastly, I answer, *That it is a very great judgment to be given up to follow evil examples*, Mat. 18:7. A man given up to evil examples is a man sadly left of God, woefully blinded by Satan, and desperately hardened in sin. It speaks a man ripe for wrath, for ruin, for hell: Jer. 6:21, "Behold, I will put obstacles before this people. Fathers and sons alike will stumble over them; neighbors and friends will perish." Oh! it is a dreadful thing when God shall make the sinful examples of others to be stumbling-blocks to a people, at which they shall stumble, and fall, and perish forever; good had it been for such people that they had never been born, as Christ once spoke concerning Judas, Mat. 26:24.

The Rhodians and Lydians enacted several laws, that those sons which followed not their fathers in their virtues—but followed wicked examples, should be disinherited, and their lands given to the most virtuous of that race, not admitting any impious heir whatever to inherit; and do you think that God will not disinherit all those of heaven and happiness who follow wicked examples? Doubtless he will, 1 Cor. 10:5-12.

**Objection 5.** The fifth and last objection I shall mention is this, *God is a God of mercy; in him are affections of mercy, yes, a sea, an ocean of mercy; he loves mercy, he delights in mercy, and he is ready to show mercy to poor sinners, when they are even at the last gasp, when there is but a short stride between them and the grave, between them and eternity; as we see in his extending mercy to the thief, and in his giving a pardon into his hand, and the assurance of paradise into his bosom, when he was ready to be turned off the ladder of life. Therefore I may spend the primrose of my days in following sin, and the delights, profits, vanities, and amusements of this world, and at my last gasp I may have mercy as well as the thief. God is a God made up of mercy, and surely he will not deny some crumbs of mercy to a poor sinner in misery, etc.*

Now to this objection I shall give these following answers.

1. **First**, *God is as just as he is merciful*; witness his casting the angels out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise; witness all the threatenings, the curses, the woes, that the Bible is filled with, from one end to the other;

witness the hell, the horror, the terror and astonishment that he raises in the consciences of sinners; witness the devastations that he has made of the most stately and flourishing towns, cities, countries, and kingdoms, that have been in all the world; witness the variety of diseases, calamities, miseries, dangers, deaths, and hells, that always attend the inhabitants of the world; but above all, witness Christ's treading the wine-press of his Father's wrath; witness his hiding his face from him, and the pouring out of all his displeasure and vengeance upon him.

Zealeucus, the Locrenian lawgiver, thrust out one of his own son's eyes, for his transgressing of a righteous law which he had enacted—but God the Father thrust out both Christ's eyes for our transgressing of his royal law. Oh! the justice and severity of God. But,

2. Secondly, I answer, *That there is not a greater evidence of blindness, profaneness, hard-heartedness, spiritual madness, and hellish desperateness in all the world, than to make that an argument, an encouragement to sin, namely, the mercy of God, which should be the greatest argument under heaven to keep a man from sin—as all know that have but read the Scripture.* Neither are there any sinners in the world that God delights to rain hell out of heaven upon, as upon such, who by their abuse of mercy, turn the God of mercy into a mere scarecrow, who threatens without punishing; and go on out-daring justice itself.

"Let none of those who hear the warnings of this curse consider themselves immune, thinking, 'I am safe, (God is a God of mercy), even though I am walking in my own stubborn way.' This would lead to utter ruin! The Lord will not pardon such people. His anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them." Deuteronomy 29:19-20. In these words you may observe, that God is absolute in his threatening, to show that he will be resolute in punishing: Psalm 11:5-6, "The wicked, and him that loves iniquity, does his soul hate. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

Ah! that all poor sinners would make these two scriptures their companions, their constant bed-fellows, until they are got above that sad

temptation of *turning the mercy of God into an encouragement to sin*.

While Milo Crotoniates was tearing asunder the stock of an oak, his strength failing him,—the cleft suddenly closing,—was held so fast by the hands, that he became a prey to the beasts of the field. All the abusers of mercy will certainly and suddenly become a prey to the justice of God, who will rend and tear them in pieces, as the Psalmist speaks: Psalm 50:22, "Woe, woe, to that soul that fights against God with his own mercies"—who will be bad, because he is good; who will be sinful, because he is merciful; who will turn all the kindness of God—which should be as so many silver cords, to tie him to love and obedience—into arrows, and to shoot them back into the heart of God. **Abused mercy will at last turn into a lion, a fierce lion; and then woe to the abusers and despisers of it!** But,

3. **Thirdly**, In answer to that part of the objection concerning the thief on the cross, I offer these things briefly to your thoughts.

(1). First, *That as one was saved to teach sinners not to **despair**; so another was damned to teach them not to **presume***. A pardon is sometimes given to one upon the gallows—but whoever trusts to that, the hangman's rope may be his end.

(2). Secondly, *It is an example without a promise*. Here is an example of late repentance—but where is there a promise of late repentance? Oh! let not his late and sudden conversion be to you a temptation, until you have found a promise for late and sudden conversion. It is not examples—but promises, which are foundations for faith to rest on. He who walks by an *example of mercy*, without a precept to guide him, and a promise to support him, walks but by a dark lantern, which will deceive him. Well! young man, remember this, examples of mercy increase wrath, when the heart is not bettered by them. But,

(3). Thirdly, *This was a rare miracle of mercy, with the glory whereof Christ did honor the ignominy of his cross*, and therefore we may as well look for another crucifying of Christ as look for a sinner's conversion, when he has scarce time enough for another breath. But,

(4). Fourthly, I answer, *This thief knew not Christ before; he had not refused, neglected, nor slighted Christ before.* The sermon on the cross was the first sermon that ever he heard Christ preach, and Christ's prayer on the cross was the first prayer that ever he heard Christ make. He knew not Christ until he met him on the cross, which proved to him a happy meeting. His case was as if a Turk or a heathen should now be converted to the faith; and therefore you have little reason, O young man, to plead this example to keep Christ and your soul asunder, who are every day under the call, the entreaties, and wooings of Christ. But,

(5). Fifthly, and lastly, I answer, *The circumstances of time and place are rightly to be considered.* Now when Christ was triumphing on the cross over sin, Satan, and the world; when he had made the devils a public spectacle of scorn and derision; when he was taking his leave of the world and entering into his glory; now he puts a pardon into the thief's hand, and crowds other favors and kindnesses upon him.

As in the Roman triumphs, the victor being ascended up to the capitol in a chariot of state, used to cast coins among the people for them to pick up, which he used not to do at other times; so our Lord Jesus Christ, in the day of his triumph and solemn inauguration into his heavenly kingdom, scatters some heavenly jewels that this thief might pick up—which He does not, nor will not do every day. Or, as in these days it is usual with princes to save some notorious malefactors at their coronations when they enter upon their kingdoms in triumph, which they do not do afterwards, so did Jesus Christ carry it toward this thief.

But this is not his ordinary way of saving and bringing souls to glory; and therefore do not, O young man! let not the thief's late conversion prove a temptation or an occasion of your delaying your repentance, and trifling away the primrose of your days in vanity and folly. And this much may suffice to have spoken by way of answer to the young man's objections. I shall now speak a few words to old men, and so close up.

**I shall now give some brief answers to the old man's scruples,** and so close up this discourse.

Is it so commendable, so desirable, and so necessary for young men to be godly early, to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of their youth, as has been sufficiently demonstrated in this treatise? Oh, then, that I could so woo aged people as to win them who yet have put off this great work to seek and serve the Lord before their hour-glass be out, their sun set, and their souls lost forever!

Oh, that that counsel of the prophet might take hold upon your hearts! "Give glory to the Lord your God before it is too late. Acknowledge him before he brings darkness upon you, causing you to stumble and fall on the dark mountains. For then, when you look for light, you will find only terrible darkness." Jeremiah 13:16

Ay—but aged sinners may reply, *Is there any hope, any help for us?* Is there any probability, is there any possibility, that ever such as we are should return and find mercy and favor with the Lord? We who have lived so long without him! We who have sinned so much against him! We who to this day are strangers to him, yes, in arms against him! Is there any hope that we white-headed sinners, who have withstood so many thousand offers of grace—and so many thousand motions of the Spirit—and so many thousand checks of conscience—and so many thousand offers of Christ and heaven—that ever **we** should obtain mercy—that ever we should have our old hearts turned—our millions of sins pardoned—our vile natures changed—and our poor souls saved?

I answer, That there is hope—even for such as you are! All the angels in heaven and all the men on earth cannot tell—but that you, even you, may obtain God's mercy and favor, that your souls be not damned. With the Lord nothing is impossible, and for the grace of the gospel nothing is too hard. Now this I shall make evident by an induction of particulars. Thus,

(1.) **First**, *All were not called nor sent to work in the vineyard at the first hour*; some were called at the third hour, others at the sixth, others at the ninth, and some at the eleventh. God has his several times of calling souls to himself. The eleventh hour was about five in the afternoon, an hour before sunset; when it was even time to leave work; and yet at this hour some were called, employed, and rewarded along with the rest.

Some of the commentators, by the several hours mentioned in this parable, do understand the several ages of man, namely, childhood, youth, middle age, and old age, wherein poor souls are called and converted to Christ. The scope of the parable is to signify the free grace of God in the calling of some in the spring and morning of their days, and in the calling of others in their old age, in the evening of their days. But,

(2.) **Secondly**, *Abraham in the Old Testament, and Nicodemus in the New, were called and converted in their old age*, when there were but a few steps between them and the grave, between them and eternity.

I have read of one Caius Marius Victorius, and had been a pagan all his days, and in his old age he inquired and hearkened after Christ, and said he would be a Christian. Simplicianus hearing him say so, would not believe him—but when the church saw a work of grace indeed upon him, there was shouting and dancing for gladness, and songs were sung in every church, *Caius Marius Victorius is become a Christian!* And this was written for a wonder, that he in his old age, and in his grey hairs, should become a gracious Christian.

Aretius also speaks of a certain man in his time. It is no feigned story, says he, for I saw the man with my own eyes: he was one who had been a most vile and desperate sinner, a drunkard, a swearer, a gamester, a lecherous man—and so he continued to his grey hairs; but at last it pleased God to set his sins in order before him, and the man was so troubled in conscience that he threw himself down upon the ground, calling unto Satan to take him away, provoking Satan to take him away: *Devil, take your own; devil, take your own; I am your own, take your own!* Whereupon, says Aretius, prayer was made for him; Christians prayed, they fasted and prayed, they prayed night and day; and it pleased God at last that this poor aged sinner was converted to God, lived a godly life afterwards, and died comfortably.

Therefore, let not the grey-headed sinner despair, though his spring be past, his summer overpast, and he arrived at the fall of the leaf. But,

(3.) **Thirdly**, *Divine promises shall be made good to returning souls, to repenting souls, to believing souls—be they young or old.* 2 Chron. 30:9,

"The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return unto him." Joel 2:13, "Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you." Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked one abandon his way, and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will freely forgive"—or he will multiply to pardon. More of this you may see by reading of the scriptures in the margin. All sorts of sin shall be pardoned—to all sorts of believing and repenting sinners.

The New Jerusalem has twelve gates, to show that there is every way access for all sorts and ranks of sinners to come to Christ. He was born in an inn, to show that he receives all comers, young and old, poor and rich, etc. But,

(4.) **Fourthly**, *The Lord has declared by oath a greater delight in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners, whether they are young or old, than in the destruction and damnation of such.* Ezek. 33:11, "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" Two things make a thing more credible.

[1.] The integrity or dignity of the person speaking.

[2.] The manner of the speech. Now here you have the great God, not only speaking, promising—but solemnly swearing that he had rather poor sinners should live than die, be happy than miserable! Therefore, despair not, O aged sinner! but return unto the Lord, and you shall be happy forever. But,

(5.) **Fifthly**, *There is virtue enough in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, to wash and cleanse away all sin!* Not only virtue to cleanse away the young man's sins—but also to cleanse away the old man's sins; not only to cleanse a sinner of twenty years—but to cleanse a sinner of fifty, sixty, yes, a hundred years old! 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin!"—not simply from sin—but from **all sin**. There is such a power and efficacy in the blood of Christ, as is sufficient to

cleanse all sorts of sinners from all sorts of sins. There is a virtue in the blood of the Lamb to wash out all the spots that are in the oldest sinners' hearts; and therefore let not old sinners despair, let them not say there is no hope, there is no help, as long as this fountain—the blood of Jesus Christ—is open for all sorts of sinners to wash in. But,

(6.) **Sixthly**, *The call and invitation of Christ in the gospel are general and indefinite, excluding no sort of sinners.* Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if **any** man" (mark the indefiniteness of personal admittance) "hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Let the sinner be old or young; a green head, or a grey head—if he will but open the door, Christ will come in and have communion and fellowship with him. So in that Mat. 11:28. Turn to these scriptures, Isaiah 55:1, John 7:37, Rev. 22:17, and dwell upon them; they all clearly evidence the call and gracious invitations of Christ to be to **all** sinners, to every sinner; he excepts not a man, no, though never so old. Nothing shall hinder the sinner, any sinner, the worst and most aged sinner, from obtaining mercy, if he is willing to open to Christ, and to receive him as his Lord and king, John 6:37. But,

(7.) **Seventhly**, *Christ's piteous lamentation over all sorts and ranks of sinners, declares his willingness to show mercy to them.* "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," says Christ, weeping over it, "that you had known in this your day the things that belong to your peace," etc., Luke 19:41-42. "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me!" Psalm 81:13. Christ weeps over Jerusalem; so did Titus, and so did Marcellus over Syracuse, and so did Scipio over Carthage—but they shed tears for them whose blood they were to shed. But **Christ weeps over the necks of those young and old sinners who were to shed his blood!** As a tender-hearted father weeps over his rebellious children, when neither smiles nor frowns, neither counsels nor entreaties, will win them, or turn them from their evil ways—so does Jesus Christ over these rebellious Jews, upon whom nothing would work. But,

(8.) **Eighthly**, and lastly, *Though aged sinners have given Christ many thousand denials, yet he has not yet damned them—but after all, and in the face of all denials, he still re-enforces his suit, and continues to beseech them by his Spirit, by his word, by his wounds, by his blood, by*

*his messengers, and by his rebukes—to turn home to him, to embrace him, to believe in him—that they may be saved eternally by him! All which bespeaks grey-headed sinners not to despair, nor to dispute—but to repent, return, and believe, that it may go well with them forever. Consider seriously what has been spoken, and the Lord make you wise for eternity!*

## **The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures**

By Thomas Brooks, 1675

[Introduction](#)

[What are the special remedies, means or helps against cherishing or keeping up of any special or peculiar sin, either in heart or life?](#)

[What is that faith, which gives a man a saving interest in Christ, and in all those blessed benefits and favors which come by Christ?](#)

[Questions concerning the great day of the Lord, and the day of judgment.](#)

[Christ, bearing and enduring all these punishments for the elect.](#)

[Christ's spiritual sufferings.](#)

[Hell is a place of endless, easeless, and remediless torment.](#)

[The Divinity and Humanity of Christ](#)

[Applications and inferences](#)

[Applications and inferences \(continued\)](#)

[The justification of a sinner in the sight of God](#)

[Nine choice consolations of justification](#)

[Christ our representative and surety](#)

Serious and Weighty Questions Clearly and Satisfactorily Answered.

Several great points, which refer to the saints' present blessedness, and their future happiness, with the resolution of several important questions.

Here you have also the active and passive obedience of Christ vindicated and improved, against men of corrupt minds, etc. Who boldly, in pulpit and press, contend against those glorious truths of the Gospel.

You have farther eleven serious singular pleas, that all sincere Christians may safely and groundedly make, to those ten Scriptures in the Old and New Testament, which speak of the general Judgment, and of that particular Judgment, that must certainly pass upon them all immediately after death.

The Godhead and Manhood of Christ, is here largely proved, and improved against all gainsayers, by whatever names and titles they are distinguished and known among us. Several things concerning Hell, and hellish torments, opened, cleared and improved against all Atheists, and all others who boldly assert, that there is no Hell—but what is in us. Some other points of importance are here cleared and opened, which other authors have passed over them in great silence, all tending to the confirmation of the strong, and support, peace, comfort, settlement and satisfaction of poor, weak, doubting, trembling, staggering Christians.

### **THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY**

To his much honored and worthily esteemed friend, Sir Nathaniel Herne,

Knight, Sheriff of London, and Governor of the East India Company.

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied upon you and yours.

Sir,

Much might be said, were it necessary, for the dedication of books unto people of worth, interest, service, and honor, this having been the constant practice of the best and wisest of men in all the ages of the world; and therefore I need not make any farther apology for my present practice.

What is **written** is permanent, and spreads itself farther by far, for time, place, and people—than the **voice** can reach. Augustine, writing to Volusian, says, "That which is written is always at hand to be read when the reader is at leisure." There are those who think—and, as they conceive, from Scripture grounds too—that the glory of the saints in heaven receives additions and increases daily, as their holy walk and faithful service when here on earth does, after they are gone, bring forth fruit to the praise of God among those who are left behind them. If this be so, what greater encouragement can there be to write, print, preach, and to walk holily in this world?

I must also confess that that general acceptance that my former labors have found, both in England and in foreign parts, that singular blessing that has attended them from on High. This has been a great encouragement to me once more to cast in my mite into the common treasury. Besides, I am not insensible of your candid esteem of some former endeavors of mine in this kind, neither do I know any way wherein I am more capacitated to serve the glory of God, the interest of Christ, the public good, reproached truths, and the interest of the churches, in my generation, than this, as my case and condition is circumstanced. I am very well satisfied that there is nothing in this treatise but what tends to the advantage, comfort, support, settlement, and encouragement of those whose concernment lies in peace and truth, in holiness and righteousness, throughout the nations.

Sir, the points here insisted on are of the greatest use, worth, weight, necessity, excellency, and utility imaginable. They are such wherein our

present blessedness and our future happiness, yes, wherein our very all, both as to this and the eternal world, is wrapped up. It will be your life, honor, and happiness to read them, digest them, experience them, and to exemplify them in a suitable lifestyle, Deut. 30:15, 19, and 32:47, which, that you may, let your immortal soul lie always open to the warm, powerful, and hourly influences of heaven.

Let it be the height of your ambition, and the height of all your designs, to glorify God, to secure your saving interest in Christ, to serve your generation, to provide for eternity, to walk with God, to be tender to all who have anything of Christ shining in them, and so to steer your course in this world as that you may give up your account at last with joy, Mat. 25:21, seq. All other ambition is base and low. "Selfish ambition," says Bernard, "is a gilded misery, a secret poison, a hidden plague, the engineer of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the origin of vices, the moth of holiness, the blinder of hearts. Selfish ambition turns medicines into maladies, and remedies into diseases." [Cardinal Bourbon would not lose his part in Paris, for his part in paradise.] In the enthronisation of the pope, before he is set in his chair and puts on his triple crown, a piece of straw is set on fire before him, and one appointed to say, "The glory of this world is but a blaze." Luke calls Agrippa's great *pomp* a *fantasy* or *vain show*, Acts 25:23; and indeed all worldly pomp and state is but a fantasy or vain show. Matthew calls *all the world's glory* an opinion, Mat. 4:8; and Paul calls it a mathematical figure, 1 Cor. 7:31, which is a mere notion, and nothing in substance. The word here used intimates that there is nothing of any firmness or solid consistency in the creature; it is but a surface, external, empty thing; all the beauty of it is but skin deep.

Mollerus, upon Psalm 73:20, "As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies." concludes, "that men's earthly dignities are but as idle dreams; their splendid braveries but fantasies." [The Romans built Virtue's and Honor's temples close together, to show that the way to true honor was by virtue. —Augustine.] High seats are never but uneasy, and *crowns* are always stuffed with thorns, which made one say of his crown, "O crown, more *noble* than *happy*." May the Spirit of God, the grace of God, the power of God, the

presence of God—arm you against all other sins, evils, snares, and temptations—as you are by a good hand of heaven armed against worldly ambition and worldly glory.

Sir, you know that it was a *Saul* that said, "Honor me before the people," 1 Sam. 15:30; and it was a *Jehu* that said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord Almighty," 2 Kings 10:16. There were three Irish *kings* who rebelled in Henry the Second's days—being derided for their crude fashions. Those were some of the worst of *cardinals* who, when they were like to die, would give great sums of money for a cardinal's hat, that they might be elegantly styled in their coffins. And they were the Romans and other barbarous nations that were most ambitious of worldly honor and glory. It was a *Julius Caesar* whose excessive desire of honor made him to be mortally hated by the senators and all others. God grants no man a patent for honor, during his life—but during His own good pleasure.

All worldly honor and glory is subject to mutability. *Honors, riches, and pleasures* are the three deities, which all people adore, and to whom they continually sacrifice, their best thoughts and energies. These, for their unparalleled vanity, may well be called the vanity of vanities, Ecclesiastes 1:2. Worldly honors are but a mere conceit, a shadow, a vapor, a feather in the cap—without substance. And yet they are the most powerful charm of Satan, whereby he lulls men to sleep in the paradise of fools; to cast them, after they die, into the bottomless pit of eternal woe!

For had not Satan held them to be the strongest of all temptations, he would not have reserved them for his last battery against the constancy of our blessed Savior, as he did, Mat. 4:8-9. And although this roaring cannon of his, could not prevail against Christ, the rock of ages, Mat. 16:18—yet how many thousands in these days are captivated and deluded by the glistening of worldly honors! Men of great honor and worldly glory stand but in *slippery places*. Adonibezek, a mighty prince, was made a companion with the dogs, Judges 1:7; and Nebuchadnezzar, a mighty conqueror, was turned a-grazing among the oxen, Dan. 4:28; and Herod was reduced from a imagined god, to the most loathsome of men, a living carrion, arrested by the vilest creatures, upon the affront of his Creator, Acts 12:23. A great Haman is feasted with the king one day, and made a feast for crows the next, Esther. 7:10. In all the ages of the world God has

taken a delight to stain the pride of all the glory of this lower world. "The Lord Almighty planned it, to bring low the pride of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth." Isaiah 23:9. See it in a few instances:

Valerian, the Roman emperor, fell from being an emperor to be a footstool to Sapor, king of Persia—as often as he mounted his horse.

Bibulus the consul, riding in his triumphant chariot, by the fall of a tile-stone from a house—was made a sacrifice before he could reach the capitol, to offer up there the bulls and garlands he had prepared.

Aurelianus, the Roman emperor, brought Tetricus his opponent, and the brave Queen Zenobia of Palmyra—captive to Rome in golden chains.

Sejanus, that prodigious favorite, on the same day that he was attended by the senate—he was torn in pieces by the people. Seneca, speaking of him, says, that he who in the morning was swollen with titles, before night there remained not so much as a morsel of flesh for the hangman to fasten his hook in.

Belisarius, a most famous general under Justinian the emperor, after all the great and famous services that he had done—had his eyes put out in his old age by the Empress Theodora; and was forced to beg: "Give a crust to old blind Belisarius, whom virtue advanced—but envy has brought into this great misery."

Henry the Fourth, emperor, in sixty-two battles, for the most part, he became victorious—yet he was deposed, and driven to such misery, that he desired only a lowly clerk's place—which was denied him. Whereupon he broke forth into that speech of Job: "Have pity upon me, oh my friends, for the hand of God has touched me!" Job 19:21. He died of grief and poverty.

Bajazet was a proud emperor of the Turks. Tamerlane took him prisoner, and bound him in chains of gold, and used him for a footstool whenever he mounted horse. When he was at table, he made him gather crumbs and scraps under his table, and eat them for his food.

Dionysius, king of Sicily, was such a cruel tyrant that his people banished him. After his banishment he went to Corinth, where he lived a base and contemptible life. At last he became a schoolmaster; so that, when he could not tyrannize any longer over *men*, he might over *boys*.

Pythias, who once was able to maintain Xerxes his mighty army—pined to death for lack of bread.

Great Pompey had no coffin to be buried in. William the Conqueror's corpse lay three days unburied, his interment being hindered by one who claimed the ground to be his.

Caesar having bathed his sword in the blood of the senate and his own countrymen, was miserably murdered in the senate by his own friends, Cassius and Brutus.

King Guillimet, a powerful king of the Vandals, was brought so low as to entreat his friend to send him a sponge, a loaf of bread, and a harp; a sponge to dry up his tears, a loaf of bread to maintain his life, and a harp to solace himself in his misery.

A Duke of Exeter was reduced to begging barefoot.

By all these instances, and many more which might be produced, it is most evident that worldly glory is but a breath, a vapor, a froth, a phantasy, a shadow, an apparition, a nothing. Like in a dream, you imagine it a substance, a weight; you grasp at it and awake, and it is nothing. **Pleasure** and **wealth** will abide a sense or two—the one a touch or taste; the other a sight of the eyes. But worldly glory can neither be felt, seen, or understood. The philosophers are at strife among themselves where to fix it in any being or existence, whether in the giver or the taker. The inconstancy and slipperiness of it is discernible in the instances last cited. It has raised some—but has ruined more; and those commonly whom it has most raised, it has most ruined.

Sir, if there be anything glorious in the world, it is a mind that divinely contemns that glory; and such a mind I judge and hope God has given you. I have hinted a little at the vanity of worldly glory, because happily

this treatise, passing up and down the world, may fall into the hands of such as may be troubled with that itch; and if so, who can tell but that that little that I have said may prove a sovereign salve to cure that Egyptian botch: and if so, I have my end.

**Sir, let nothing lie so near your heart in all the world, as these eight things:**

1. Your sins, to humble you and abase you at the foot of God.
2. Free and rich and sovereign grace, to soften and melt you down into the will of God.
3. The Lord Jesus Christ, to assist, help, strengthen, and influence you to all the duties and services which are incumbent upon you.
4. The blessed Scriptures, to guide you and lead you, "and to be a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your paths." [Col. 1:10-13; Phil. 4:12-14; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:10; Psalm 119:105; Amos 6:3-6; Neh. 1:1-5.]
5. The afflictions of Joseph, to draw out your charity, mercy, pity, sympathy, and compassion to men in misery.
6. The glory and happiness of the eternal world, to arm you and steel you against all the sins, snares, and temptations that your high places, offices, and circumstances may lay you open to.
7. The grand points in this treatise, which, being laid upon your heart by the warm hand of the Spirit, are able to make you wise unto salvation, and to secure your precious and immortal soul against those pernicious and most dangerous, may I not say damnable, errors and opinions, which are preached, printed, and cried up in this vain world, 2 Pet. 2:1.
8. The interest of Christ and his people, which will be your honor while you live, your joy and comfort when you come to die, and your crown of rejoicing in the great day of our Lord, 1 Thes. 1:19-20.

Sir, I shall not so far disgust you as to tell the world how great a sum of

your money has passed through my hands towards the relief, refreshment, support, and preservation of such who, for their piety and extreme poverty and necessity, were proper objects of your charity; but I shall take this opportunity to tell you, and all others into whose hands this treatise may fall, that of all the duties of piety there are none—

1. More *commanded* than this duty of charity, pity, compassion, and mercy to men in misery, especially to those of "the household of faith."
2. There is no one duty more highly *commended* and extolled than this.
3. There is no one duty that has more choice and precious *promises* annexed to it than this.
4. There is no one duty that has greater *rewards* attending it than this. [Proverbs 3:9-10; Eccles. 11:1-2; Gal. 6:10; 2 Cor. 8:3-5, and 9:1-2; Isaiah 58:7-13, (ponder upon it;) Mat. 25:34-41.]

It is certain, that one day's being in heaven, will make a sufficient recompense for whatever a man has given on earth.

Neither shall I acquaint the world with those particular favors and respects which you have showed to myself—but treasure them up in an awakened bosom, and be your remembrancer at the throne of grace. Only I must let the world know that I owe you more than an epistle; and if you please, to accept of this mite in part of payment, and improve it for your soul's advantage, you will put a farther obligation upon me, to study how I may farther serve the interest of your immortal soul.

Let the luster of your prudence, wisdom, charity, fidelity, generosity, and humility of spirit, shine gloriously through all your places, offices, abilities, riches, employments, and enjoyments; for this is the height of all true excellency. And that it may be so, remember forever that the eyes of God, of Christ, of angels, of devils, of sinners, of saints, of good, of bad—are always fixed upon you. God is all **ear** to hear, all **hand** to punish, all **power** to protect, all **wisdom** to direct, all **goodness** to relieve, all **grace** to pardon. God is all eye, to observe the thoughts, hearts, words, ways, and walkings of men. "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not

hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes." Jeremiah 16:17. "Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve." Jeremiah 32:19. "For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths." Proverbs 5:21. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Hebrews 4:13

As the eyes of a well-drawn picture are fastened on us, whichever way we turn, so are the eyes of the Lord. Zeno, a wise heathen, affirms, that God beheld even the very *thoughts* of men. Athenodorus, another heathen, says that all men ought to be careful of the actions of their life, because God was everywhere, and beheld all that was done. Of all men on earth, magistrates and ministers had need pray with David, "Teach us your way, O Lord, and lead us in a plain path, because of our *enemies*," Psalm 27:11; or, nearer the Hebrew, "because of our *observers*." In all the ages of the world there have been Sauls and Doegs, who have looked upon God's Davids with an evil eye, and watched for their halting, Jer. 20:10. There are multitudes that will be still eyeing and prying into the practices, offices, lives, and conversations of magistrates and ministers—the more it concerns them to watch, pray, act, and walk like so many *earthly angels* in the midst of a crooked, perverse, and froward generation, Phil. 2:15.

Wise and prudent governors are an unspeakable mercy to a nation, which Jethro well understood when he gave Moses that good counsel, to select, "capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens." [Exod. 18:21-22.] But in the nations round, how rare is it to find magistrates qualified, suitable to Jethro's counsel! Alphonsus, king of Spain, coming very young to the crown, was advised that seven counselors should be joined to govern with him—who should be men fearing God, lovers of justice, free from filthy lusts, and such as would not take bribes; to which Alphonsus replied, "If you can find seven such men, nay—bring me but one so qualified—and I will not only admit him to govern with me—but shall willingly resign the kingdom itself to him!"

Wicked policies are ever destructive to their authors; as you may see in

Pharaoh, in Ahithophel, in Haman, etc., Exod. 1:10, 22; 2 Sam. 16:and 23:23; Esther. 7:10. As long as the *Roman* civil magistrates, senators, and commanders of armies were chosen into places of honor and trust for their prudence and valor—their state did flourish, and did enlarge its dominions more in one century of years than it did after three centuries—when these places of honor came to be purchased. For then men of no abilities were promoted to highest dignities—for money; whereupon civil contentions were fomented, factions increased, and continual bloody internal wars maintained; by which the ancient liberties of that state were suppressed, and the last government of it changed into an imperial monarchy.

As long as the chief offices of the crown of *France*, and the places of judicature of the realm, were given by Charles the Fifth, surnamed the Wise—to men of learning, of wisdom, and valor in recompense of their loyalty, virtue, and merits—that kingdom did flourish, with peace, honor, and prosperity; and the courts of parliaments of France had the honor, for their justice and equity, to be the arbitrators and umpires of all the differences which happened in those days between the greatest princes of Christendom. But when these places of honor and trust began to be sold to such as gave most money for them, then was justice and equity banished, and that flourishing kingdom reduced to the brink of ruin and desolation by variety of factions and a bloody civil war.

The barbarous policy of Philip the Second, king of *Spain*, to banish two or three hundred thousand Moors, with their wives and children, under guise of religion, on purpose to confiscate all their land, was fatal to him and to all the Spanish nation; for the Spanish nation never thrived since, etc.

Were it not for exceeding the bounds of an epistle, I might show, in all the ages of the world, how destructive the wicked policies of rulers and governors have been to themselves and the states and nations under them, etc. But from such policies God has, and I hope will forever, deliver your soul. Sir, the best policy in the world is to know God savingly, to serve him sincerely, to do the work of your generation throughly, and to secure your future happiness and blessedness effectually, etc.

Sir, I do not offer you that which cost me nothing, or little, Mal. 1:13-14. God best knows the pains, the prayers, and the study that the travailing of this treatise into the world has cost me, in the midst of trials, troubles, temptations, afflictions, and my frequent labors in the ministry. The truths that I offer for your serious consideration in this treatise are not such as I have formerly preached, in one place or another, at one time or another—but such as, at several times, the Lord has brought to hand; and, I hope, in order to the service and saving of many, many souls. [Commonly men *preach* those points first, which afterwards they *print*—but not knowing how long the door of liberty may be open, I have sent this treatise into the world.]

And should you redeem time from your many and weighty occasions, and live to read it as often over as there are leaves in it, I am apt to think you would never repent of your pains when you come to die and make up your account with God. Sir, I must and shall say, because I love and honor you, and would have you happy for all eternity, that it is your greatest wisdom, and should be your greatest care, to redeem time from your worldly business to acquaint yourself more and more with the great and main points of true religion—to serve your God, to be useful in your day, and to make sure and safe work for your soul to escape hell and to get heaven, Eph. 5:15-16; Col. 4:5; Eccles. 9:10.

Sir Thomas More, one of the great wits of that day, would commonly say, "There is a devil called *business*, which carries more souls to hell than all the devils in hell beside." Many men have so many irons in the fire, and are cumbered about so many things, Luke 10:40-42, that upon the matter they wholly neglect the one thing necessary, though I hope better things of you. [When one presented Antipater, king of Macedonia, with a book treating of happiness, his answer was, "I have no time for this." The Duke of Alva had so much to do on earth, that he had no time to look up to heaven.]

Those who are least perplexed with a crowd of worldly business, are commonly nearest to God. Sir, as you love God, as you love your soul, as you love eternity, as you would be found at Christ's right hand at last, and as you would meet me with joy in the great day of the Lord—make much conscience of redeeming time daily from your secular affairs, to be with

God in your closet, and in your family—to read the Scriptures, to study the Scriptures, and such men's writings which are sound in the faith, and which treat of the great things of the gospel. It is dangerous to be crying, "Tomorrow, tomorrow!" Manna must be gathered in the morning; the orient pearl is generated by the morning dew. **There is nothing which puts a more serious frame into a man's heart, than to know the worth and preciousness of time.** "Time," says Bernard, "would be a good commodity in hell, and the selling of it most gainful; where, for one day, a man would give ten thousand worlds if he had them."

One called his friends, "*Thieves!*" because they stole time from him. And certainly there are no worse thieves than those who rob us of our praying seasons, our hearing seasons, our mourning seasons, etc. There was an eminent minister who would often say, that he could eat the flesh off his arm in indignation against himself, for his lost hours. Blessed Hooper was spare of diet, sparer of words, and sparest of time. Bradford counted that hour lost wherein he did not some good by his tongue, pen, or purse. A heathen could say he lived no day without a purpose—that is, he did something remarkable every day. Cato was accustomed to say, that he abhorred to spend idle day.

It was good counsel that an ancient Christian, who is now triumphing in glory, gave to another, "Be either like Christ or Mary: the first was always doing good, the latter was still a-receiving good." This is the way to be strong in grace, and to be soon ripe for glory. Certainly time is infinitely precious in regard of what depends upon it. What more necessary than repentance? yet that depends upon time: Rev. 2:21, "I gave her time to repent of her fornications." What more desirable than the favor of God? This depends upon time, and is therefore called "the acceptable time," Isaiah 49:8. What more excellent than salvation? this likewise depends upon time: 2 Cor. 6:4, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Pythagoras says that time is *the soul of heaven*.

But to draw to a close, what can there be of more worth, and weight, and importance—than eternity? Eternity is the heaven of heaven—and the hell of hell. Without eternity, heaven would not be so desirable—nor hell so formidable. Eternity depends upon time. Time is the prologue to eternity. The great weight of eternity, hangs upon the small wire of time. Whether

our time here is longer or shorter, upon the spending of our time, depends either the bliss or the bane of body and soul to all eternity! This is our seed-time, eternity is the harvest. Whatever seed we now sow, whether of sin or grace, it comes up in eternity! "Whatever a man sows, the same shall he reap," Gal. 6:7-8; 2 Cor. 9:6. This is our market-time, in which, if we are wise merchants, we may make a happy exchange of earth for heaven, of a valley of tears for a paradise of delights. This is our working time: "I must work the works of him who sent me; the night comes, when no man can work," John 9:4. According as the work is we do now, such will be our wages in eternity. Though time itself does not last—yet whatever is everlasting, depends upon time; and therefore should be carefully improved to the best advantage for our souls, and for the making sure of such things as will go with us beyond the grave.

Shall your wife live to be an honor to God, to be wise for eternity, to be a pattern of piety, humility, modesty, etc., to others, to be a joyful mother of many children, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Shall you both live to see Christ formed up in your offspring, and to see their souls flourish in grace and holiness, and God bestowing himself as a portion upon them? Shall you all be blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," and shall you all be crowned with the highest glory, happiness, and blessedness in the world to come? Shall you all live in the sense of divine love and die in the sense of divine favor? [1 Pet. 3:3-5; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; Eph. 6:4; Proverbs 31:1-3; Gal. 4:19; 1 Tim. 1:5-6; Isaiah 44:3-4, and 59:21; Psalm 112:1-2; Eph. 1:3.] Now, to the everlasting arms of divine protection, and to the constant influences of free, rich, and sovereign grace and mercy, he commends you all, Gal. 5:22-23;

Your much obliged friend and soul's servant,  
Thomas Brooks.

### **To the Reader**

Christian Reader! Some preachers in our days are like Heraclitus, who was called the dark doctor, because he affected dark speeches; so they

affect sublime notions, obscure expressions, uncouth phrases: making plain truths difficult, and easy truths hard, etc. They "darken counsel by words without knowledge," Job 38:2. Men of abstract conceits and wise speculations are but wise fools: like the lark that soars up on high, peering and peering—but at last falls into the net of the fowler. Such people commonly are as censorious as they are curious, and do Christ and his church but very, very little service in this world.

The heathenish priests had their mythologies and strange canting expressions, of their imaginary inaccessible deities, to amaze and amuse their blind superstitions followers; and thereby to hold up their Popish and apish idolatries in greater veneration. The prudent reader can tell how to make application.

If you desire high strains of wit, or larded, pompous, and high-flown expressions, or eloquent trappings, or fine new notions, or such things that you may rather be amazed at than understand, I shall not encourage you to the perusal of this treatise. But,

**First**, If you would be furnished with sovereign antidotes against the most dangerous errors which are rampant in these days—then seriously peruse this treatise: 2 Pet. 3:16; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7-11.

**Secondly**, If you would be established, strengthened, settled, and confirmed in the grand points of the gospel—then seriously peruse this treatise: 1 Pet. 5:10. But,

**Thirdly**, If you would know what that faith is, which gives you a saving interest in Christ and in all that fundamental good which comes by Christ—then seriously peruse this treatise: John 1:12, 16, and 5:24. But,

**Fourthly**, If you would have your judgment rightly informed in some great truths, about which several men of note have been mistaken—then seriously peruse this treatise: 1 Cor. 2:6-7; Psalm 119:18. But,

**Fifthly**, If you would know what safe and excellent pleas to make to those ten scriptures that refer to the general judgment, and to your particular day of judgment—then seriously peruse this treatise: 2 Cor.

5:10; Heb. 9:27. But,

**Sixthly**, If you would have your heart brought and kept in a humble, broken, bleeding, melting, tender frame—then seriously peruse this treatise: Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 57:15; 2 Chron. 34:27. But,

**Seventhly**, If you would always come to the Lord's table with such a frame of spirit, as Christ may take a delight to meet you, to bless you, to bid you welcome, and to seal up his love and your pardon to you—then seriously peruse this treatise, especially that part of it where the dreadful and amazing sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, both in body and soul, are at large set forth: Mat. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-30. But,

**Eighthly**, If you would have a clear sight of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ—then seriously peruse this treatise: Eph. 3:18; Psalm 146:8. But,

**Ninthly**, If you would have your love to Christ tried, raised, acted, inflamed, discovered, and augmented, etc.—then seriously peruse this treatise: Cant. 1:7, and 8:5-7. But,

**Tenthly**, If you are a *strong* man in Christ Jesus, and would have your head and heart exercised in the great things of God, and in the deep things of God, and in the mysterious things of God—then seriously peruse this treatise: 2 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 5:14; 1 Cor. 6-7; 1 John 2:14. But,

**Eleventhly**, If you are but a *weak* Christian, a babe, a little child, a shrub, a dwarf in grace, holiness, and communion with God, and in your spiritual attainments, enjoyments, and experiences—then seriously peruse this treatise, especially the first part of it: 1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:2; 1 John 2:1, 12-13. But,

**Twelfthly**, If you would know whether you are an indulger of sin, and if you would be stocked with singular remedies against your special sins—then seriously peruse the former part of this treatise: Job 20:11-14; Micah 6:6-7; Romans 13:14; James 4:3. But,

**Thirteenthly**, If you would be rooted, grounded, strengthened, and

settled in those two grand points of the gospel, namely, the active and passive obedience of Christ, and be daily refreshed with those pleasant streams, with those waters of life that flow from thence—then seriously peruse this treatise: 1 Pet. 5:10; Isaiah Heb. 10:10, 12, 14; Gal. 4:4-5; Romans 8:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21. But,

**Fourteenthly**, If you would be thoroughly acquainted with the sufferings of Christ, in his body and soul, with their greatness and grievousness, etc., and if you would understand the mighty benefits we have by his sufferings—then seriously peruse this treatise: Isaiah 53 and 63:2; 1 Pet. 2:21-24; John 10:11, 15, 17-18. But,

**Fifteenthly**, If you would be able strongly to prove, that there is a hell, a place of torment, provided and prepared for all wicked and ungodly people—then seriously peruse this treatise: Mat. 25:41; Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 5:5. But,

**Sixteenthly**, If you would, in a scripture-glass, see the torments of hell, and know how to avoid them, and what divine improvements to make of them, and be resolved in several questions concerning hell and hellish torments—then seriously peruse this treatise. But,

**Seventeenthly**, If you would be able strenuously to maintain and defend Christ's eternal deity and manhood against all corrupt teachers and gainsayers—then seriously peruse this treatise: 1 John 1:2, 14; 1 Tim. 2:5. But,

**Eighteenthly**, If you would be rooted and grounded in that great doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, and be warmed, refreshed, cheered, comforted, and delighted with those choice and singular consolations that flow from thence—then seriously peruse this treatise: Jer. 23:6; Isaiah 45:24, and 61:10; 1 Cor. 1:30. But,

**Nineteenthly**, If you would be set at liberty from many fears and doubts and disputes that often arise in your soul about your internal and eternal estate, then seriously peruse this treatise: Psalm 42:5, 11, and 55:5; 2 Cor. 7:5. But,

**Twentiethly**, If you would have all grace to flourish and abound in your soul, if you would be eminently serviceable in your generation, if you would be ripe for sufferings, for death, for heaven, if you would be temptation-proof, if you would be weaned from this world and triumph in Christ Jesus when the world triumphs over you—then seriously peruse this treatise: Psalm 92:12-14; Romans 15:13; Acts 13:36; 2 Cor. 12:9, 10; Rev. 12:1; 2 Cor. 14.

**Reader, if you would make any earnings of your reading this treatise, then you must—**

1. Read, and **believe** what you read.
2. You must read, and **meditate** on what you read.
3. You must read, and **pray** over what you read.
4. You must read, and **test** what you read by the touchstone of the word.
5. You must read, and **apply** what you read; that plaster will never heal that is not applied, etc.
6. You must read, and make conscience of **living** up to what you read, and of living out what you read. [Acts 18:8, and 24:14; Psalm 1:2, and 119:5, 18; Acts 17:11; Psalm 119:9; John 13:17; Psalm 119:105-106.] This is the way to honor your God, to gain profit by this treatise, to credit religion, to stop foul mouths, to strengthen weak hands, to better a bad head, to mend a bad heart, to rectify a disorderly life, and to make sure work for your soul, for heaven, for eternity.

Reader, in a sealed fountain and hidden treasures, there is little profit or comfort. No fountain compared to that which flows for common good, no treasures compared to those who lie open for public service. If you get any good by reading this treatise, give God alone the glory; and remember the author when you are in the mount with God. His prayers for you are, that you may be a knowing Christian, a sincere Christian, a growing Christian, a rooted Christian, a resolute Christian, an untainted Christian, an exemplary Christian, a humble Christian, and then he knows you will

be a saved Christian in the day of Christ; so he rests, who is your cordial friend and soul's servant,  
Thomas Brooks

## **Serious and Weighty Questions Clearly and Satisfactorily Answered**

**1st Question. What are the special remedies, means, or helps against cherishing or keeping up of any special or peculiar sin, either in heart or life, against the Lord, or against the light and conviction of a man's own conscience?**

Before I come to the resolution of this question, **I shall premise a few things that may clear my way.**

**1. First, When men's hearts are sincere with God; when they don't indulge, cherish, or keep up any known transgression in their hearts or lives against the Lord, they may on very good grounds plead a saving interest in God, in Christ, and in the covenant of grace, though their corruptions prevail against them, and too frequently worst them and lead them captive, as is most evident in these special scriptures, 2 Sam. 23:5; Psalm 65:3; Romans 7:23, 25; Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; Jer. 14:7-9; Hosea 14:1-4, 8.**

But now, when any man's heart does condemn him for dealing deceitfully and guilefully with God in this or that or the other particular, or for connivings or winking at any known transgression that is kept up, either in his heart or life against the Lord, and against the light of his own conscience, which he will not let go, nor in good earnest use the means whereby it should be subdued and mortified; it is not to be expected that such a person can come to any clearness or satisfaction about his interest in Christ and the covenant of grace and his right to the great things of that other world.

When a person will dally with sin, and will be playing with snares and baits, and allow a secret liberty in his heart to sin, conniving at many workings of it, and not setting upon mortification with earnest endeavors; though they are convinced—yet they are not persuaded to arise with all their might against the Lord's enemies—but do his work negligently, which is an accursed thing; and for this, God casts such a person into sore straits, and lets him wander in the dark, without any sight, sense, or assurance of their gracious estate or interest in Christ, etc.

The Israelites should perfectly have rooted out the Canaanites—but because they did it but by halves, and did not engage all their power and strength against them, therefore God left them to be as "thorns in their eyes, and as goads in their sides." So when men who should fight with all their might against those sins which war against them in their hearts, ways, and walkings, and pursue the victory to the utmost, until their spiritual enemies lie dead at their feet; and yet they do but trifle and make slender opposition against their sins; this provokes God to stand afar off, and to hide his reconciled face from them.

It is true, when men are really in Christ, they ought not to question their state in him—but yet a guilty conscience will be clamorous and full of objections, and God will not speak peace unto it until it is humbled at his foot. God will make his dearest children know that it is a bitter thing to dally with sin. Now, before I lay down the remedies, give me permission to show you **what it is to indulge sin, or when a man may be said to indulge or cherish, or keep up any known transgression in his soul against the Lord.** Now, for a clear understanding of me in this particular, take me thus—

**[1.] First, To indulge sin or to cherish it, it is to make daily provision for it.** Romans 13:14. It is to give the breast to it, and to feed it and nourish it, as fond parents do feed and nourish the sick child, or the darling child; it must have what it will, and do what it will, it must not be crossed. Now, when men ordinarily, habitually, commonly, are studious and laborious to make provision for sin, then sin is indulged by them. But,

**[2.] Secondly, When sin is commonly, habitually, sweet and**

**pleasant to the soul, when a man takes a daily pleasure and delight in sin, then sin is indulged.** 2 Thes. 2:12 you read of those who had "pleasure in unrighteousness;" Isaiah 66:3, "And their soul delights in their abominations;" Proverbs 2:14, "Who rejoice to do evil," etc.

**[3.] Thirdly, When men commonly, habitually, side with sin, and take up arms in the defense of sin, and in defiance of the commands of God, the motions of the Spirit, the checks of conscience, and the reproofs of others, then sin is indulged.** But,

**[4.] Fourthly, When men ordinarily, habitually, do yield a quiet, free, willing, and total subjection to the authority and commands of sin, then sin is indulged.** That man who is wholly addicted and devoted to the service of sin, that man indulges sin.

Now in none of these senses does any godly man indulge any one sin in his soul. Though sin lives in him—yet he does not live in sin. Every man who has liquor in him is not drunk. A child of God may slip into a sin, as a sheep may *slip* into the mire. But he does not, and cannot wallow in sin as the swine does in the mire. Nor can he keep on in the path of sin, as sinners do: Psalm 139:24, "See if there be any way of wickedness in me." A course, a trade of sin is not consistent with the truth or state of grace: Job 10:7, "You know that I am not wicked." He does not say, "You know that I am not a sinner," or "you know that I have not sinned." No! for the best of saints are sinners, though the worst and weakest of saints are not wicked. Every real Christian is a renewed Christian, and every renewed Christian takes his denomination from his renovation, and not from the remainders of corruptions in him; and therefore such a one may well look God in the face and say, "Lord you know that I am not wicked;" weaknesses are chargeable upon me—but wickednesses are not chargeable upon me. And certainly that man gives a strong demonstration of his own uprightness, who dares appeal to God himself that he is not wicked.

**That no godly man does, or can indulge himself in any course or way or trade of sin, shall be thus made evident.**

**[1.] First, He sins not with allowance.** When he does evil, he disallows of the evil he does: Romans 7:15, "For that which I do, I allow not." A Christian is sometimes tossed and whirled away by sin before he is aware, or has time to consider of it. See Psalm 119:1, 3; 1 John 3:9; Proverbs 16:12.

**[2.] Secondly, A godly man hates all known sin.** Psalm 119:128, "I hate every false way." True hatred is against the whole kind. That contrariety to sin which is in a real Christian, springs from an inward gracious nature or principle, and so is to the whole species or kind of sin, and is irreconcilable to any sin whatever. As contrarieties of nature are to the whole kind, as light is contrary to all darkness, and fire to all water. Just so, this contrariety to all sin arising from the inward man, is universal to all sin. He who hates a toad because it is a toad, hates every toad; and he who hates a godly man because he is godly, he hates every godly man; and so he who hates sin because it is sin, he hates every sin: Romans 7:15, "What I want to do I do not do; but what I hate I do."

**[3.] Thirdly, Every godly man would sincerely have his sins not only pardoned, but destroyed.** His heart is alienated from his sins, and therefore nothing will serve him or satisfy him but the blood and death of his sins, Isaiah 2:20, and 30:22; Hosea 14:8; Romans 8:24. Saul hated David, and sought his life; and Haman hated Mordecai, and sought his destruction; and Absalom hated Amnon, and killed him; Julian the apostate hated the Christians, and put many thousands of them to death. The great thing that a Christian has in his eye, in all the duties he performs, and in all the ordinances that he attends—is the blood and death and ruin of his sins.

**[4.] Fourthly, Every godly man groans under the burden of sin.** 2 Cor. 5:4, "For we who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." Never did any porter groan more to be delivered from his heavy burden, than a Christian groans to be delivered from the burden of sin. The burden of *affliction*, the burden of *temptation*, the burden of *desertion*, the burden of *opposition*, the burden of *persecution*, the burden of *scorn* and *contempt*—is nothing compared to the burden of sin. Ponder upon Psalm 38:4, and 40:12; Romans 7:24.

**[5.] Fifthly, Every godly man combats and conflicts with all known sin.** In every gracious soul there is a constant and perpetual conflict.

"The flesh will be still a-lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," Gal. 5:17; Romans 7:22-23; 1 Kings 14:30-31. Though sin and grace were not born together, and though sin and grace shall never die together—yet while a believer lives in this world, they must live together; and while sin and grace do cohabit together, they will still be opposing and conflicting one with another.

**[6.] Sixthly, Every gracious heart is still a-crying out against his sins.** He cries out to God to subdue them; he cries out to Christ to crucify them; he cries out to the Spirit to mortify them; he cries out to faithful ministers to arm him against them; and he cries out to sincere Christians, that they would pray hard that he may be made victorious over them. Now certainly it is a most sure sign that sin has not gained a man's heart, a man's love, nor his consent—but committed a rape upon his soul, when he cries out bitterly against his sin. It is observable, that if the ravished virgin, under the law, cried out, she was guiltless, Deut. 22:25-27. Certainly such as cry out of their sins, and that would not for all the world indulge themselves in a way of sin, such are guiltless before the Lord. That which a Christian does not indulge himself in, that he does not do—in divine account. But,

**[7.] Seventhly, The fixed purposes and designs of a godly man, is not to sin.** Psalm 17:3, "I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress," that is, I have laid my design so as not to sin. Though I may have many particular failings—yet my general purpose is not to sin: Psalm 39:1, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." Whenever a godly man sins, he sins against the general purpose of his soul. David laid a law upon his tongue. He uses three words in the first and second verses to the same purpose, which is as if he should say in plain English, "I was silent, I was silent, I was silent;" and all this to express how he kept in his passion, that he might not offend with his tongue.

Though a godly man sins—yet he does not purpose to sin, for his purposes are fixed against sin. Holiness is his highway; and as sin is itself a byway, so it is besides his way. The honest traveler purposes to keep straight on his way; so that if at any time he miss his way, he misses his purpose. Though Peter denied Christ—yet he did not purpose to deny Christ; yes, the settled purpose of his soul was rather to die with Christ than to deny Christ: Mat. 26:35, "Peter said unto him, Though I should die with you—yet will I not deny you." Interpreters agree that Peter meant as he speaks. But,

**[8.] Eighthly, The settled resolutions of a gracious heart is not to sin.** Psalm 119:106, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep your righteous judgments;" Neh. 10:28-31, dwell on it; Job 31:1, etc.; Micah 4:5, "Even though the nations around us worship idols, we will follow the Lord our God forever and ever." So Daniel and the three children.

Jerome writes of a brave woman, who, being upon the rack, bid her persecutors do their worst, for she was resolved that she would rather die than lie.

The Prince of Conde being taken prisoner by Charles the Ninth of France, and put to his choice—first, whether he would go to mass; or second, be put to death; or thirdly, suffer perpetual imprisonment, answered, "As for the first, I will never do, by the assistance of God's grace; and as for the other two, let the king do with me what he pleases, for I am very well assured that God will turn all to the best."

"The heavens shall as soon fall," said William Flower to the bishop who tried to persuade him to save his life by recanting, "as I will forsake the opinion and faith I am in, God assisting of me."

Just so, Marcus Arethusius chose rather to suffer a most cruel death than to give one halfpenny towards the building of an idol temple.

Just so, Cyprian, on the way to his execution, when the emperor said, "Now I give you space to consider whether you will obey me in casting a grain of frankincense into the fire—or be thus miserably slain." "Nay,"

says he, "I need no deliberation in the case." There are many thousands of such instances scattered up and down in history.

**[9.] Ninthly, There is a sincere willingness in every gracious soul to be rid of all sin.** Romans 7:24; Hosea 14:2, 8; Job 7:21. Saving grace makes a Christian as willing to leave his sin—as a *slave* is willing to leave his galley, or a *prisoner* his dungeon, or a *thief* his chains, or a *beggar* his rags. "Many a day have I sought death with tears," says blessed Cooper, "not out of impatience, distrust, or perturbation—but because I am weary of sin, and fearful of falling into it." Look, as the daughters of Heth even made Rebekah weary of her life, (Gen. 27:46;) so corruptions within makes a gracious soul even weary of his life. A gracious soul looks upon sin with as evil and as envious an eye as Saul looked on David when the evil spirit was upon him. "Oh," says Saul, "that I was but once well rid of this David;" and oh, says a gracious soul, that I was but once well rid of "this proud heart, this hard heart, this unbelieving heart, this unclean heart, this earthly heart, this froward heart of mine."

**[10.] Tenthly, Every godly man complains of his known sins, and mourns over his known sins, and would be sincerely rid of his known sins,** as might be made evident out of many scores of scripture, Job 7:21; Psalm 51:14; Hosea 2.

**[11.] Eleventhly, Every gracious soul sets himself mostly, resolutely, valiantly, and habitually against his special besetting sins, his constitution sins, his most prevalent sins.** Psalm 18:23, "I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from my iniquity." Certainly that which is the special besetting sin of a godly man, is his special burden; it is not delighted in—but lamented. There is no sin which costs him so much sorrow as that to which either the temper of his body or the occasions of his life leads him. That sin which he finds his heart most set upon—he sets his heart, his whole soul, most against. The Scripture gives much evidence that David, though a man after God's own heart, was very apt to fall into the sin of lying; he used many unlawful shifts. We read of his often faltering in that kind, when he was in straits and hard put to it, 1 Sam. 21:2, 8, and 27:8, 10, etc. But it is as clear in Scripture that his heart was set against lying, and that it was the grief and

daily burden of his soul. *Certainly that sin is a man's greatest burden and grief which he prays most to be delivered from!* Oh, how earnestly did David pray to be delivered from the sin of lying: Psalm 119:29, "Keep me from the way of lying." And as he prayed earnestly against lying, so he as earnestly detested it: ver. 163, "I hate and abhor lying." Though lying was David's special sin—yet he hated and abhorred it as he did hell itself. And he tells us how he was affected, or afflicted rather, with that sin, whatever it was, which was his iniquity: Psalm 31:10, "My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighings; my strength fails, and my bones are consumed," or moth-eaten, as the Hebrew has it. Here are deep expressions of a troubled spirit; and why all this? Mark, he gives you the reason of it in the same verse, "because of my iniquity:" as if he had said, there is a base corruption which so haunts and dogs me, that my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing. He found, it seems, his heart running out to some sin or other, which yet was so far from being a beloved sin, a bosom sin, a darling sin—that it was the breaking of his heart and the consumption of his bones.

Just so, Psalm 38:18, "I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin." There is no sin that a gracious heart is more perfectly set against, than against his special besetting sin; for by this sin:

firstly, God has been most dishonored;

secondly, Christ most crucified;

thirdly, the Spirit most grieved;

fourthly, conscience most wounded;

fifthly, Satan most advantaged;

sixthly, mercies most embittered;

seventhly, duties most hindered;

eighthly, fears and doubts most raised and increased;

ninthly, afflictions most multiplied;

tenthly, death made most formidable and terrible.

Therefore he breaks out against this sin with the greatest detestation and abhorrency.

Ephraim's special sin was idolatry, Hosea 4:17; he thought the choicest gold and silver in the world hardly good enough to build his idols with. But when it was the day of the Lord's gracious power upon Ephraim, then he thought no place bad enough to cast his choicest idols into, as you may see by comparing of these scriptures together, Hosea 14:8; Isaiah 2:20, and 30:22. True grace will make a man stand stoutly and steadfastly on God's side, and work the heart to take part with him against a man's special besetting sins, though they be as dear as right hands or right eyes. True grace will lay hands upon a man's special besetting sins, and cry out to heaven, "Lord, crucify them, crucify them! Down with them, down with them, even to the ground! Lord, do justice, do speedy justice, do stern justice, do exemplary justice upon these special sins of mine! Lord, hew down root and branch; let the very stumps of this *Dagon* be broken all in pieces! Lord, curse this wild fig-tree, that fruit may never more grow thereon!" But,

**[12.] Twelfthly, There is no time wherein a gracious soul cannot sincerely say with the apostle in Heb. 13:18, "Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do."** Gracious hearts attempt that which they cannot effect. Just so, Acts 24:16, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men;" in all cases, in all places, by all means, and at all times. A sincere Christian labors to have a good conscience, void of offence towards God and towards men: Proverbs 16:17, "The path of the upright leads away from evil," that is, it is the ordinary, usual, constant course of an upright man to depart from evil. An honest traveler may step out of the highway into a house, a forest, a meadow—but his work, his business, is to go on in the highway; so the business, the work, of an upright man is to depart from evil. It is possible for an upright man to step into a sinful path, or to touch upon sinful facts—but his main way, his principal work and business, is to depart from iniquity; as a bee may light upon a thistle—but her work is to be gathering at flowers; or as a sheep may slip into the dirt—but its work

is to be grazing upon the mountains or in the meadows. But,

**[13.] Thirteenthly and lastly, Jesus Christ is the real Christian's only beloved; he is the saint's only darling.** Cant. 2:3, "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." ver. 8, "Listen! My lover! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills." ver. 10, "My beloved spoke, and said unto me—Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me." Cant. 4:16, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Seven times Christ is called "the beloved of his spouse" in the fifth chapter of Canticles, and twice in the sixth chapter, and four times in the seventh chapter, and once in the eighth chapter. In this book of Solomon's Song, Christ is called the church's *beloved* just twenty times. I might turn you to many other scriptures—but in the mouth of twenty witnesses you may be very clearly and fully satisfied that Jesus Christ is the saints' beloved.

1. When the Dutch martyr was asked whether he did not love his wife and children, he answered, "Were all the world a lump of gold, and in my hand to dispose of, I would give it to live with my wife and children in a prison—but Christ is dearer to me than all."

2. Says Jerome, "If my father should stand before me, and if my mother should hang upon me, and my brethren should press about me—I would break through my brethren, throw down my mother, and tread under foot my father, that I might cleave the faster and closer unto Jesus Christ."

3. That blessed virgin, being condemned for Christianity to the fire, and having her estate and life offered her if she would worship idols, cried out, "Let money perish and life vanish, Christ is better than all."

4. Love made Jerome to say, "Oh, my Savior, did you die for love of me, a love more dolorous than death—but to me a death more lovely than love itself. I cannot live, love you, and be longer from you."

5. Henry Voes said, "If I had ten heads, they should all be chopped off for Christ."

6. John Ardley, martyr, said, "If every hair of my head were a man, they should all suffer for the faith of Christ."

7. Ignatius said, "Let fire, racks, pulleys, yes, and all the torments of hell, come on me—just so that I may win Christ."

8. George Carpenter, being asked whether he loved not his wife and children, when they all wept before them, answered, "My wife and children are dearer to me than all Bavaria—yet for the love of Christ I know them not."

9. "O Lord Jesus," said Bernard, "I love you more than all my goods, and I love you more than all my friends, yes, I love you more than my very self."

10. Austin says he would willingly go through hell to Christ.

11. Another says, "He had rather be in his chimney-corner with Christ, than in heaven without him."

12. Another cries out, "I had rather have one Christ than a thousand worlds!" by all which it is most evident that Jesus Christ is the saint's best beloved, and not this or that sin.

Now by these thirteen arguments it is most clear that no gracious Christian does or can indulge himself in any trade, course, or way of sin.

Yes, by these thirteen arguments it is most evident that no godly man has, or can have, any one beloved sin, any one bosom, darling sin, though many worthy ministers, both in their preaching and writings, make a great noise about the saints' beloved sins, about their bosom, darling sins. I readily grant that all unregenerate people have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins—but that no such sins are chargeable upon the regenerate is sufficiently demonstrated by the thirteen arguments last cited. And oh, that this were wisely and seriously considered of, both by ministers and Christians!

There is no known sin which a godly man is not troubled at, and that he would not be rid of. There is as much difference between sin in a regenerate person and in an unregenerate person—as there is between

poison in a man and poison in a serpent. Poison in a *man's* body is most offensive and burdensome, and he readily uses all arts and antidotes to expel it and get rid—but poison in a *serpent*, is in its natural place, and is most pleasing and delightful. Just so, sin in a *regenerate* man is most offensive and burdensome, and he readily uses all holy means and antidotes to expel it and to get rid of it. But sin in an *unregenerate* man is most pleasing and delightful, it being in its natural place. A godly man still enters his protest against sin. A gracious soul, while he commits sin, hates the sin he commits.

O sirs! there is a vast difference between a *besetting* sin—and a beloved sin, a darling sin, a bosom sin. Noah had a sin, and Lot had a sin, and Jacob had a sin, and Job had a sin, and David had a sin, which was his special besetting sin—but neither of these had any sin which was their beloved sin, their bosom sin, their darling sin. That passage in Job 31:33 is observable, "Have I covered my sin as others do, by hiding my guilt in my heart?" Mark, in this text, while Job calls some sin or other his iniquity, he denies that he had any beloved sin; for says he, "Did I hide it in my bosom? did I show it any favor? did I cherish it or nourish it, or keep it warm in my bosom? Oh, no; I did not!" **A godly man may have many sins—yet he has not one beloved sin, one bosom sin, one darling sin.** He may have some particular sin, to which the unregenerate part of his will may strongly incline, and to which his unmortified affections may run out with violence to—yet he has no sin he bears any good-will to, or does really or cordially cling to.

Mark, that may be called a man's particular way of sinning, which yet we cannot, we may not call his beloved sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin; for it may be his greatest grief and torment, and may cost him more sorrow and tears than all the rest of his sins; it may be a tyrant usurping power over him, when it is not the delight and pleasure of his soul. A godly man may be more prone to fall into some one particular sin rather than another; it may be passion, or pride, or slavish fear, or worldliness, or hypocrisy, or this, or that, or another vanity—yet are not these his beloved sins, his bosom sins, his darling sins; for these are the enemies he hates and abhors; these are the grand enemies that he prays against, and complains of, and mourns over; these are the powerful rebels which his

soul cries out most against, and by which his soul suffers the greatest violence.

Mark, no sin—but Christ, is the dearly beloved of a Christian's soul. Christ, and not this sin or that, is "the chief of ten thousand" to a gracious soul—and yet some particular corruption or other may more frequently worst a believer and lead him captive—but then the believer cries out most against that particular sin. Oh, says he, this is my *iniquity*; this is the *Saul*, the *Pharaoh* that is always a-pursuing after the blood of my soul. Lord! let this *Saul* fall by the sword of your Spirit; let this *Pharaoh* be drowned in the Red Sea of your son's blood. O sirs, it is a point of very great importance for gracious souls to understand the vast difference that there is between a beloved sin and this or that particular sin, violently tyrannizing over them; for this is most certain, whoever gives up himself freely, willingly, cheerfully, habitually, to the service of any one particular lust or sin, he is in the state of nature, under wrath, and in the way to eternal ruin.

Now a little to show the vanity, folly, and falsehood of that opinion that is received and commonly avowed by ministers and Christians—namely, **that every godly person has his beloved sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin**—seriously and frequently consider with me of these following particulars—

**[1.] First,** That this opinion is not bottomed or founded upon any clear scripture or scriptures, either in the Old or New Testament.

**[2.] Secondly,** This opinion that is now under consideration runs counter-cross to all those thirteen arguments but now alleged, and to all those scores of plain scriptures by which those arguments are confirmed.

**[3.] Thirdly,** This opinion that is now under consideration, has a great tendency to harden and strengthen wicked men in their sins; for when they shall hear and read that the saints, the dearly beloved of God, have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins, what inferences will they not be ready to make! "What are these they call *saints*? wherein are they better than us? Have we our beloved sins? so have they. Have we our bosom sins? so have they. Have we our darling sins? so have they.

They have their beloved sins, and yet are beloved of God; and why not us —why not us? Saints have their beloved sins, and yet God is kind to them; and why then not to us, why not to us also? Saints have their beloved sins, and yet God will save them; and why then should we believe that God will damn us? Saints have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins, and therefore certainly they are not to be so dearly loved, and highly prized, and greatly honored as ministers would make us believe. Saints have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins, and therefore it is just to account and call them hypocrites, deceivers, dissemblers, who pretend they have a great deal of love to God, and love to Christ, and love to his word, and love to his ways? and yet for all this they have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins!"

**[4.] Fourthly,** If Christ be really the saints' beloved, then sin is not their beloved. But Christ is the saints' beloved, as I have formerly clearly proved; and therefore sin is not the beloved. A man may as well serve two masters, as have two beloveds—namely, a beloved Christ and a beloved lust.

**[5.] Fifthly,** Those supernatural graces or those divine qualities which are infused into the soul at first conversion, are contrary to all sin, and opposite to all sin, and engage the heart against all sin; and therefore a converted person can have no beloved sin, no bosom sin, no darling sin. Seriously weigh this argument.

**[6.] Sixthly,** This opinion may fill many weak Christians with many needless fears, doubts, and jealousies about their spiritual and eternal conditions. Weak Christians are very apt to reason thus: "Surely my conversion is not sound; my spiritual estate is not good; my heart is not right with God; a saving work has never yet passed upon me in power; I fear I have not the root of the matter in me; I fear I have never had a thorough change; I fear I have never yet been effectually called out of darkness into his marvelous light; I fear I have never yet been espoused to Christ; I fear the Spirit of God has never taken up my heart for his habitation; I fear that after all my high profession I shall at last be found a hypocrite; I fear the execution of that dreadful sentence, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed'—because I carry about with me my besetting sins." Ministers had need be very wary in their preaching and writing,

that they don't bring forth fuel to feed the fears and doubts of weak Christians, it being a great part of their work to arm weak Christians against their fears and faintings. But,

**[7.] Seventhly,** This opinion that is now under consideration, is an opinion that is very repugnant to sound and sincere repentance; for sound, sincere repentance includes and takes in a divorce, an alienation, a detestation, a separation, and a turning from all sin, without exception or reservation.

One of the first works of the Spirit upon the soul, is the dividing between all known sin and the soul; it is a making an utter breach between all sin and the soul; it is a dissolving of that old league which has been between a sinner and his sins, yes, between a sinner and his beloved lusts. One of the first works of the Spirit is to make a man to look upon all his sins as enemies, yes, as his greatest enemies, and to deal with his sins as enemies, and to hate and loathe them as enemies, and to fear them as enemies, and to arm against them as enemies. Seriously ponder upon these scriptures, Ezek. 18:28, 30-31; Ezek. 6; 2 Cor. 7:1; Psalm 119:101, 104, 128.

True repentance is a turning from all sin, without any reservation or exception. He never truly repented of any sin, whose heart is not turned against every sin. The true penitent casts off all the rags of old Adam; he is for throwing down every stone of the old building; he will not leave a horn nor a hoof behind. The reasons of turning from sin are universally binding to a penitent soul. There are the same reasons and grounds for a penitent man's turning from every sin, as there is for his turning from any one sin. Do you turn from this or that sin because the Lord has forbid it? Why upon the same ground you must turn from every sin; for God has forbid every sin as well as this or that particular sin. There is the same authority forbidding or commanding in all; and if the authority of God awes a man from one sin, it will awe him from all. He who turns from any one sin, because it is a transgression of the holy and righteous law of God, he will turn from every sin upon the same account. He who turns from any one sin because it is a dishonor to God, a reproach to Christ, a grief to the Spirit, a wound to religion, etc., will upon the same grounds, turn from every sin.

**QUESTION.** In what does a true penitential turning from all sin consist? Answer, in these six things—

**First,** In the alienation and inward aversion and drawing off of the soul from the **love** and liking of all sin, and from all free and voluntary subjection unto sin—the heart being filled with a loathing and detestation of all sin, [Psalm 119:104, 128,] as that which is most contrary to all goodness and happiness.

**Secondly,** In the **will's** detestation and hatred of all sin. When the very bent and inclination of the will is set against all sin, and opposes and crosses all sin, and is set upon the ruin and destruction of all sin—then the penitent is turned from all sin, Romans 7:15, 19, 21, 23; Isaiah 30:22; Hosea 14:8. When the will stands upon such terms of defiance with all sin, as that it will never enter into a league of friendship with any sin—then is the soul turned from every sin.

**Thirdly,** In the **judgment's** turning away from all sin, by disapproving, disallowing, and condemning all sin, Romans 7:15. "Oh!" says the judgment of a Christian, "sin is the greatest evil in all the world! Sin is the only thing which God abhors! Sin brought Jesus Christ to the cross! Sin damns souls! Sin shuts heaven! Sin has laid the foundations of hell! Oh sin is the pricking thorn in my eye, the deadly arrow in my side, the two-edged sword that has wounded my conscience, and slain my comforts, and separated between God and my soul. Oh! sin is that which has hindered my prayers, and embittered my mercies, and put a sting into all my crosses; and therefore I can't but disapprove of it, and disallow of it, and condemn it to death, yes, to hell, from whence it came.

**Fourthly,** In the **purpose** and resolution of the soul; the soul sincerely purposing and resolving never willingly, willfully, or wickedly to transgress any more, Psalm 17:3. "The general purpose and resolution of my heart is not to transgress. Though particular failings may attend me—yet my resolutions and purposes are firmly set against doing evil." Psalm 39:1. The true penitent holds up his purposes and resolutions to keep off from sin, and to keep close with God, though he be not able in everything and at all times to make good his purposes and resolutions, etc. But,

**Fifthly**, In the earnest and sincere **desires**, and careful **endeavors** of the soul to abandon all sin, to forsake all sin, and to be rid of all sin, Romans 7:22-23. You know when a prudent, tender, kind father sees his child to fail and come short in that which he enjoins him to do—yet knowing that the child's desires and endeavors are to please him, and serve him, he will not be harsh, rigid, sour, or severe towards him—but will spare him, and exercise much tenderness and indulgence towards him. And will God, will God whose mercies reach above the heavens, and whose compassions are infinite, and whose love is like himself, behave worse towards his children, than kind fathers do towards their children? Surely not! God's fatherly indulgence accepts of the *will* for the *work*, Heb. 13:18; 2 Cor. 8:12. Certainly, a sick man is not more desirous to be rid of all his diseases, nor a prisoner to be freed from all his bolts and chains, than the true penitent is desirous to be rid of all his sins.

**Sixthly** and lastly, In the common and ordinary declining, shunning, and avoiding of all known occasions of sin, yes, and all temptations, provocations, inducements, and enticements to sin, etc. That royal law, 1 Thes. 5:22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," is a law that is very precious in a penitent man's eye, and commonly lies warm upon a penitent man's heart; so that take him in his ordinary course, and you shall find him very ready to shun and be shy of the very appearance of sin, of the very shows and shadows of sin. Job made "a covenant with his eyes," Job 31:1; and Joseph would not hearken to his bold tempting mistress, "to lie by her, or to be with her," Gen. 39:10; and David, when himself, would not "sit with vain people," Psalm 26:3-5. Now a true penitential turning from all sins lies in these six things: and therefore you had need look about you; for if there be any one way of wickedness wherein you walk, and which you are resolved you will not forsake, you are no true penitents, and you will certainly lose your souls, and be miserable forever!

**[8.] Eighthly**, This opinion that is now under consideration, is an opinion that will exceedingly deject many precious Christians, and cause them greatly to hang down their heads, especially in four days:

1. In the day of common calamity.

2. In the day of personal affliction.

3. In the day of death.

#### 4. In the great day of account.

**First**, In a day of **common calamity**, when the *sword* is drunk with the blood of the slain, or when the *raging pestilence* lays thousands in heap upon heap, or when plagues and other diseases carry hundreds every week to their long homes. Oh, now the remembrance of a man's beloved sins, his bosom sins, his darling sins—if a saint had any such sins—will be very apt to fill his soul with fears, dreads, and perplexities. "Surely now God will meet with me, now God will avenge himself on me for my beloved sins, my bosom sins, my darling sins! Oh, how righteous a thing is it with God, because of my beloved lusts, to sweep me away by these sweeping judgments which are abroad in the earth!"

On the contrary, how sweet and comfortable a thing is it, when in a day of common calamity, a Christian can appeal to God, and appeal to conscience, that though he has many weaknesses and infirmities which hang upon him—that yet he has no beloved sin, no bosom sin, no darling sin—which either God or conscience can charge upon him. Oh, such a consideration as this may be as life from the dead to a gracious Christian, in the midst of all the common calamities which surround him and which hourly threaten him.

**Secondly**, In the day of **personal afflictions**, when the smarting rod is upon him, and God writes bitter things against him; when the hand of the Almighty has touched him in his name, estate, relations, etc. Oh, now the remembrance of a man's beloved sins, his bosom sins, his darling sins—if a saint had any such sins—will be as "the handwriting upon the wall," Dan 5:5-6, "that will make his countenance to be changed, his thoughts to be troubled, his joints to be loosed, and his knees to be dashed one against another." Oh, now a Christian will be ready to conclude, "Oh, it is my beloved sins, my bosom sins, my darling sins—which have caused God to put this bitter cup into my hand, and which have provoked him to give me gall and wormwood to drink!" Lam. 3:19.

Whereas on the contrary, when a man under all his personal trials, though they are many and great—yet can lift up his head and appeal to God and conscience, that though he has many sinful weaknesses and

infirmities hanging upon him—yet neither God nor conscience can charge upon him any beloved sins, any bosom sins, any darling sins. Oh, such a consideration as this will help a man to bear up bravely, sweetly, cheerfully, patiently, and contentedly, under the heaviest afflicting hand of God, as is evident in that great instance of Job. Who so sorely afflicted as Job? and yet no beloved sin, no bosom sin, no darling sin being chargeable upon him by God or conscience, [Job 10:7, and 31:33,] how bravely, sweetly, and Christianly does Job bear up under those sad changes and dreadful providences that would have broke a thousand of such men's hearts—upon whom God and conscience could charge beloved sins, bosom sins, darling sins! But,

**Thirdly**, In the day of **death**; Death is the king of terrors, as Job speaks; and the "terror of kings," as the philosopher speaks. Oh how terrible will this king of terrors be, to that man upon whom God and conscience can charge beloved sins, bosom sins, darling sins! This is certain, when a wicked man comes to die, all the sins that ever he committed don't so grieve him and terrify him, so sadden him and sink him, and raise such horrors and terrors in him, and put him into such a hell on this side hell—as his beloved sins, his bosom sins, his darling sins! And had saints their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins, ah, what a hell of horror and terror would these sins raise in their souls, when they come to lie upon a dying bed!

But now when a child of God shall lie upon a dying bed, and shall be able to say, "*Lord*, you know, and *conscience* you know—that though I have had many and great failings—yet there are no beloved sins, no bosom sins, no darling sins, which are chargeable upon me! Lord, you know, and conscience you know:

1. That there is no known sin which I don't hate and abhor.
2. That there is no known sin which I don't combat and conflict with.
3. That there is no known sin which I don't grieve and mourn over.
4. That there is no known sin which I would not presently, freely, willingly, and heartily be rid of.

5. That there is no known sin which I don't in some weak measure, endeavor in the use of holy means, to be delivered from.

6. That there is no known sin, the effectual subduing and mortifying of which would not administer matter of the greatest joy and comfort to me!"

Now, when God and conscience shall acquit a man upon a dying bed of beloved sins, of bosom sins, of darling sins, who can express the joy, the comfort, the peace, the support that such an acquittance will fill a man with?

**Fourthly**, In the day of **judgment**, the very thoughts of which day, to many, is more terrible than death itself. Such Christians as are captivated under the power of this opinion, namely—that the saints have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins—such cannot but greatly fear and tremble to appear before the dread tribunal of God. "Oh!" says such poor hearts, "how shall we be able to answer for our beloved sins, our bosom sins, our darling sins. As for infirmities, weaknesses, and follies which have attended us, we can plead with God, and tell him—Lord! when grace has been weak, corruptions strong, temptations great, and your Spirit withdrawn, and we off from our watch—we have been beaten and captivated! But what shall we say as to our beloved sins, our bosom sins, our darling sins? Oh, these fill us with terror and horror, and how shall we be able to hold up our heads before the Lord, when he shall reckon with us for these sins!"

But now when a poor child of God thinks of the day of account, and is able, through grace, to say, "Lord, though we cannot clear ourselves of *infirmities*, and many *sinful weaknesses*—yet we can sincerely appeal to you and our consciences—that we have no beloved sins, no bosom sins, no darling sins!" Oh, with what comfort, confidence, and boldness will such poor hearts hold up their heads in the day of account, when a Christian can plead those six things before a judgment-seat, that he pleaded in the third particular, when he lay upon a dying bed! how will his fears vanish, and how will his hopes and heart revive, and how comfortably and boldly will he stand before a judgment-seat! But,

**[9.] Ninthly,** This opinion that is now under consideration, has a very great tendency to discourage and deaden the hearts of Christians to the most noble and spiritual duties of religion—namely,

1. Praising of God;
2. Delighting in God;
3. Rejoicing in God;
4. Admiring of God;
5. Taking full contentment and satisfaction in God;
6. Witnessing for God, his truth, his ordinances, and ways;
7. To self-trial and self-examination;
8. To the making of their calling and election sure.

I cannot see with what comfort, confidence, or courage such souls can apply themselves to these eight duties—who lie under the power of this opinion, namely, that saints have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins. But now when a Christian is clear, and he can clear himself, as every sincere Christian can, of beloved sins, of bosom sins, of darling sins—how is he upon the advantage ground to fall in roundly with all the eight duties last mentioned! But,

**[10.] Tenthly** and lastly, This opinion that is now under consideration, has a very great tendency to discourage multitudes of Christians from coming to the Lord's table. I would willingly know with what comfort, with what confidence, with what hope, with what expectation of good from God, or of good from the ordinance, can such souls draw near to the Lord's table, who lie under the power of this opinion or persuasion, that they carry about with them their bosom sins, their beloved sins, their darling sins. How can such souls expect that God should meet with them in the ordinance, and bless the ordinance to them? How can such souls expect that God should make that great ordinance to be strengthening, comforting, refreshing, establishing, and enriching unto them? How can

such souls expect, that in that ordinance God should seal up to them his eternal loves, their saving interest in Christ, their right to the covenant, their title to heaven, and the remission of their sins—who bring to his table their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins?

But when the people of God draw near to the table of the Lord, and can appeal to God, that though they have many sinful failings and infirmities hanging upon them—yet they have no beloved sins, no bosom sins, no darling sins that they carry about with them—how comfortably and confidently may they expect that God will make that great ordinance a blessing to them, and that in time all those glorious ends for which that ordinance was appointed shall be accomplished in them, and upon them!

Now, by these ten arguments, you may see the weakness and falseness, yes, the dangerous nature of that opinion that many worthy men have so long preached, maintained, and printed to the world, namely—*That the saints have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins*; neither do I wonder that they should be so sadly out in this particular, when I consider how apt men are to receive things by tradition, without bringing of things to a strict examination; and when I consider what strange definitions of faith many famous, worthy men have given, both in their writings and preachings; and when I consider what a mighty noise many famous men have made about *legal preparations*, before men presume to close with Christ, or to give up themselves in a marriage covenant to Christ—most of them requiring men to be better Christians before they come to Christ, than commonly they prove after they are implanted into Christ, etc.

Now, though I have said enough, I suppose, to lay that opinion asleep that has been last under consideration, namely, That the saints have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins—yet for a close of this discourse, premise with me these five things:

**[1.] First,** That all unconverted people have their beloved sins, their bosom sins, their darling sins. The beloved, the bosom, the darling sin of the *Jews* was idolatry. The beloved, the bosom, the darling sin of the *Corinthians* was uncleanness, wantonness, 1 Cor. 6:15, 20. The beloved, the bosom, the darling sin of the *Cretans* was lying, Titus 2:12.

*Jeroboam's* beloved sin was idolatry, and *Cain's* beloved sin was envy, and *Korah's* beloved sin was gainsaying, and *Esau's* beloved sin was profaneness, and *Ishmael's* beloved sin was scoffing, and *Balaam's* beloved sin was ambition; *Simeon* and *Levi's* beloved sin was treachery, *Manasseh's* beloved sin was cruelty, and *Nebuchadnezzar's* beloved sin was pride, and *Herod's* beloved sin was uncleanness, and *Judas'* beloved sin was covetousness, and the young man's beloved sin in that 19th chapter of Matthew was worldly-mindedness, etc.

**[2.] Secondly,** Premise this with me, that the elect of God, before their conversion, had their beloved sins. *Manasseh's* beloved sin was cruelty; and *Ephraim's* beloved sin, before conversion, was idolatry, Hosea 4:17; and *Zaccheus'* beloved sin before conversion was worldly-mindedness and defrauding of others; and *Paul's* beloved sin, before conversion, was persecution; and the *jailer's* beloved sin, before conversion, was cruelty; and *Mary Magdalene's* beloved sin, before conversion, was wantonness and uncleanness, etc.

**[3.] Thirdly,** Premise this with me, namely, that after conversion there is no sin that the heart of a Christian is more seriously, more frequently, more resolutely, and more totally set against, than that which was once his beloved lust. The hatred, detestation, and indignation of a converted person breaks out and discovers itself most against that sin—which was once a beloved sin, a bosom sin, a darling sin. His care, his fear, his jealousy, his watchfulness is most exercised against that sin which was once the darling of his soul. The converted person eyes this sin as an old enemy; he looks upon this sin as the sin by which God has been most dishonored, and his own conscience most enslaved, and his immortal soul most endangered, and Satan most advantaged, and accordingly his spirit rises against it, Hosea 14:8; Isaiah 2:20, and 30:22. And all Christians' experience confirms this truth—but of this more before.

**[4.] Fourthly,** After conversion, a Christian endeavors to be most eminent in that particular grace which is most contrary and opposite to that sin which was once his beloved sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin. *Zaccheus'* beloved sin was worldliness and defrauding—but, being converted, he labors to excel in restitution and liberality. The *jailer's* beloved sin was severity and cruelty—but, being converted, he labors to

excel in pity and courtesy. *Paul's* beloved sin was persecution—but, being converted, how mightily does he bestir himself to convert souls, and to edify souls, and to build up souls, and to strengthen souls, and to establish souls, and to encourage souls in the ways of the Lord—he gives it you under his own hand, "That he labored more abundantly than they all," 2 Cor. 11:23. *Augustine's* beloved sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin, before his conversion, was wantonness and uncleanness—but, when he was converted, he was most careful and watchful to arm against that sin, and to avoid all temptations and occasions that might lead him to it afterwards.

If a man's beloved sin, before conversion, has been *worldliness*—then after conversion he will labor above all to excel in heavenly-mindedness. Or if his sin, his beloved sin, has been *pride*—then he will labor above all to excel in humility. Or if his beloved sin has been *intemperance*—then he will labor above all to excel in temperance and sobriety. Or if his beloved sin has been *wantonness* and *uncleanness*—then he will labor above all to excel in all chastity and purity. Or if his beloved sin has been *oppressing* of others—then he will labor above all to excel in piety and compassion towards others. Or if his beloved sin has been *hypocrisy*—then he will labor above all to excel in sincerity, etc. But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** Though no godly man, though no sincere gracious Christian has any beloved sin, and bosom, darling sin—yet there is no godly man, there is no sincere gracious soul—but has some sin or other to which they are more prone than to others. Every real Christian has his inclination towards one kind of sin rather than another—which may be called his special besetting sin, his peculiar sin, or *his own iniquity*, as David speaks in Psalm 18:23. Now the main power of grace and of uprightness, is mainly seen and exercised in a man's keeping of himself from his iniquity. Now that special, that besetting, that peculiar sin, to which a gracious soul may be most prone and addicted to, may arise—

**1. From the temperament and constitution of his body.** The complexion and constitution of a man's body may be a more prepared instrument for one vice rather than another; or,

**2. It may arise from his particular calling.** Christians have distinct

and particular callings that incline them to particular sins. For instance, the soldier's calling puts him upon rapine and violence: Luke 3:14, "Do violence to no man." And the tradesman's calling puts him upon lying, deceiving, defrauding, and overreaching his brother. And the minister's calling puts him upon flattering of the rich and great ones of his parish, and upon pleasing the rest by speaking of smooth things, Isaiah 30:10, "and by sewing of pillows under their elbows," Ezek. 13:18, 20. And the magistrates', judges', and justices' employments lays them open to oppression, bribery, injustice, etc. If Christians are not very much upon their watch, their very callings and offices may prove a very great snare to their souls; or,

**3. It may arise from his outward state and condition in this world,** whether his state be a state of prosperity or a state of adversity, or whether he be in a marriage state or in a single state. Many times a man's outward state and condition in this world has a strong influence upon him to incline him to this or that particular sin, as best suiting with his condition; or,

**4. It may arise from distinct and peculiar ages;** for it is certain that distinct and peculiar ages do strongly incline people to distinct and peculiar sins. *Youth* inclines to wantonness and prodigality; and *manhood* inclines to pride and ambition; and *old age* inclines to covetousness and irritability. Common experience tells us that many times sexual immorality is the sinner's darling in the time of his youth, and worldliness his darling in the time of his mature age; and without controversy, Christians' distinct and peculiar ages may more strongly incline them to this or that sin rather than any other; or,

**5. It may arise from that distinct and particular way of breeding and education which he has had.**

Now to arm such Christians against their special sins, their peculiar sins—whose sins are advantaged against them, either by their constitutions and complexion, or else by their particular calling, or else by their outward state and condition, or else by their distinct and peculiar ages, or else by their particular way of breeding and education—is my present work and business; for though the **reigning** power of this or that special

peculiar sin be broken in a man's conversion—yet the **remaining** life and strength which is still left in those corruptions, will by Satan be improved against the growth, peace, comfort, and assurance of the soul. Satan will strive to enter in at the same door; and by the same Delilah, by which he has betrayed and wounded the soul, he will do all he can, to do the soul a further mischief. Satan will be still a-reminding of the soul of those former sweets, pleasures, profits, delights, and contentments which have come in upon the old score, so that it will be a hard thing, even for a godly man, to keep himself from his iniquity, from his special or besetting, or peculiar sin, which the fathers commonly call, though not truly, a man's special darling and beloved sin.

Well, Christians, remember this once for all, namely—that sound conversion includes a noble and serious revenge upon that sin which was once a man's beloved, bosom, darling sin: 2 Cor. 7:11, "Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm." You see this in Cranmer, who when he had subscribed with his *right hand* to that which was against his conscience, he afterwards, as a holy revenge, put that right hand into the flames. Just so, Mary Magdalene takes that hair of hers. "Of all sins," says the sound convert, "I am resolved to be avenged on my once beloved, bosom, darling sins, by which I have most dishonored God, and wronged my own precious and immortal soul, and by which I have most endangered my everlasting estate."

Having thus cleared up my way, I shall now endeavor to lay before you **some special remedies, means, or helps against cherishing or keeping up of any special or peculiar sin**, either in heart or life, against the Lord, or against the light and conviction of a man's own conscience.

**1. First, Cherishing or keeping up of any special or peculiar sin, either in heart or life, against the Lord, or against the light and conviction of a man's own conscience, will hinder assurance these several ways—**

**[1.] First, The cherishing of any special peculiar sin—will abate the degrees of our graces, and so make them less discernible.**

Now grace rather in its *degrees* than in its *sincerity*, or simple being only—is that which gives the clearest evidence of a gracious estate, or of a man's interest in Christ. Sin, lived in, is like a blight to the tree, which destroys the fruit. *Grace cannot thrive in a sinful heart.* In some soil, plants will not grow. The cherishing of sin—is the withering of grace. The casting of a favorable eye on any one special sin hinders the growth of grace. If a man has a choice plant or flower in his garden, and it withers and shrivels and is dying, he opens the ground and looks at the root, and there finds a worm gnawing the root; and this is the cause of the flower's fading—the application is easy.

**[2.] Secondly, The cherishing of any special peculiar sin—will hinder the lively actings and exercise of grace;** it will keep grace dormant, so that it will hardly be seen to stir or act; yes, it will keep grace so repressed, that it will hardly be heard to speak. When a special or peculiar sin is entertained, it will exceedingly mar the vigorous exercises of those graces which are the evidences of a lively faith, and of a gracious state, and of a man's interest in Christ. Grace is never apparent and sensible to the soul—but while it is in action; therefore lack of action must needs cause lack of assurance. Habits are not felt—but by the freeness and facility of their acts. Of the very being of the soul itself, nothing is felt or perceived—but only its acts. The fire that lies still in the flint, is neither seen nor felt—but when you smite it and force it into act, it is easily discernible. For the most part, so long as a Christian has his graces in lively action—just so long he is assured of them. He who would be assured that this sacred fire of grace is in his heart, he must blow it up and get it into a flame. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, The cherishing of any special sin—so blears, dims, and darkens the eye of the soul, that it cannot see its own condition,** nor have any clear knowledge of its gracious state, or of its interest in Christ, etc. Sometimes men in riding raise such a dust that they can neither see themselves nor their dearest friends, so as to distinguish one from another—the application is easy. The room sometimes is so full of smoke that a man cannot see the jewels, the treasures which lie before him; so it is here. But,

**[4.] Fourthly, the cherishing of any special or peculiar sin—**

**provokes the Lord to withdraw himself, his comforts, and the gracious presence and assistance of his blessed Spirit;** without which presence and assistance the soul may search and seek long enough for assurance, comfort, and a sight of a man's interest in Christ, before it will enjoy the one or see the other. If by keeping up of any known transgression against the Lord, you set the Holy Spirit a-mourning, who alone can comfort you, and assure you of your interest in Christ, you may walk long enough without comfort and assurance, Lam 1:16. "The Comforter who should relieve my soul, is far from me;" so in that 1 John 3:21, it is supposed that a self-condemning heart makes void a man's confidence before God.

The precious jewel of faith can be held in no other place—but in a pure conscience; which is the only royal palace wherein it must and will dwell: 1 Tim, 1:19, "Holding faith and a good conscience:" Heb. 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." He who comes to God with a true, honest, upright heart, being sprinkled from an evil conscience, may draw near to God in full assurance of faith. Whereas guilt clouds, clogs, and distracts the soul, that it can never be with God, either as it would or as it should. A good conscience has sure confidence. Conscience is a thousand witnesses for or against a man. **Conscience is God's preacher in the bosom.** It is better, with Evagrius, to lie secure on a bed of straw—than to have a turbulent conscience on a bed of down. It was a divine saying of Seneca, a heathen, namely, "That if there were no God to punish him, no devil to torment him, no hell to burn him, no man to see him—yet would he not sin, for the ugliness of sin, and the grief of his own conscience." But,

**[5.] Fifthly, The cherishing of any special peculiar sin—will greatly hinder his high esteem and reputation of Jesus Christ,** and so it will keep him from comfort and assurance of his interest in him, so that sometimes his dearest children are constrained to cry out, "God has departed from me, and he answers me not, neither by dream nor vision, neither this way nor that," 1 Sam. 28:15. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, The greatest and most common cause of the lack of assurance, comfort, and peace—is some unmortified lust, some**

**secret, special, peculiar sin, unto which men give entertainment; or at least, which they do not so vigorously oppose, and heartily renounce as they should and might.** This is that which casts them on sore straits and difficulties. And how should it be otherwise, seeing God, who is infinitely wise, holy, and righteous, either cannot or will not reveal the secrets of his love to those who harbor his known enemies in their bosoms? The great God either cannot, or will not, regard the whinings and complainings of those who play or dally with that very sin which galls their consciences; and who connive and wink at the stirrings and workings of that very lust for which he hides his face from them, and writes "bitter things against them."

Mark, all fears and doubts and scruples are begotten upon sin—either real or imaginary. Now, if the sin is but imaginary, an enlightened rectified judgment may easily and quickly scatter such fears, doubts, and scruples, as the sun does mists and clouds, when it shines in its brightness. But if the sin is real, then there is no possibility of curing those fears, doubts, and scruples arising from thence—but by an unfeigned repentance and returning from that sin. Now, if I should produce all the scriptures and instances that stand ready pressed to prove this, I must transcribe a good part of the Bible—but this would be labor in vain, seeing it seems to have been a notion engraved even on natural conscience, namely, that sin so defiles people, that until they are washed from it, neither they nor their services can be accepted; from whence arose that custom of setting water-pots at their entrance into their temples or places of worship.

Let him who lacks assurance, comfort, peace, and a sight of his interest in Christ, cast out every known sin, and set upon a universal course of reformation; for God will not give his cordials to those who have a foul stomach. Those who, against light and checks of conscience, dally and tamper with this sin or that sin, those God will have no commerce, no communion with; on such God will not lift up the light of his countenance: Rev. 2:17, "To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in that stone, a new name written." These are all metaphorical expressions, which, being put together, do amount to as much as assurance—but mark, these are promised, "to him who overcomes," to him who rides on conquering and

to conquer.

Oh, that Christians would seriously remember this! The dearer it cost anyone to part with his sins, the more sweet and comfortable will it be to call to mind the victory that through the Spirit of grace he has gotten over his sins. There is no comfort, joy, or peace, compared to that which arises from the conquests of sin, especially of special sins. When Goliath was slain, what joy and triumph was there in the camp! So here.

**[7.] Seventhly, Cherishing of any special or peculiar sin—will hinder the soul from that warm, lively, fervent, frequent, seasonable, sincere, and constant way of duty,** as contributes most to the increase of grace, peace, comfort, and assurance, etc.

**[8.] Eighthly, Seriously consider of the several assertions and concurrent judgments of our best and most famous divines in the present case.** I shall give you a taste of some of their sayings.

1. "A man," says one, "can have no peace in his conscience—who favors and retains any one sin in himself against his conscience."

2. Another says, "A man is in a damnable state, whatever good deeds seem to be in him—if he yields not to the work of the Holy Spirit for the leaving but of any one known sin which fights against peace of conscience." But,

3. "So long," says another, "as the power of mortification destroys your sinful affections, and so long as you are sincerely displeased with all sin, and do mortify the deeds of the body by the Spirit—your case is the case of salvation." But,

4. Another says, "A good conscience stands not with a *purpose of sinning*, no, not with irresolution against sin." This must be understood of habitual purposes, and of a constant irresolution against sin.

5. "The rich and precious box of a good conscience," says another, "is polluted and made impure, if but one dead fly is allowed in it. One sin being quietly permitted, and allowed to live in the soul without being

disturbed, resisted, resolved against, or lamented over, will certainly mar the peace of a good conscience."

6. "Where there is but any one sin," says another, "nourished and fostered, all other our graces are not only blemished—but abolished; they are no graces."

7. Most true is that saying of Aquinas, "All sins are coupled together, so that he who looks but towards one sin is as much averted and turned back from God as if he looked to all; in which respect James says, 'He who offends in one, is guilty of all,' James 2:10." Now, that you may not mistake Aquinas, nor the scripture he cites, you must remember that the whole law is but one whole, Exod. 16:18; Ezek. 18:10-13. Mark, he who breaks one command habitually, breaks all; not so actually. Such as are truly godly in respect of the habitual desires, purposes, bents, biases, inclinations, resolutions, and endeavors of their souls—do keep those very commands that actually they daily break. But a dispensatory conscience keeps not any one commandment of God. He who willingly and willfully and habitually gives himself liberty to break any one commandment, is guilty of all; that is, 1. Either he breaks the chain of duties, and so breaks all the law, being a whole; or, 2. With the same disposition of heart, that he willingly, willfully, habitually breaks one commandment, with the same disposition of heart he is ready pressed to break all. The apostle's meaning in that James 2:10, is certainly this, namely, that suppose a man should keep the whole law for substance, except in some one particular—yet by allowing of himself in this particular, thereby he manifests that he kept no precept of the law in obedience and conscience unto God; for if he did, then he would be careful to keep every precept. Thus much the words following import, and hereby he manifests that he is guilty of all. Some others conceive that therefore such a one may be said to be guilty of all, because by allowing of himself in any one sin, thereby he lies under that curse which is threatened against the transgressors of the law, Deut. 27:26.

8. "Every Christian should carry in his heart," says another, "a constant and resolute purpose not to sin in anything; for faith and the purpose of sinning can never stand together." This must be understood of a habitual, not actual; of a constant, not transient purpose. But,

9. "One flaw in a diamond," says another, "takes away the luster and the price." One puddle, if we wallow in it, will defile us. Just so, one sin lived in, and allowed, may make a man miserable forever. But,

10. One wrong turn, may bring a man quite out of the way. One act of treason makes a traitor. Gideon had seventy sons—but one bastard, and yet that one bastard destroyed all the rest, Judg. 8:31. "One sin, lived in and allowed, may destroy much good," says another.

11. "He who favors one sin, though he forego many, does but as Benhadad, recover of one disease and die of another; yes, he does but take pains to go to hell," says another.

12. "Satan, by one lie to our first parents, made fruitless what God himself had preached to them immediately before," says another.

13. A man may, by one short act of sin, bring a long curse upon himself and his posterity, as Ham did when he saw his father Noah drunk: Gen. 9:24-25, "And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him, and he said, Cursed is Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." Canaan was Ham's son. Noah, as God's mouth, prophesied a curse upon the son for his father's sin. Here Ham is cursed in his son Canaan, and the curse entailed not only to Canaan—but to his posterity. Noah prophesies a long series and chain of curses upon Canaan and his children. He makes the curse hereditary to the name and nation of the Canaanites: "A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren," that is, the vilest and basest servant; for the Hebrew expresses the superlative degree by such a duplication as "vanity of vanities;" that is, most vain; a "song of songs;" that is, a most excellent song. Just so, here, "a servant of servants;" that is, the vilest, the basest servant. Ah, heavy and prodigious curse, upon the account of one sin! But,

14. Satan can be content that men should yield to God in many things, provided that they will be but true to him in some one thing; for he knows very well, that as one grain of poison may poison a man, and one stab at the heart may kill a man; so one sin unrepented of, one sin allowed,

retained, cherished, and practiced, will certainly damn a man. But,

15. Though all the parts of a man's body are healthy, except only one, that one diseased and ulcerous part may be deadly to you; for all the sound members cannot preserve your life—but that one diseased and ulcerous member will hasten your death; so one sin allowed, indulged, and lived in, will prove killing and damning to you.

16. "Observe," says another, "that an unmortified sin allowed and willfully retained, will eat out all appearance of virtue and piety. Herod's high esteem of John and his ministry, and his reverencing of him and listening to him, and his performance of many good things, are all given over and laid aside at the instance and command of his master-sin, his reigning sin. John's head must go for it—if he won't let Herod enjoy his Herodias quietly." But,

17. Some will leave all their sins but one; Jacob would let all his sons go but Benjamin. Satan can hold a man fast enough by one sin which he allows and lives in, as the fowler can hold the bird fast enough by one wing or by one claw.

18. Holy Polycarp, in the time of persecution, when he was commanded but to swear one oath, he made this answer: "Eighty-six years have I endeavored to do God service, and all this while he never hurt me; how then can I speak evil of so good a Lord and Master who has thus long preserved me! I am a Christian, and cannot swear; let heathens and infidels swear if they will, I cannot do it, were it to the saving of my life."

19. A willing and a willful keeping up, either in heart or life, any known transgression against the Lord, is a breach of the holy law of God; it is a fighting against the honor and glory of God, and is a reproach to the eye of God, the omnipresence of God.

20. The keeping up of any known transgression against the Lord may endanger the souls of others, and may be found a-fighting against all the cries, prayers, tears, promises, vows, and covenants that you have made to God, when you have been upon a sick-bed, or in eminent dangers, or near death; or else when you have been in solemn seeking of the Lord,

either alone or with others. These things should be frequently and seriously thought of, by such poor fools as are entangled by any lust.

21. The keeping up of any known transgression against the Lord, either in heart or life, is a high tempting of Satan to tempt the soul; it will also greatly unfit the soul for all sorts of duties and services that he either owes to God, to himself, or others; it will also put a sting into all a man's troubles, afflictions, and distresses; it will also lay a foundation for despair; and it will make death, which is the king of terrors, and the terror of kings—to be very terrible to the soul.

22. The keeping up of any known transgression against the Lord, either in heart or life, will fight against all those patterns and examples in Holy Writ—who in duty and honor we are bound to imitate and follow. Pray, where do you find in any of the blessed Scriptures, that any of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, or saints are ever charged with a willing or a wilful keeping up, either in their hearts or lives, any known transgression against the Lord?

23. The keeping up of any known transgression against the Lord will highly hinder against all clear, sweet, and standing communion with God. Parents do not smile at their children, nor keep up any intimate communion with them—while they persist in disobedience. It is so here.

24. The keeping up, either in heart or life, of any known transgression against the Lord, will fight against the continual joy, peace, comfort, and assurance of the soul. Joy in the Holy Spirit will make its nest nowhere, but in a holy soul. Just so far as the Spirit is grieved, he will suspend his consolations, Lam. 1:16. A man will have no more comfort from God, than he makes conscience of sinning against God. A conscience good in point of integrity, will be good also in point of tranquility. "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God," Acts 24:16. Oh, what comfort and solace has a clear conscience! he has something within to answer accusations without.

I shall conclude this particular with a notable saying of Bernard, "The joys of a good conscience are the paradise of souls, the delight of angels, the garden of delights, the field of blessing, the temple of Solomon, the

court of God, the habitation of the Spirit."

25. The keeping up of any known transgression, either in heart or life, against the Lord, is a high contempt of the all-seeing eye of God, of the omnipresence of God. It is well known what Ahasuerus, that great monarch, said concerning Haman, when coming in, he found him cast upon the queen's bed on which she sat; "What!" says he, "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes?" Esther 7:8. There was the killing emphasis in the words, "before my very eyes!" What! will he dare to commit such a villainy—as I stand and look on? O sirs! to do wickedly in the sight of God, is a thing that he looks upon as the greatest affront and indignity that can possibly be done unto him. "What!" says he, "Will you be drunk before me, and swear and blaspheme before me, and be wanton and unclean before me, and break my laws before my eyes!" This, then, is the killing aggravation of all sin—that is done before the face of God, in the presence of God! The very consideration of God's omnipresence, that he stands and looks on, should be as a bar, to stop the proceedings of all wicked intensions, and a great dissuasive from sin.

It was an excellent saying of Ambrose, "If you can not hide yourself from the sun, which is God's minister of light, how impossible will it be to hide yourself from him whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun." God's eye is the best marshal to keep the soul in a lovely order. Let your eye be ever on him whose eye is ever on you. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," Proverbs 15:9. There is no drawing of a curtain between God and you. God is all eye; he sees all things, in all places, and at all times. When you are in secret, consider conscience is present, which is more than a thousand witnesses; and God is present, which is more than a thousand consciences.

One had his chamber painted full of eyes, that which way soever he looked he might still have some eyes upon him; and he fancying, according to the moralist's advice, always under the eye of a keeper, might be the more careful of his behavior. O sirs! if the eyes of men make even the vilest to forbear their beloved lusts for a while, that the adulterer watches for the twilight, and "they who are drunken are drunken in the night," how powerful will the eye and presence of God be with those who

fear his anger and know the sweetness of his favor! The thought of this omnipresence of God will affrighten you from sin.

Gehazi dared not ask or receive any part of Naaman's presents in his master's presence—but when he had got out of Elisha's sight, then he tells his lie, and gives way to his lusts. Men never sin more freely than when they presume upon *secrecy*; "They break in pieces your people, O Lord, and afflict your heritage. They slay the widow and stranger, and murder the fatherless," yet they say, "The Lord does not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it," Psalm 94:5-7. Those who abounded in abominations said, "The Lord sees us not, the Lord has forsaken the earth," Ezek. 8:9, 12. The godly man is dissuaded from wickedness, upon the consideration of God's eye and omniscience. "And why will you, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger; for the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his goings," Proverbs 5:20-21.

*Joseph* saw God in the room, and therefore dared not yield to lust. But *Potiphar's wife* saw none but Joseph, and so was impudently alluring and tempting him to immorality.

I have read of two pious men who took contrary courses with two harlots, whom they were desirous to reclaim from their wicked course of life.

One of the men told one of the women, that he was desirous to enjoy her company in secret. After she had brought him into a private room, and locked the door, he told her, "All your bars and bolts cannot keep God out!"

The other pious man asked the other harlot to be unchaste with him openly in the streets--which she rejected as an insane request. He then told her, "It was better to do it before the eyes of a crowd--than before the eyes of the all-seeing God!"

Oh, why shall not the presence of that God who hates sin, and who is resolved to punish it with hell-flames, make us ashamed or afraid to sin, and dare him to his face!

26. There have been many a prodigal, who, by one cast of the dice, have lost a fair inheritance. A man may be killed with one stab of a penknife; one hole in a ship may sink it; one thief may rob a man of all he has in the world. A man may escape many gross sins, and yet, by living in the allowance of some one sin, be deprived of the glory of heaven forever. Moses came within the sight of Canaan—but for one sin—not sanctifying God's name—he was shut out. And no less will it be to any man who, for living in any one sin, shall be forever shut out of the kingdom of heaven; not but that there may be some remainders of sin, and yet the heart taken off from every sin—but if there be any secret closing with any one way of sin, all the profession of godliness and leaving all other sins will be to no purpose, nor ever bring a man to happiness.

27. As the philosopher says, a cup or some such thing that has a hole in it is no cup; it will hold nothing, and therefore cannot perform the use of a cup, though it have but one hole in it. Just so, if the heart has but one hole in it, if it retains the devil but in one thing, if it makes choice but of any one sin to lie and wallow in, and tumble in, it does evacuate all the other good, by the entertainment of that one sin. The whole box of ointment will be spoiled by the dropping of that one fly into it. In the state of grace, no man can have a full interest in Christ until all reigning, domineering sin, is rooted out.

Thus you see the concurrent judgments of our most famous divines, against men's allowing, indulging, or retaining any one known sin against their light and consciences.

But that these sayings of theirs may lie in more weight and power upon every poor soul that is entangled with any base lusts, be pleased seriously and frequently to consider of these following particulars—

**[1.] First, It is to no purpose for a man to turn from some sins, if he does not turn from all his sins.** James 1:26. "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." This, at first sight, may seem to be a hard saying, that for one fault, for one fault in the tongue, all a man's religion should be counted vain—and yet this, you see, the Holy Spirit does peremptorily conclude. Let a man make ever so

glorious a profession of religion—yet, if he gives himself liberty to live in the practice of any known sin, yes, though it be but in a sin of the tongue, his religion is in worthless, and that one sin will separate him from God forever. If a wife be ever so submissive to her husband in many things—yet if she entertains any other lover into his bed besides himself, it will forever alienate his affections from her, and make an everlasting separation between them. The application is easy.

To turn from one sin to another sin—is but to be tossed from one hand of the devil to another; it is but, with Benhadad, to recover of one disease and die of another; it is but to take pains to go to hell. If a ship spring three leaks, and only two be stopped, the third will sink the ship; or if a man has two grievous wounds in his body, and takes order only to cure one, that which is neglected will certainly kill him. It is so here. Herod, Judas, and Saul, with the scribes and Pharisees, have for many hundred years experienced this truth. But,

**[2.] Secondly, Partial obedience is not true obedience. It is only universal obedience, which is true obedience.** Exod. 24:7, "All that the Lord has said—will we do, and be obedient." Those only are indeed obedient—who have a desire to do all that is commanded; for to obey is to do that which is commanded, because it is commanded. Though the thing done is commanded—yet if it be not therefore done *because* it is commanded, it is not genuine obedience. Now, if this is the nature of obedience, then where obedience is genuine, it is not partial—but universal; for he who does any one thing that is commanded because it is commanded, he will be careful to do everything that is commanded, there being the same reason for all. Those who are only for a partial obedience, they do break asunder the bond and reason of all obedience; for all obedience is to be founded upon the authority and will of God, because God, who has authority over all his creatures, does will and command us to obey his voice, to walk in his statutes. For this very reason do we stand bound to obey him; and if we do obey him upon this reason, then must we walk in all his statutes, for so has he commanded us. And if we will not come up to this—but will walk in only those statutes of his we please, then do we renounce his will as the obliging reason of our obedience, and do set up our own liking and pleasure as the reason thereof.

God has so connected the duties of his law one to another, that if there is not a conscientious care to walk according to all that the law requires, a man becomes a transgressor of the whole law; according to James 2:10, "Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." The bond of all is broken, the authority of all is slighted, and that evil disposition, that sinful frame of heart, that works a man to venture upon the breach of one command, would make him venture upon the breach of any command, were it not for some infirmity of nature, or because his purse will not hold out to maintain it, or for shame, or loss, or because of the eyes of friends, or the sword of the magistrate, or for some other sinister respects. He who gives himself liberty to live in the breach of any one command of God, is qualified with a disposition of heart to break them all.

Every single sin contains virtually all sin in it. He who allows himself a liberty to live in the breach of any one particular law of God, he casts contempt and scorn upon the authority that made the whole law, and upon this account breaks it all. And the apostle gives the reason of it in verse 11; for he who said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." Now, if you commit no adultery—yet if you kill, you have become a transgressor of the law; not that he is guilty of all individually—but collectively; for the law is a whole, there is a chain of duties, and these are all so linked one to another, that you cannot break one link of the chain—but you break the whole chain. No man can live in the breach of any known command of God—but he wrongs every command of God. He has no real regard to any of the commandments of God, who has not a regard to all the commandments of God. There is one and the same lawgiver in respect of all the commandments; he who gave one command gave also another. Therefore he who observes one commandment in obedience unto God, whose commandment it is, he will observe all, because all are his commandments; and he who slightes one commandment is guilty of all, because he despises the authority of him who gave them all. Even in those commandments which he does observe, he has no respect to the will and authority of him who gave them; therefore, as Calvin does well observe upon James 2:10-11, "That there is no obedience towards God, where there is not a uniform endeavor to please God, as well in one thing as in another."

**[3.] Thirdly, Partial obedience tends to plain atheism;** for by the same reason that you slight the will of God in any commandment, by the same reason you may despise his will in every commandment; for every commandment of God is his will, and it is "holy, spiritual, just, and good," Romans 7:12, 14, and contrary to our sinful lusts. And if this is the reason why such and such commandments of God don't hold sway over you, then by the same reason none of them must be of authority with you.

**[4.] Fourthly, God requires universal obedience:** Deut. 5:33, etc., and 10:12, and 11:21-22, etc.; and Jer. 7:23, "Walk in *all* the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you;" Mat. 28:20, "Teaching them to observe *all* things that I have commanded you," etc.

**[5.] Fifthly, Partial obedience is an audacious charge against God himself, as to his wisdom, or power, or goodness;** for those statutes of God which you will not obey—either they are as righteous as the rest, and as holy as the rest, and as spiritual as the rest, and as good as the rest—or they are not. If they are as holy, spiritual, just, righteous, and good as the rest—why should you not walk in them as well as in the rest? To say they are not as holy, spiritual, righteous, etc., as the rest—Oh what a blasphemous charge is this against God himself, in prescribing unto him anything that is not righteous and good, etc., and likewise in making his will, which is the rule of all righteousness and goodness—to be partly righteous and partly unrighteous—to be partly good and partly bad.

**[6.] Sixthly, God delights in universal obedience, and in those who perform it:** Deut. 5:29, "that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep *all* my commandments always." Upon this account Abraham is called the friend of God in Scripture three times, Isaiah 41:8; 2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:3. And upon the very same account God called David "a man after his own heart:" Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who shall fulfill all my will,"—or, all my wills, to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience.

**[7.] Seventhly, There is not any one statute of God but it is good and for our good;** consequently, we should walk in all his statutes:

Deut. 5:25, "You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may be well with you." What one path has the Lord commanded us to walk in—but as it concerns his own glory, so likewise it concerns our good?

Is it not good for us to love the Lord, and to set him up as the object of our fear, and to act faith on him, and to worship him in spirit and in truth, and to be tender of his glory, and to sanctify his day, and to keep off from sin, and to keep close to his ways? But,

**[8.] Eighthly, Universal obedience is the condition upon which the promise of mercy and salvation runs:** Ezek. 18:21, "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all his statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die."

**[9.] Ninthly, Our hearts must be perfect with the Lord our God:** Deut. 18:13, "You shall be perfect with the Lord your God;" and Gen. 17:1, "Walk before me, and be perfect." Now, how can our hearts be said to be perfect with God—if we do equivocate with him; if in some things we obey him—and in other things we will not obey him; if we walk in some of his statutes—but will not walk in all his statutes; if in some parts we will be his servants—and in another parts of our lives we will be the servants of sin. But,

**[10.] Tenthly, If the heart be sound and upright, it will yield entire and universal obedience:** Psalm 119:80, "Let my heart be sound in your statutes, that I may not be ashamed;" and verse 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all your commandments." By these verses, compared together, it appears that the heart is sound and sincere—when a man has respect unto all God's commandments. Without a universal obedience, a man can never have that "hope which makes not ashamed." But,

**[11.] Eleventhly, Either we must endeavor to walk in all the statutes of God, or else we must find some dispensation or toleration from God to free us, and excuse us, though we do not walk in all of them.** Now, what one commandment is there from

obedience whereunto, God excuses any man, or will not punish him for the neglect of obedience unto it? The apostle says, "That whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," James 2:10. If he equivocates with God, as to any one particular commandment of his, his heart is bad; he is guilty of all, he has really no regard of any of the rest of God's laws. But,

**[12.] Twelfthly, The precious saints and servants of God, whose examples are recorded, and set forth for our imitation, they have been very careful to perform universal obedience.** You see it in *Abraham*, who was ready to comply with God in all his royal commands. When God commanded him to leave his country, and his father's house, he did it, Gen. 12. When God commanded him to be circumcised, though it were both shameful and painful, he submitted unto it, Gen. 17. When God commanded him to send away his son Ishmael, though when Sarah spoke to him about it, the thing seemed very grievous unto him—yet as soon as he saw it to be the will of God, he was obedient unto it, Gen. 21. When God commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac, his only son, the son of his old age, the son of the promise, the son of his delight; yes, that son from whom was to proceed that Jesus in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and though all this might seem to cross both nature and grace, both reason and religion—yet Abraham was willing to obey God in this also, and to do what he commanded, Gen. 22. Just so, *David* was "a man after God's own heart," who fulfilled all his wills, as the original runs in Acts 13:22. And it is said of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, etc., Luke 1:6; 1 Thes. 2:10, "You are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you who believe."

**[13.] Thirteenthly, Universal obedience speaks out the strength of our love to Christ, and the reality of our friendship with Christ,** John 15:14, "You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you." That child shows most love to his father—who observes all his precepts; and that servant shows most love to his master—who observes all his master's commands; and that wife shows most love to her husband—who observes all he requires in the Lord. Just so, here, etc.

**[14.] Fourteenthly, Universal obedience will give most peace, rest, quiet, and comfort to the conscience.** Such a Christian will be as an eye that has no mote to trouble it; as a kingdom that has no rebel to annoy it; as a ship that has no leak to disturb it: Psalm 119:165, "Abundant peace belongs to those who love Your instruction; nothing makes them stumble." But,

**[15.] Fifteenthly, Man's holiness must be conformable to God's holiness:** Eph. 5:1-2, "Be followers of God as dear children;" Mat. 5:48, "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Now "God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works," and so ought all to desire and endeavor to be—who would be saved: 1 Pet. 1:15-16, "But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God—who chose you to be his children—is holy. For he himself has said—You must be holy because I am holy." But,

**[16.] Sixteenthly, The holiness of a Christian must be conformable to the holiness of Christ,** "Be followers of me, as I am of Christ," 1 Cor. 11:1. Now Christ was holy in all things. "It behooves us," said he, "to fulfill all righteousness." And this should be the care of everyone who professes himself to be Christ's, to endeavor "to be holy as Christ was holy." 1 John 2:6, "He who says he abides in him, ought himself to walk even as he walked." But,

**[17.] Seventeenthly, Servants must obey their earthly masters, not in some things only—but in all things which are just and lawful:** Titus 2:9, "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things." What master will be content that his servant should choose how far forth he will observe and do those things which he does require of him? Much less may we think that such arbitrary and partial performances will please that God, who is our heavenly Master.

**[18.] Eighteenthly, The promises of mercy, both spiritual and temporal, are made over to universal obedience,** 1 Kings 6:12-13; Deut. 28:1-3; Ezek. 18:21-22, 27-28. Turn to all these promises and dilate on them, etc.

**[19.] Nineteenthly, One sin never goes alone,** as you may see in the falls of Adam and Eve, Lot, Abraham, Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Solomon, Peter, Ahab, Judas, Jeroboam. One sin will make way for more; as one little thief can open the door to let in many great ones. Satan will be sure to nest himself, to lodge himself in the least sins, as birds nest and lodge themselves in the smallest branches of the tree, and there he will do all he can to hatch all manner of wickedness. A little wedge makes way for a greater; and so do little sins make way for greater.

**[20.] Twentiethly, The reasons of turning from sin are universally binding to a gracious soul.** There are the same reasons and grounds for a penitent man's turning from every sin as there is for his turning from any one particular sin. Do you turn from this or that sin because the Lord has forbid it? why! upon the same ground you must turn from every sin; for God has forbid every sin as well as this or that particular sin. There is the same authority forbidding or commanding, in all; and if the authority of God awes a man from committing one sin, it will awe him from all, etc. But,

**[21.] Twenty-firstly, One sin allowed and lived in, will keep Christ and the soul asunder.** As one rebel, one traitor, hidden and kept in the house, will keep a prince and his subjects asunder; or as one stone in the pipe will keep the water and the cistern asunder; so here. But,

**[22.] Twenty-secondly, One sin allowed and lived in, will unfit a person for suffering;** as one cut in the shoulder may hinder a man from carrying a burden. Will he ever lay down his *life* for Christ, who can't, who won't lay down a *lust* for Christ? But,

**[23.] Twenty-thirdly, One sin allowed and lived in, is sufficient to deprive a man forever of the greatest good.** One sin allowed and wallowed in, will as certainly deprive a man of the blessed vision of God, and of all the treasures, pleasures, and delights which are at God's right hand, as a thousand. One sin stripped the fallen angels of all their glory; and one sin stripped our first parents of all their dignity and excellency, Gen. 3:4-5. One fly in the box of precious ointment spoils the whole box; one thief may rob a man of all his treasure; one disease may deprive a

man of all his health; and one drop of poison will spoil the whole glass of wine: and so one sin allowed and lived in will make a man miserable forever. One millstone will sink a man to the bottom of the sea, as well as a hundred. It is so here. But,

**[24.] Twenty-fourthly, One sin allowed and lived in, will eat out all peace of conscience.** As one jarring string will spoil the sweetest music; so one sin countenanced and lived in will spoil the music of conscience. One pirate may rob a man of all he has in this world. But,

**[25.] Twenty-fifthly and lastly, The sinner would have God to forgive him, not only some of his sins—but all his sins;** and therefore it is but just and equal that he should turn from all his sins. If God is so faithful and just to forgive us all our sins, we must be so faithful and just as to turn from all our sins. The plaster must be as broad as the sore, and the scalpel as long and as deep as the wound. It argues horrid hypocrisy, damnable folly, and astonishing impudency, for a man to beg the pardon of those very sins that he is resolved never to forsake, etc.

**OBJECTION.** But it is impossible for any man on earth to walk in all God's statutes, to obey all his commands, to do his will in all things, to walk according to the full breadth of God's royal law.

**SOLUTION.** I answer, there is a twofold walking in all the statutes of God; there is a twofold obedience to all the royal commands of God.

(1.) First, One is **legal**, when all is done which God requires; and all is done as God requires, when there is not one path of duty—but we do walk in it perfectly and continually. Thus no man on earth does or can walk in all God's statutes, or fully do what he commands. "We all stumble in many ways," James 3:2. Just so, Eccles. 7:20, "There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins." 1 Kings 8:46, "For there is no man who sins not." Proverbs 20:9, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." 1 John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

(2.) Secondly, Another is **evangelical**, which is such a walking in all the

statutes of God, and such a keeping of all the commands of God, as is *in Christ* accepted of, and accounted of—as if we did keep them all. This walking in all God's statutes, and keeping of all his commandments, and doing of them all, is not only *possible*—but it is also *actual* in every believer, in every sincere Christian. It consists in these particulars—

**[1.] First, Evangelical obedience consists in the approbation of all the statutes and commandments of God.** Romans 7:12, "The commandment is holy, and just, and good." Ver. 16, "I consent unto the law that it is good." There is both assent and consent. Psalm 119:128, "I esteem all your precepts concerning all things to be right." A sincere Christian *approves* of all divine commands, though he cannot perfectly *keep* all divine commands. But,

**[2.] Secondly, Evangelical obedience consists in a conscientious submission unto the authority of all the statutes of God.** Every command of God has an authority within his heart, and over his heart. Psalm 119:161, "My heart stands in awe of your word." A sincere Christian stands in awe of every known command of God, and has a spiritual regard unto them all. Psalm 119:6, "I have respect unto all your commandments." But,

**[3.] Thirdly, Evangelical obedience consists in a cordial willingness and a cordial desire to walk in all the statutes of God, and to obey all the commands of God.** Romans 7:18, "For to will is present with me." Psalm 119:5, "O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes!" Ver. 8, "I will keep your statutes." But,

**[4.] Fourthly, Evangelical obedience consists in a sweet delight in all God's commands.** Psalm 119:47, "I delight in your commands because I love them." Romans 7:22, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." But,

**[5.] Fifthly, He who obeys sincerely—obeys universally.** Though not in regard of *practice*, which is impossible—yet in regard of *affection*, he loves all the commands of God, yes, he dearly loves those very commands of God which he cannot obey, by reason of the infirmity of the flesh, by reason of that body of sin and death which he carries about with

him. Ponder upon Psalm 119:97, "O how I love your law!" Such a pang of love he felt, as could not otherwise be vented—but by this heartfelt exclamation, "O how I love your law," vers. 113, 163, 127, 159, 167. Ponder upon all these verses. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, A sincere Christian obeys all the commands of God; he is universal in his obedience, in respect of valuation or esteem.** He highly values all the commands of God; he highly prizes all the commands of God; as you may clearly see by comparing these scriptures together, Psalm 119:72, 127, 128, 19:8-11; Job 23:12. But,

**[7.] Seventhly, A sincere Christian is universal in his obedience, in respect of his purpose and resolution;** he purposes and resolves, by divine assistance, to obey all, to keep all. Psalm 119:106, "I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep your righteous judgments." Psalm 17:3, "I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." But,

**[8.] Eighthly, A sincere Christian is universal in his obedience, in respect of his inclination;** he has an habitual inclination in him to keep all the commands of God, 1 Kings 8:57-58; 2 Chron. 30:17-20; Psalm 119:112, "I have inclined my heart to perform your statutes always, even to the end." But,

**[9.] Ninthly and lastly, Their evangelical keeping of all the commands of God, consists in their sincere endeavor to keep them all;** they put out themselves in all the ways and parts of obedience; they do not willingly and wittingly slight or neglect any commandment—but are striving to conform themselves thereunto. As a dutiful son does all his father's commands, at least in point of endeavor; just so, sincere Christians make conscience of keeping all the commands of God in respect of endeavors. Psalm 119:59, "I turned my feet unto your testimonies."

God esteems of *evangelical* obedience as *perfect* obedience. Zacharias had his failings, he did hesitate through unbelief, for which he was struck dumb—yet the text tells you, "That he walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless," Luke 1:6, because he did cordially desire and

endeavor to obey God in all things. Evangelical obedience is true for the *essence*, though not perfect for the *degree*. A child of God obeys all the commands of God—in respect of all his sincere desires, purposes, resolutions, and endeavors; and this God accepts in Christ for perfect and complete obedience. This is the glory of the covenant of grace, that God accepts and esteems of *sincere* obedience as *perfect* obedience. Such who sincerely endeavor to keep the whole law of God—they do keep the whole law of God in an *evangelical* sense, though not in a *legal* sense. A sincere Christian is for the first table as well as the second, and the second as well as the first. He does not adhere to the first and neglect the second, as *hypocrites* do; neither does he adhere to the second and despise the first, as *profane* men do.

O Christians, for your support and comfort, know that when your desires and endeavors are to do the will of God entirely, as well in one thing as in another, God will graciously pardon your failings, and pass by your imperfections. "He will spare you as a man spares his son who serves him," Mal. 3:17. Though a father sees his son to fail, and come short in many things which he enjoins him to do—yet knowing that his desires and endeavors are to serve him, and please him to the full, he will not be rigid and severe with him—but will be indulgent to him, and will spare him, and pity him, and show all love and kindness to him. The application is easy, etc.

The second question or case is this—**What is that FAITH which gives a man a saving interest in Christ, and in all those blessed benefits and favors which come by Christ?** or whether that person who experiences the following particulars, may not safely, groundedly, and comfortably conclude that his faith is a true, justifying, saving faith, the faith of God's elect, and such a faith as clearly evidences a gracious estate, and will certainly bring the soul to heaven? Now, in answer to this important question, we may suppose the poor believer is ready to express himself thus—

[1.] **First**, Upon search and sad experience, I find myself a poor, lost, miserable, and undone creature—as the Scriptures everywhere do evidence, Eph. 2:1-2, 5, 12; Col. 2:13; Romans 8:7; Luke 19:10.

[2.] **Secondly**, I am convinced that it is not in myself to deliver myself out of this lost, miserable, and forlorn estate. Could I make as many prayers as might be piled up between heaven and earth, and weep as much blood as there is water in the sea—yet all this could not procure the pardon of one sin, nor one smile from God, etc.

[3.] **Thirdly**, I am convinced that it is not in angels or men to deliver me out of my lost, miserable, and undone condition. I know provoked justice must be satisfied, divine wrath pacified, my sins pardoned, my heart renewed, my state changed, etc., or my soul can never be saved; and I know it is not in angels or men to do any of these things for me.

[4.] **Fourthly**, I find that I stand in absolute need of a Savior to save me from wrath to come, 1 Thes. 1:10, "to save me from the curse of the law," Gal. 10, 13, "and to save me from infernal flames," Isaiah 33:14; so that I may well cry out with those in Acts 2:37, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and with the jailer, Acts 16:36, "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?"

[5.] **Fifthly**, I see and know that there is an utter impossibility of obtaining salvation by anything, or by any person—but by Christ alone. Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name" that is, no other person, "under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved." I know there is no Savior who can deliver me from eternal death, and bring me to eternal life and glory—but only Jesus, of whom it is said, "that he shall save his people from their sins," Luke 1:21; and therefore I must conclude that there is an utter impossibility of obtaining salvation by any other person or thing, etc. But,

[6.] **Sixthly**, I see and know that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient Savior, that he is a mighty, yes, an almighty Savior, a Savior who is able to save to the utmost, all those who come to him—as the Scripture speaks, Psalm 89:19, "I have laid help upon one who is mighty." Isaiah 63:1, "Mighty to save." Heb. 7:25, "Therefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede

for them." I know that the Lord Jesus is mighty to save me from that wrath, and from that curse, and from that hell, and from that damnation, which is due to me, by reason of my sins; and that he is mighty to justify me, and mighty to pardon me, and mighty to reconcile me to God the Father, and mighty to bring me to glory—as the Scripture does everywhere testify. But,

[7.] **Seventhly**, I know, through grace, that Jesus Christ is the only person anointed, appointed, fitted, and furnished by the Father, for that great and blessed work or office, of saving sinners' souls; as these scriptures, among others, do clearly testify, Isaiah 61:1-4; Luke 4:18-21; Mat. 1:20-21; John 6:27. Certainly were Jesus Christ never so able and mighty to save—yet if he were not anointed, appointed, fitted, and furnished by the Father for that great office of saving poor lost sinners, I know no reason why I should expect salvation by him. But,

[8.] **Eighthly**, I know through grace that the Lord Jesus Christ has sufficiently satisfied, as mediator, the justice of God, and pacified his wrath, and fulfilled all righteousness, and procured the favor of God and the pardon of sin, etc., for all those who close with him, that accept of him, as he is offered in the gospel of grace, Gal. 3:19-20; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; Heb. 9:14-15, and 12:24; Heb. 10:12, 14; Mat. 3:15; Romans 8:1-4, 33-34, and 5:8-10; Acts 13:39.

[9.] **Ninthly**, I find that Jesus Christ is freely offered in the gospel to poor, lost, undone sinners, such as I am. I find that the ministers of the gospel are commanded by Christ to proclaim in his name a general pardon, and to make a general offer of him to all to whom they preach the everlasting gospel, without excluding any: Mark 16:15, "And he said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature." And what is it to preach the gospel unto every creature—but to say unto them, as the angels did to the shepherds, Luke 2:11, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord"? etc.

[10.] **Tenthly**, I know, through grace, that all sorts of sinners are invited to come to Christ, to receive Christ, to accept of Christ, and to close with Christ, Isaiah 55:1-2; Mat. 11:28-29; John 7:37; Rev. 3:20, and 22:17, etc.

But,

[11.] **Eleventhly**, Through grace, I do in my understanding really assent to that blessed record and report that God the Father, in the blessed Scriptures, has given concerning Christ, 1 John 5:10-12. The report that God the Father has made concerning the person of Christ, and concerning the offices of Christ, and concerning the work of redemption by Christ, I do really and cordially assent unto, as most true and certain, upon the authority of God's testimony, who is truth itself, and cannot lie. Now, though this assent alone is not enough to make a saving reception of Christ—yet it is in saving faith, and that without which it is impossible that there should be any saving faith. But,

[12.] **Twelfthly**, I can say, through grace, that in my judgment I do approve of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as a good—but as the greatest good, as a universal good, as a matchless good, as an incomparable good, as an infinite good, as an eternal good, and as the most suitable good in heaven and earth to my poor soul; as these scriptures do evidence, Psalm 73:25-26; Cant. 5:10, 45; Psalm 1:2; Phil. 3:7-10; 1 Tim. 1:15. I know there is everything in Christ that may suit the state, case, necessities, and needs of my poor soul. There is mercy in him to pardon me, and power in him to save me, and wisdom in him to counsel me, and grace in him to enrich me, and righteousness in him to clothe me, etc., and therefore I cannot but approve of the Lord Jesus, as such a good as exceeds all the good that is to be found in angels and men. The good that I see in Christ does not only counterbalance—but also excel all that real or imaginary good that ever I have met with in anything below Christ.

Christ must come into the will, he must be received there, else he is never savingly received. Now before the will will receive him, the will must be certainly informed that he is good, yes, the best and greatest good, or else he shall never be admitted there. Let the understanding assent ever so much to all propositions concerning Christ as true, if the judgment does not approve of them as good, yes, as the best good, Christ will never be truly received. God in his working maintains the faculties of the soul in their actings, as he made them.

[13.] **Thirteenthly**, So far as I know my own heart, I am sincerely willing

to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in a matrimonial covenant; according to these scriptures, Hos. 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 11:2; Isaiah 54:5; Isaiah 61:10; Isaiah 62:5; Cant. 3:11, etc. Through grace I am,

FIRST, Through grace I am sincerely willing to take the Lord Jesus Christ for my Savior and sovereign Lord. Just so far as I know my own heart, I do through mercy give my hearty consent—that Christ, and Christ alone, shall be my Savior and Redeemer. It is true, I perform duties—but the desire of my soul is to do them out of love to Christ, and in obedience to his royal law and pleasure. I know my best righteousnesses are but "as filthy rags," Isaiah 64:6. And woe would be to me, had I no other shelter, or savior, or resting-place for my poor soul—than rags, than filthy rags. And so far as I know my own heart, I am sincerely willing to give up myself to the guidance and government of Jesus Christ, as my sovereign Lord and king, desiring nothing more in this world, than to live and die under the guidance and government of his Spirit, his word, and his grace. But,

SECONDLY, Through grace I am willing, through grace, to give a bill of divorce to all other lovers, without exception or reservation. Just so far as I know my own heart, I desire nothing more in this world, than that God would pull out right-eye sins, and cut off right-hand sins. I am very desirous, through grace, to have all sins brought under control, by the power, Spirit, and grace of Christ—but especially my special sins, my besetting corruptions. I would have Christ alone to rule and reign in my heart, without any competitor. But,

THIRDLY, Through grace I am sincerely willing, through grace, to take the Lord Jesus Christ for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health; and in his strength I would go with him through fire and water, resolving, through his grace, that nothing shall divide between Christ and my soul. Just so far as I know my own heart, I would have Christ, though I beg with him, though I go to prison with him, though I go in agonies in the garden with him, though I go to the cross with him. But,

FOURTHLY, So far as I know my own heart, through grace I am sincerely willing,

First, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ presently, John 1:12.

Secondly, to receive him in all his offices, as king, prophet and priest, Col. 2:6; Acts 5:31.

Thirdly, To receive him into every room of my soul—to receive him into my understanding, mind, will, affections. etc.

Fourthly, To receive him upon his own terms, of denying myself, taking up his cross and following of him wherever he goes, Mat. 16:21; Rev. 14:4, etc.

FIFTHLY and lastly, So far as I know my own heart, I do freely consent, through grace:

1. To be really Christ's;
2. To be presently Christ's;
3. To be wholly Christ's;
4. To be only Christ's;
5. To be eminently Christ's;
6. To be forever Christ's, etc.

Certainly that Christian who has and does experience the particulars last mentioned under the second question, that Christian may safely, groundedly, boldly, and comfortably conclude—that his faith is a true, justifying, saving faith, the faith of God's elect, and such a faith as clearly evidences a gracious estate, and will never leave his soul short of heaven.

Now how many thousand Christians are there, that have this faith which is here described, which is doubtless a true, justifying, saving faith, which gives a man an interest in the person of Christ, and in all the blessings and benefits that comes by Christ—who yet question whether they have true faith or not; partly from weakness, partly from temptations, and partly from the various definitions which are given of faith by some, both

in their preachings and writings. It is and must be for a lamentation, that in a point of so great moment the trumpet should give such an uncertain sound.

The third question, or case is this, namely—Whether in the day of general judgment, or in the particular judgment that will pass upon every soul immediately after death, which is the stating of the soul in an eternal estate or condition, either of happiness or misery; **whether the sins of the saints, the follies and vanities of believers, the infirmities and enormities of sincere Christians shall be brought into the judgment of discussion and discovery, or not?** Whether the Lord will either in the great day of account, or in a man's particular day of account or judgment, publicly manifest, proclaim, and make mention of the sins of his people, or not? This question is bottomed upon these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:36, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10, 12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Peter 4:5.] which I desire the Christian reader to consult; and upon the sad and daily complaints of many dear sincere Christians, who frequently cry out, "Oh, we can never answer for one evil thought of ten thousand, nor we can ever answer for one idle word of twenty thousand; nor we can ever answer for one evil action of a hundred thousand! How then shall we stand in judgment? how shall we look the judge in the face? how shall we be ever able to answer for all our omissions, and for all our commissions; for all our sins of ignorance, and sins against light and knowledge; for all our sins against the law, and for all our sins against the gospel, and for all our sins against sovereign grace, and for all our sins against the remedy, against the Lord Jesus, and for all the sins of our infancy, of our youth, and of old age? Job 9:3; Psalm 19:12, and 143:2; Ezra 9:6, etc.

What account shall we be able to give up, when we come to our particular day of judgment, immediately after our death, or in the great and general day of account, when angels, devils, and men shall stand before the Lord Jesus, Heb. 9:27, whom God the Father has ordained to be the judge of the living and dead, Acts 17:31?"

Now to this great question I answer, that the sins of the saints, the infirmities and enormities of believers, shall never be brought into the judgment of discussion and discovery; they shall never be objected against them, either in their particular day of judgment, or in the great day of their account. Now this truth I shall make good by an induction of particulars; thus,

**[1.]** First, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his judicial proceedings in the last day, which is set down clearly and largely in Mat. 25:34-42, does only enumerate the good works they have done—but takes not the least notice of the spots and blemishes, of the infirmities or enormities, of the weaknesses or wickednesses, of his people. God has sealed up the sins of his people, never more to be remembered or looked upon, Deut. 32:4-6; Dan. 9:24. In the great day the book of God's remembrance shall be opened and publicly read, that all the good things that the saints have done for God, for Christ, for saints, for their own souls, for sinners; and that all the great things that they have suffered for Christ's sake, and the gospel's sake, will be mentioned to their everlasting praise, to their eternal honor. And though the choicest and chief saints on earth have—

1. Sin dwelling in them;
2. Sin operating and working in them;
3. Sin vexing and molesting of them, being as so many goads in their sides and thorns in their eyes;
4. Sin captivating and prevailing over them, Romans 7:23-24; Gal. 5:17—yet in that large recital which shall then be read of the saints' lives, Mat. 25, there is not the least mention made either of sins of omission or commission; nor the least mention made either of great sins or of small sins; nor the least mention made either of sins before conversion or after conversion.

Here in this world the best of saints have had their "buts", their spots, their blots, their specks—as the fairest day has its clouds, the finest linen its spots, and the richest jewels their specks. But in the judicial process of this last and universal assize, there is not found in all the books that shall

then be opened, so much as one unpleasant "but" to blemish the fair characters of the saints. Surely he who sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel, Num. 23:21, to impute it to them while they live, he will never charge iniquity or perverseness upon them in the great day, Rev. 20:12; Dan. 7:10. Surely he who has fully satisfied his Father's justice for his people's sins, and who has by his own blood balanced and made up all reckonings and accounts between God and their souls—he will never charge upon them their faults and follies in the great day. Surely he who has spoken so much for his saints while he was on earth, and who has continually interceded for them since he went to heaven, John 17; Heb. 7:25; he won't, though he has cause to blame them for many things, speak anything against them in the great day. Surely Jesus Christ, the saints' paymaster, who has discharged their whole debt at once, who has paid down upon the nail, the ten thousand talents which we owed, and took in the bond and nailed it to the cross, Heb. 10:10, 12, 14; Mat. 18:24; Col. 2:14; leaving no back reckonings unpaid, to bring his poor children, which are the travail of his soul, Isaiah 53:11, afterward into any danger from the hands of divine justice; he will never mention the sins of his people, he will never charge the sins of his people upon them in the great day. Our dear Lord Jesus, who is the righteous judge of heaven and earth in the great day of account, he will bring in his presentment, all fair and well, and accordingly will make proclamation in that high court of justice, before God, angels, devils, saints, and sinners, etc.

Christ will not charge his children with the least unkindness, he will not charge his spouse with the least unfaithfulness in the great day. Yes, he will represent them before God, angels, and men, as complete in him, as all fair and spotless, as without spot or wrinkle, as without fault before the throne of God, as holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight, as immaculate as the angels themselves who kept their first estate, Col. 2:10; Cant. 4:7; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 14:5. This honor shall have all the saints, and thus shall Christ be glorified in his saints, and admired in all those who believe, 1 Thes. 2:10.

The greatest part of the saints by far will have passed their particular judgment long before the general judgment, Heb. 9:27, and being therein

acquitted and discharged from all their sins by God the Judge of the living and dead, 2 Tim. 4:1, and admitted into heaven upon the credit of Christ's blood, righteous satisfaction, and their free and full justification; it cannot be imagined that Jesus Christ, in the great day, will bring in any new charge against his children when they have been cleared and absolved already. Certainly when once the saints are freely and fully absolved from all their sins by a divine sentence, then their sins shall never be remembered, they shall never be objected against them any more; for one divine sentence cannot cross and rescind another. The Judge of all the world had long since cast all their sins behind his back, Isaiah 38:17; and will he now set them before his face, and before the faces of all the world? Surely not! He has long since cast all their sins into the depths of the sea, Micah 7:19,—bottomless depths of everlasting oblivion—that they might never be buoyed up any more! He has not only *forgiven* their sins—but he has also *forgotten* their sins, Jer. 31:34; and will he remember them and declare them in the great day? Surely not!

God has long since blotted out the transgressions of his people, Isaiah 43:25. This metaphor is taken from creditors, who, when they purpose never to exact a debt, will blot it out of their books. Now after that a debt is struck out of a bill, bond, or book, it cannot be exacted, the evidence cannot be pleaded. Christ having crossed the debt-book with the red lines of his blood, Col. 2:14; if now he should call the sins of his people to remembrance, and charge them upon them, he should cross the great design of his cross. Upon this foundation stands the absolute impossibility that any sin, that the least sin, yes, that the least circumstance of sin, or the least aggravation of sin, should be so much as mentioned by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth in the process of that judicial trial in the great day—*except it be in a way of absolution in order to the magnifying of their pardon.*

God has long since blotted out as a thick cloud the transgressions of his people, and as a cloud their sins, Isaiah 44:22. Now we know that the clouds which are driven away by the winds appear no more; nor the mist which is dried by the sun appears any more; other clouds and other mists may arise—but not those which are driven away and dried up. Thus the sins of the saints being forgiven, they shall no more return upon them,

they shall never more be objected against them.

[2.] Further, The Lord says, "Though your sins be as *scarlet*, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like *crimson*, they shall be as wool," Isaiah 1:18. Pardon makes such a clear riddance of sin, that it is as if it had never been. The scarlet sinner is as white as snow—snow newly fallen from the sky, which was never sullied. The crimson sinner is as wool, wool which never received the least tincture in the dye. You know *scarlet* and *crimson* are double and deep dyes, ingrained dyes—yet if the cloth dyed therewith be as the wool before it was dyed, and if it be as white as snow, what is become of those dyes? Are they any more? Is not the cloth as if it had not been dyed at all? Even so; though our sins, by reiterating them, by long lying in them, have made deep impressions upon us—yet, by God's discharge of them—we are as if we had never committed them.

[3.] Again, The psalmist pronounces him "blessed whose sin is covered," Psalm 32:1. A thing covered is not seen; so sin forgiven is before God as not seen.

The same psalmist pronounces him "blessed to whom the Lord imputes not sin," Psalm 32:2. Now a sin not imputed is as not committed. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found," Jer. 50:20. Now is not that fully discharged which shall never be found, never appear, never be remembered, never be mentioned?

Thus, by the many metaphors used in Scripture to set out forgiveness of sin, pardon of sin, you plainly and evidently see that God's discharge is free and full, and therefore he will never charge their sins upon them in the great day, Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 18:22. But

Some may **OBJECT** and say that the Scripture says, that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccles. 12:14. How then can this be, that the sins of the saints shall not be mentioned, nor charged upon them in the great day?

I answer, this scripture is to be understood respective, etc. with a just

respect to the two great parties which are to be judged, Mat. 25:32-33. Sheep and goats, saints and sinners, sons and slaves, elect and reprobate, holy and profane, pious and impious, faithful and unfaithful. All the grace, the holiness, the godliness, the good of those who are godly, shall be brought into the judgment of mercy, that it may be freely, graciously, and nobly rewarded. And all the wickedness of the wicked shall be brought into the judgment of condemnation, that it may be righteously and everlastingly punished in this great day of the Lord. All *sincerity* shall be discovered and rewarded; and all *hypocrisy* shall be disclosed and revenged. In this great day, all the works of the saints shall follow them into heaven; and in this great day, all the evil works of the wicked shall hunt and pursue them into hell. In this great day—all the hearts, thoughts, secrets, words, ways, works, and walkings of wicked men shall be discovered and laid open before all the world—to their everlasting shame and sorrow, to their eternal amazement and astonishment. And in this great day the Lord will make mention, in the ears of all the world—of every prayer that the saints have made, and of every sermon that they have heard, and of every tear that they have shed, and of every fast that they have kept, and of every sigh and groan that ever they have fetched, and of all the good words that ever they have spoke, and of all the good works that ever they have done, and of all the great things that ever they have suffered!

Yes, in this great day they shall reap the fruit of many good services which themselves had forgotten! "Lord, when did we see you hungry, and fed you; or thirsty, and gave you drink; or naked, and clothed you; or sick or in prison, and visited you?" Mat. 25:34-41. They had done many good works, and forgotten them—but Christ records them, remembers them, and rewards them before all the world. In this great day, a bit of bread, a cup of cold water shall not pass without a reward, Eccles. 11:1, 6. In this great day, the saints shall reap a plentiful and glorious crop, as the fruit of that good seed, that for a time has seemed to be buried and lost. In this great day of the Lord the saints shall find that bread which long before was cast upon the waters. But my

The **second** reason is taken from **Christ's vehement protestations**, that they shall not come into judgment: John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say

unto you, he who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into *condemnation*—but has passed from death unto life." Those words, "shall not come into condemnation," are not rightly translated. The original is, "shall not come into *judgment*," not into *damnation*, as you read it in all your English books. Further, it is very observable that no evangelist uses this double asseveration but John, and he never uses it but in matters of greatest weight and importance, and to show the earnestness of his spirit, and to stir us up to better attention, and to put the thing asserted out of all question and beyond all contradiction; as when we would put a thing forever out of all question, we do it by a double asseveration—truly, truly, it is so, etc., John 1:51, 3, 11, and 6:26, 32, 47, 53, etc.

**Thirdly**, Because his not bringing their sins into judgment does most and best agree with many precious and glorious expressions that we find scattered, as so many shining, sparkling pearls, up and down in Scripture; as,

FIRST, With those of God's blotting out the sins of his people: "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins," Isaiah 43:25, and 44:22.

*Who* is this that blots out transgressions? He who has the keys of heaven and hell at his belt; who opens, and no man shuts; who shuts, and no man opens; he who has the power of life and death, of condemning and absolving, of killing and making alive. He it is, who blots out transgressions! If an under officer should blot out an indictment, that perhaps might do a man no good; a man might, for all that, be at last condemned by the judge. But when the judge or king himself, shall blot out the indictment with their own hand, then the indictment cannot return. Now this is every believer's case and happiness.

SECONDLY, To those glorious expressions of God's not remembering of their sins any more, Jer. 31:34; Isaiah 43:25. "And I will not remember your sins." "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." So the apostle, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. 8:12.

And again, the same apostle says, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws on their hearts, and I will write them on their minds, I will never again remember their sins and their lawless acts." Hebrews 10:16-17. [That which Cicero said flatteringly of Caesar, is truly affirmed of God, "He forgets nothing but the wrongs which daily are done him by his people."]

The meaning is, their iniquities shall be quite forgotten: I will never mention them more, I will never take notice of them more, they shall never hear more of them from me. **Though God has an iron memory to remember the sins of the wicked—yet he has no memory to remember the sins of the righteous.**

Thirdly, His not bringing their sins into judgment does most and best agree with those blessed expressions of his casting their sins into the depth of the sea, and of his casting them behind his back. "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," Mic. 7:19. Where sin is once pardoned, the remission stands never to be repealed. Pardoned sin shall never more come in account against the pardoned man before God; for so much does this speech import. If a thing were cast into a river, it might be brought up again; or if it were cast upon the sea, it might be discerned and taken up again—but when it is cast into the *depths*, the *bottom* of the sea—it can never be buoyed up again. By the metaphor in the text, the Lord would have us to know that sins pardoned shall rise no more, they shall never be seen more, they shall never come on the account more. He will so drown their sins, that they shall never come up before him the second time.

And so much that other scripture imports, "You have cast all my sin behind your back," Isaiah 38:17. These last words are a borrowed speech, taken from the manner of men, who are accustomed to cast behind their backs such things as they have no mind to see, regard, or remember. A gracious soul has always his sins before his face, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me," Psalm 51:3, and therefore no wonder if the Lord cast them behind his back. The father soon forgets, and casts behind his back those faults that the child remembers, and has always in his eyes; so does the Father of spirits.

FOURTHLY, His not bringing their sins into judgment does best agree with that sweet and choice expression of God's pardoning the sins of his people.

"And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me," Jer. 33:8. Just so, in Micah, "Who is a God like unto you, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage?"—as though he would not see it—but wink at it—"he retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy," Mic. 7:18. The Hebrew word that is here rendered pardons, signifies a taking away. When God pardons sin, he takes it sheer away; that if it should be sought for—yet it could not be found, as the prophet speaks, Jer. 50:20, "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them whom I reserve;" and these words, "and passes by," in the afore-cited Micah 7:18, according to the Hebrew is, "and passes over," "God passes over the transgression of his heritage," that is, he takes no notice of it; as a man in a deep muse, or as one who has haste of business, sees not things before him, his mind being busied about other matters, he neglects all to mind his business.

As David, when he saw in Mephibosheth the feature of his friend Jonathan, took no notice of his lameness, or any other defect or deformity; so God, beholding in his people the glorious image of his Son, winks at all their faults and deformities, Isaiah 40:1-2, which made Luther say, "Do with me what you will, since you have pardoned my sin; and what is it to pardon sin—but not to mention sin?"

FIFTHLY, His not bringing their sins into the judgment of discussion and discovery does best agree to those expressions of forgiving and covering, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," Psalm 32:1. In the original, it is in the plural, "O, the blessednesses"; so here is a plurality of blessings, a chain of pearls.

The like expression you have in the 85th Psalm and the 2nd verse, "You

have forgiven the iniquity of your people, you have covered all their sin. Selah." For the understanding of these scriptures aright, take notice that to cover is a metaphorical expression. Covering is such an action which is opposed to disclosure; to be covered, it is to be so hidden and closed as not to appear. Some make the metaphor from filthy loathsome objects which are covered from our eyes as dead carcasses are buried under the ground; some from garments, which are put upon us to cover our nakedness; others from the Egyptians who were drowned in the Red Sea, and so covered with water; others from a great gulf in the earth, that is filled up and covered with earth injected into it; and others make it, in the last place, an allusive expression to the mercy-seat, over which was a covering.

Now all these metaphors in the general tend to show this, that the Lord will not look, he will not see, he will not take notice of the sins he has pardoned, to call them any more to a judicial account.

As when a prince reads over many treasons and rebellions, and meets with such and such which he has pardoned, he reads on, he passes by, he takes no notice of them, the pardoned person shall never more hear of them, he will never more call him to account for those sins; so here, etc. When Caesar was painted, the artists drew his finger upon his scar, his wart. God puts his fingers upon all his people's scars and warts, upon all their weaknesses and infirmities, that nothing can be seen but what is fair and lovely: "You are all fair, my love, and there is *no spot* in you," Cant. 4:7.

SIXTHLY, It best agrees to that expression of not imputing of sin. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit," Psalm 32:2. Just so, the apostle reiterates in Romans 4:6-8. Now not to impute iniquity, is not to charge iniquity, not to set iniquity upon his score, who is blessed and pardoned, etc.

SEVENTHLY, and lastly, It best agrees with that expression that you have in the 103d Psalm and the 11th and 12th verses, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." What a vast distance is there between the east and west! of all

visible latitudes, this is the greatest; and thus much for the third argument. The

**[4.]** The fourth argument which prevails with me to judge that Jesus Christ will not bring the sins of the saints into the judgment of discussion and discovery in the great day is, because it seems unsuitable to three considerable things for Jesus Christ to proclaim the infirmities and miscarriages of his people to all the world.

FIRST, It seems to be unsuitable to the glory and solemnity of that day, which to the saints will be a day of refreshing, a day of restitution, a day of redemption, a day of coronation—as has been already proved. Now how suitable to this great day of solemnity the proclamation of the saints' sins will be, I leave the reader to judge.

SECONDLY, It seems unsuitable to all those near and dear relations that Jesus Christ stands in, towards his people. He stands in the relation of a Father, a Brother, a Head, a Husband, a Friend, an Advocate. [Isaiah 9:6; Heb. 2:11-12; Eph. 1:21-22; Rev. 19:7; John 15:1; 2:1-2.] Now, are not all these by the law of relation, bound rather to hide, and keep secret—at least from the world—the weaknesses, and infirmities of their near and dear relations; and is not Christ, is not Christ much more, by how much he is more a Father, a Brother, a Head, a Husband, etc., in a spiritual way, than any others can be in a natural way? etc.

THIRDLY, It seems very unsuitable to what the Lord Jesus requires of his people, in this world. The Lord requires that his people should cast a mantle of love, of wisdom, of silence, and secrecy over one another's weaknesses and infirmities, etc.

Hatred stirs up strife—but love covers all sins—love's mantle is very large. Love will find a hand, a plaster to clap upon every sore, Proverbs 10:12, and 1 Pet. 4:8. Flavius Vespasianus, the emperor, was very ready to conceal his friends' vices, and as ready to reveal their virtues. Just so, is divine love in the hearts of the saints, "If your brother offends you, go and tell him his fault between him and you alone; if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother," Mat. 18:15. As the *pills of reproof* are to be gilded and sugared over with much gentleness and softness, so they are to

be given in secret. Tell him between him and you alone. Tale-bearers and tale-hearers are alike abominable. Heaven is too hot, and too holy a place for them, Psalm 15:3. Now will Jesus Christ have us behave thus towards offending Christians, and will he himself act otherwise? Nay, is it an evil in us to lay open the weaknesses and infirmities of the saints to the world? and will it be an excellency, a glory, a virtue in Christ, to do it in the great day? etc.

[5.] A fifth argument is this, It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression. "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense," Proverbs 19:11. Or to pass by it, as we do by people or things we know not, or would take no notice of. Now, is it the glory of a *man* to overlook an offense—and will it not much more be the glory of *Christ*, silently to overlook an offenses of his people in that great day? The greater the treasons and rebellions are, that a prince passes over, and takes no notice of—the more is his honor and glory; and so doubtless it will be Christ's in that great day, to pass over all the treasons and rebellions of his people, to take no notice of them, to forget them as well as to forgive them.

The heathens have long since observed, that in nothing man came nearer to the glory and perfection of God himself, than in goodness and mercifulness. Surely, if it is such an honor to man, "to overlook an offense," it cannot be a dishonor to Christ, to overlook an offenses of his people, he having already buried them in the sea of his blood. Again, says Solomon, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," Proverbs 25:2. And why it should not make for the glory of divine love, to conceal the sins of the saints in that great day, I know not. And whether the concealing the sins of the saints in the great day, will not make most for their joy and wicked men's sorrows; for their comfort and wicked men's terror and torment—I will leave you to judge, and time and experience to decide; and thus much for the resolution of that great question.

FIRSTLY. Now, from what has been said, in answer to this third question, a sincere Christian may form up this first plea as to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:36, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10, 12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] which refer either to the general judgment, or to the particular judgment that will pass upon every

Christian immediately after death.

"O blessed God! Jesus Christ has by his own blood balanced and made up all reckonings and accounts that were between you and me; and you have vehemently protested, that you will not bring me into judgment; that you will blot out my transgressions as a thick cloud, and that you will remember my sins no more; and that you will cast them behind your back, and hurl them into the depth of the sea; and that you will forgive them, and cover them, and not impute them to me, etc. This is my plea, O Lord, and by this plea I shall stand."

"Well", says the Judge of the living and the dead, "I own this plea, I accept of this plea, I have nothing to say against this plea; the plea is just, safe, honorable, and righteous. Enter into the joy of your Lord!"

SECONDLY. Every sinner at his first believing and closing with Christ, is justified in the court of glory from all his sins, both guilt and punishment, Acts 13:39. *Justification* does not increase or decrease—but all sin is pardoned at the first act of believing. All who are justified are justified alike. There is no difference among believers, as to their justification; one is not more justified than another, for every justified person has a complete remission of his sins, and the same righteousness of Christ imputed.

But in *sanctification*, there is difference among believers. Everyone is not sanctified alike, for some are stronger and higher, and others are weaker and lower in grace. As soon as any are made believers in Christ, all the sins which they have committed in time past, and all the sins which they are guilty of, as to the time present, they are actually pardoned unto them in general, and in particular, 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 1 John 2:1,12-14. Now, that all the sins of a believer are pardoned at once, and actually unto them, may be thus demonstrated.

[1.] **First**, All phrases in Scripture imply thus much. Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." Jer. 31:34, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. 33:8, "And I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed

against me." Ezek. 18:22, "All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him." Heb. 8:12, "I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more;" consequently, all is pardoned at once. But,

[2.] **Secondly**, That remission of sins which leaves no condemnation to the party offending, is the remission of all sins; for if there were any sin remaining, a man is still in the state of condemnation—but justification leaves no condemnation. Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," and verse 33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies;" and verse 38-39, "Nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" and John 5:24, "He who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, *has* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation—but is passed from death to life;" consequently, all sins are pardoned at once, or else they were in a state of condemnation, etc. At a sinner's first conversion his sins are truly and perfectly pardoned. Thus you see it evident that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Therefore there is full remission of all sins, to the soul at the first act of believing. But,

[3.] **Thirdly**, A believer, even when he sins, is still united to Christ, John 15:1, 6, 17:21-23; 1 Cor. 6:17, "And he is still clothed with the righteousness of Christ, which covers all his sins, and discharges him from them, so that no sin can redound to him," Isaiah 61:10; Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9, etc. But,

[4.] **Fourthly**, A believer is not to fear curse or hell at all, which yet he might do if all his sins were not pardoned at once—but some of his new sins were for a while unpardoned, etc. But,

[5.] **Fifthly**, Our Lord Jesus Christ, by once suffering, suffered for all the sins of the elect—past, present, and to come. The infinite wrath of God the Father fell on him for all the sins of the chosen ones, Isaiah 53:9; Heb. 12:14, and 10:9-10, 12, 14. If Christ had suffered for ten thousand worlds, he could have suffered no more than he did; for he suffered the whole infinite wrath of God the Father. The wrath of God was infinite wrath, and the sufferings of Christ were infinite sufferings. Consequently, as

Adam's sin was enough to infect a thousand worlds, so our Savior's merits are sufficient to save a thousand worlds. Those sufferings that he suffered for sins past, are sufficient to satisfy for sins present and to come. That all the sins of God's people, in their absolute number, from first to last, were laid upon Christ, who in the days of his sufferings did meritoriously purchase perfect remission of all their sins—to be applied in future times to them, and by them, is most certain, Isaiah 54:5, 6. But,

[6.] **Sixthly**, Repentance is not at all required for our justification—where our pardon is only to be found—but only faith; therefore pardon of sin is not suspended until we repent of our sins. But,

[7.] **Seventhly**, If the remission of all sins be not at once, it is either because my faith cannot lay hold on it, or because there are some hindrances in the way. But a man by the hand of faith, may lay hold on all the merits of Christ, and thereby, the pardon of all. There is no danger which attends this assertion, for it puts the highest obligation imaginable upon the soul, as to fear and obedience: Psalm 130:3, "If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" verse 4, "But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared." Forgiveness does not make a Christian bold with sin—but fearful of sin, and careful to obey, as Christians find in their daily experience. By this argument it appears clear, that the forgiveness of all sins is made to the soul at once, at the first act of believing. But,

[8.] **Eighthly**, If new sins were not pardoned until you repent—then we would be left to an uncertainty, as to whether our sins are pardoned, or when they will be pardoned; for it may be long before we repent, as you see in David, who lay long under the guilt of murder and adultery before he repented; and you know Solomon lay long under many high sins before he repented, etc., and it may be more long before we do, or can know that we do truly repent of our sins. But,

[9.] **Ninthly**, If all sins were not forgiven at once, then justification is not perfect at once—but is more and more increased and perfected as more and more sins are pardoned, which cannot consist with the true doctrine of justification. Certainly as to the state of justification, there is a full and perfect remission of all sins—considered under the differences of time

past, present, and to come. As in the state of *condemnation*, there is not any one sin pardoned; just so in the state of *justification*, there is not any one sin unpardoned; for the state of justification is opposite to all condemnation and curse and wrath. But,

[10.] **Tenthly**, All agree that as to God's eternal decree or purpose of forgiveness, all the sins of his people are forgiven. God did not intend to forgive some of their sins and not the rest—but a universal and full and complete forgiveness was fixedly purposed and resolved on by God. Forgiveness of sins is a gracious act, or work of God for Christ's sake, discharging and absolving believing and repenting people from the guilt and punishment of all their sins, so that God is no longer displeased with them, nor will he ever remember them any more, nor call them to an account for them, nor condemn them for their sins—but will look on them, and deal with them—as if they had never sinned, never offended him!

THIRDLY, Consider, that at the very moment of a believer's death, that all his sins are perfectly and fully forgiven. All their sins are so fully and finally forgiven them, that at the very moment of their souls going out from the body, there is not one sin of omission or commission, nor any aggravation or least circumstance left standing in the book of God's remembrance; and this is the true reason why there shall not be the least mention made of their sins in their trial at Christ's tribunal, because they were all pardoned fully and finally at the hour of their death. All debts were then discharged, all scores were then crossed, so that in the great day, when the books shall be opened and perused, there shall not one sin be found—but all blotted out, and all reckonings made even in the blood of Christ.

Indeed, if God should pardon some sins, and not others, he would at the same time be a friend and an enemy, and we would be at once both happy and miserable, which are manifest contradictions. Besides, God does nothing in vain—but it would be in vain for God to pardon some sins but not all, for as one leak in a ship unstopped will sink the ship, and as one sore or one disease, not healed nor cured, will kill the body—so one sin unpardoned will destroy the soul.

FOURTHLY, God looks not upon those as sinners, whose sins are pardoned: Luke 7:37, "And behold a woman in the city who *was* a sinner." A notorious sinner, a branded sinner. Mark, it is not said, behold a woman who *is* a sinner—but "behold a woman who *was* a sinner;" to note that sinners converted and pardoned are no longer reputed sinners, "Behold a woman who *was* a sinner." Look, as a man, when he is cleansed from filth, is as if he had never been defiled; so when a sinner is pardoned, he is in God's account as if he had never sinned. Hence those phrases in Cant. 4. 7, "You are *all fair*, my love, and there is *no spot* in you." Col. 2:10, "And you are *complete* in him, who is the head of all principality and power," as though he had said, because in himself he has the well-head of glory and majesty, the which becomes ours; in that he is also the head of his church: Col. 1:21, "And you who were once alienated, and enemies in your mind, by wicked works—yet now has he reconciled;" verse 22, "In the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblamably, and unreprouvable in his sight," that is, by his righteousness imputed and imparted. Eph. 5:27, "that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—but that it should be holy and without blemish." The word "present" is taken from the custom of solemnizing a marriage; first the spouse was wooed, and then set before her husband adorned with his jewels, as Rebekah was with Isaac's.

Rev. 14:5, "And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God." They are without fault by imputation. Hence Job is said to be a perfect man, Job 2, and David to be "a man after God's own heart," Acts 13:22. The forgiven party is now looked upon and received with that love and favor, as if he had never offended God, and as if God had never been offended by him, Hosea 14:1-2, 4; Isaiah 54:7-10; Jer. 31:33-34, 36, 37; Luke 15:19-23. Here the sins of the prodigal are pardoned, and his father receives him with such expressions of love and familiarity as if he had never sinned against him; his father never so much as objects any one of all his high sinnings against him.

Hence it is that you read of such sweet, kind, tender, loving, comfortable expressions of God towards those whose sins he had pardoned: Jer. 31:16, "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears;" verse 20,

"Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child?" Mat. 9:2, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you." Remission of sins is not only a removal of guilt—but an imputation of righteousness. Look, as he who is legally acquitted of theft or murder, is no more reputed a thief or murderer, so here, Jer. 50:20, "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord; search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare." Pardoned sin is in God's account no sin; and the pardoned sinner in God's account is no sinner; as the pardoned debtor is no debtor. Where God has pardoned a man, there he never looks upon that man as a sinner—but as a just man. Pardon of sin is an utter abolition of it; in this respect the pardoned man is as free as if he had never sinned. Therefore the believer, the penitent person, has infinite cause of rejoicing, that God has perfectly pardoned his sins, and that he looks upon him no more as a sinner—but as a just and righteous person.

O sirs! what can the great God do more for your comfort and consolation? and therefore, never entertain any hard thoughts of God, as if he were like those men who say they forgive with all their hearts, and yet retain their secret hate and inward malice as much as ever. But forever live in the faith of this truth, namely—that when God pardons sin, he takes it so fully away, as that the party acquitted is no more looked upon as a sinner. Now upon this consideration, what a glorious plea has every sincere Christian to make in the day of account! But,

FIFTHLY, Forgiveness of sin, takes off our obligation to suffer eternal punishment; so that, look, as a forgiven debtor is freed from whatever penalty his debt did render him liable to, so is the forgiven sinner from the punishment itself. In this respect Aristotle says, "To forgive sin is not to punish it." And Austin says, "To forgive sin is not to inflict the punishment due unto it." And the schools say, "To remit the sin is not to impute the punishment." When a king pardons a thief, his theft now shall no longer make him guilty. The guilt obliging is that whereby the sinner is actually bound to undergo the punishment due to him by the law, and passed on him by the judge for the breach of it; this is that which by the schools is called the extrinsic guilt of sin, to distinguish it from the intrinsic, which is included in the unlawfulness of the act, and which is

inseparable from the sin. And if you would know wherein the nature of forgiveness immediately and primarily consists, it is in the taking off this obligation, and discharging the sinner from it. Hence it is that the pardoned sinner is said not to be under the law: Romans 6:14, and not to be under the curse; Gal. 3:13, and not to be under the sentence of condemnation. And according to this notion, all Scripture phrases are to be construed by which forgiveness is expressed, Romans 8:1. God, when he forgives sin, he is said to cover them, Psalm 32:1, 85:2; Romans 4:7; "to remember them no more," Isaiah 43:25; Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12; "to cast them behind his back," Isaiah 38:17;" to throw them into the depth of the sea," Micah 7:19; "to blot them out as a cloud," Isaiah 44:22; and "to turn away his face from them," Psalm 51:9. By all which expressions we are not to think that God does not know sin, or that God does not see sin, or that God is not displeased with sin, or that God is not displeased with believers for their sins—but that he will not so take notice of them as to enter into judgment with the people for them.

Just so, that the forgiven sinner is free from obligation of the punishment, as truly, as surely, as fully, and as perfectly as if he had never committed the sin—but were altogether innocent. In every sin there are two things considerable: first, the offence which is done to God, whereby he is displeased; secondly, the obligation of the man so offending God—to eternal condemnation. Now, remission of sin does wholly lie in the removing of these two. So that when God does will neither to punish or to be offended with the person—then he is said to forgive. It is true there remains paternal and medicinal chastisements after sin is forgiven—but no offence or punishment strictly so taken. And is not this a noble plea for a believer to make in the day of account? But,

SIXTHLY, Consider that all the sins of believers were laid upon Christ their surety, Heb. 7:21-22. What is that? That is, he became bound to God, he became responsible to him for all their sins, for all that God in justice could charge upon them, and demand for satisfaction: Isaiah 53:5-6, "Our salvation was laid upon one who is mighty;" Psalm 89:19; Isaiah 63:1. "As Judah became a surety to Jacob for Benjamin, he engaged himself to his father: I will be surety for him, of my hand shall you require him; if I bring him not unto you, and set him before you, then let

me bear the blame forever," Gen. 43:9. Herein he was a type of Christ, who is both our surety to God for the discharge of our debt and duty, and God's surety to us for the performance of his promises. "Father," says Christ, "I will take upon me all the sins of my people; I will be bound to answer for them; I will sacrifice myself for them; at my hands you require satisfaction for their sins, and a full compensation unto your justice; I will die, I will lay down my life, I will make my soul an offering for sins; I will become a curse, I will endure your wrath." Oh, what unspeakable comfort is this, that there is a Christ to answer for that which we could never answer! Christ is a surety in way of satisfaction, undertaking for the debts, the trespasses, the sins of his elect. In this respect it is that Christ is most properly called a surety, in regard of his taking upon him the sins of his elect, and undertaking to answer and make satisfaction unto the justice of God for them. Christ interposes himself between the wrath of God and his people, undertaking to satisfy their debts, and so to reconcile them unto God. Christ had nothing of his own to be condemned for, nothing of his own to be acquitted from. He was condemned to pay your debt, as your surety, and therefore you cannot be condemned too. He was acquitted from it, being paid, as your surety, and therefore you must be acquitted too. He appeared the first time *with* your sin to his condemnation, he shall appear the second time *without* your sin unto your salvation, Heb. 9:28.

God the Father says to Christ, "Son, if you would have poor sinners pardoned, you must take their debts upon yourself, you must be their surety, and you must enter into bonds to pay every farthing of that debt poor sinners owe; you must pay all if you will undertake for them." Certainly these were some of those transactions that were between God the Father and God the Son from all eternity about the pardoning of poor sinners. If ever your sins be pardoned, Christ must take your debts upon himself, and be your surety; 2 Cor. 5:21, "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Christ was made sin for us—firstly, by way of **imputation**, for "our sins were made to meet upon him," as that evangelical prophet has it, Isaiah 53:6; and, secondly, by **reckoning**, "for he was reckoned among malefactors," verse 12. The way of pardon is by a translation of all our sins upon Christ, it is by charging them all upon Christ's score. That is a great expression of Nathan to David, "The Lord

has put away your sin;" but the original runs thus, "The Lord has made your sins to pass over;" that is, to pass over from you to his Son; he has laid them to his charge.

Now Christ has discharged all his people's debts and bonds. There is a twofold debt which lay upon us. One was the debt of *obedience* unto the law, and this Christ did pay by "fulfilling all righteousness," Mat. 3:15. The other was the debt of *punishment* for our transgressions, and this debt Christ discharged by his death on the cross, Isaiah 53:4, 10, 12; "And by being made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse," Gal. 3:13. Hence it is that we are said to be "bought with a price," 1 Cor. 6:20, and 7:23; and that Christ is called our "Ransom," Mat. 20:28, and 1 Tim. 2:6. The words signify a valuable price laid down for another's ransom. The blood of Christ, the Son of God, was a valuable price, a sufficient price; it was as much as would take off all enmities, and take away all sin, and to satisfy divine justice-and indeed it has done so. Therefore you read that "in his blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins," Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14, 20; and his death was such a full compensation to divine justice, that the apostle makes a challenge to all: Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" and verse 34, "Who is he who condemns? it is Christ who died." As if he had said, Christ has satisfied and discharged all. The Greek word is of special emphasis. The force of the word properly signifies a counter-price, when one undergoes in the room of another, that which he should have undergone in his own person; as when one yields himself a captive for the redeeming of another out of captivity, or gives his own life for the saving of another's. There were such sureties among the Greeks as gave life for life, body for body; and in this sense the apostle is to be understood, when he says that Christ gave himself a *ransom*, a counter-price, paying a price for his people.

Christ has laid down a price for all believers, they are his "dearly bought ones," they are his "choice redeemed ones," Isaiah 51:11. Christ gave himself a counter-price, a ransom, submitting himself to the like punishment, which his redeemed ones would have undergone. Christ, to deliver his elect from the curse of the law, subjected himself to that same curse of the law under which all mankind lay. Jesus Christ was a true surety, one who gave his life for the life of others.

The Lord Jesus became such a surety for his elect, giving himself a ransom for them, John 6:51; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rev. 1:5, and 5:9.

Oh, what comfort is this unto us—to have such a Jesus, who himself bore our sins, even all our sins, left not one unsatisfied for; and laid down a full ransom, a full price, such an expiatory sacrifice as that now we are out of the hands of justice, and wrath, and death, and curse, and hell—and are reconciled and made near by the blood of the everlasting covenant! The blood of Christ, as the Scripture speaks, is "the blood of God," Acts 20:28, so that there is not only satisfaction—but merit in his blood. There is more in Christ's blood, than mere payment or satisfaction. There was *merit* also in it, to acquire and procure and purchase all spiritual good, and all eternal good for the people of God; not only immunities from sin, death, wrath, curse, hell, etc.—but privileges and dignities of sons and heirs; yes, all grace, and all love, and all peace, and all glory—even that glorious inheritance purchased by his blood, Eph. 1:14.

Remember this once for all, that in justification our debts are charged upon Christ, they are reckoned to his account. You know that in sin, there is the wicked and staining quality of it, and there is the resulting guilt of it, which is the obligation of a sinner over to the judgment-seat of God to answer for it. Now this guilt, in which lies our debt, this is charged upon Christ. Therefore, says the apostle, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. 5:19; "And has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," ver, 21. You know in law, the wife's debts are charged upon the husband; and if the debtor is disabled, then the creditor sues the surety. The surety and debtor, in law are reputed as one person. Now Christ is our surety, "He is made sin *for* us," says the apostle; "for us"—that is, in our stead—a surety for us, one who puts our debts on his accounts, our burden on his shoulders. Just so, says that princely prophet Isaiah: Isaiah 53:4-5, "He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." How so? "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities;" that is, he stood in our stead, he took upon him the answering of our sins, the satisfying of our debts, the clearing of our guilt; and therefore was it that he was so bruised, etc.

You remember the scape-goat; upon his head all the iniquities of the

children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins were confessed and put: "And the goat did bear upon him all their iniquities," Lev. 16:21-22. What is the meaning of this? Surely Jesus Christ, upon whom our sins were laid, and who alone died for the ungodly, Romans 5:6, "and bore our burdens away." Therefore the believer in the sense of guilt, should run unto Christ, and offer up his blood unto the Father, and say, "Lord, it is true, I owe you so much—yet, Father, forgive me; remember that your own Son was my ransom, his blood was the price; he was my surety, and undertook to answer for my sins! I beseech you, accept of his atonement, for he is my surety, my redemption. You must be satisfied that Christ has satisfied you, not for himself—what sins had he of his own?—but for me. They were my debts which he satisfied for! Look over your book, and you shall find it so; for you have said—He was made sin for us, and that he was wounded for our transgressions."

Now, what a singular support, what an admirable comfort is this, that we ourselves are not to make up our accounts and reckonings—but that Christ has cleared all accounts and reckonings between God and us! Therefore it is said that "in his blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins," Eph. 1:7.

**QUESTION.** Whether it were not against the justice of God that Christ, who was in himself innocent, without any sin, a Lamb without any spot—should bear and endure all these punishments for the elect, who were the offending and guilty and liable people? Or if you please thus—Whether God was not unjust to give his Son Jesus Christ to be our surety and mediator and redeemer and Savior, forasmuch as Christ could not be any one of these for and unto us but by a willing receiving of our sins upon himself, to be for them responsible unto the justice of God, in suffering those punishments which were due for our sins?

I shall speak a few words to this main question. I say, then, that it is not always and in all cases unjust—but it is sometimes and in some cases very just, to punish one who is himself innocent, for him or those who are the

criminal and guilty. Grotius in his book, gives divers instances—but I shall mention only two.

First, In the case of conjunction, where the innocent party and the criminal and guilty party do become legally one party; and therefore if a man marries an indebted woman, he thereupon becomes liable to pay her debts, although, absolutely considered, he was not liable thereunto. But,

Secondly, In case of suretyship, where a person, knowing the weak and insufficient condition of another, does yet voluntarily put forth himself, and will be bound to the creditor for him as his surety to answer for him, by reason of which suretyship the creditor may come upon him, and deal with him as he might have dealt with the principal debtor himself. This course we do ordinarily take with sureties for the recovery of our right, without any violation of justice. Now, both these are exactly applicable to the business in hand; for Jesus Christ was pleased to marry our nature unto himself; he did partake of our flesh and blood, and became man, and one with us. And besides that, he did, both by the will of his Father and his own free consent, become our surety, and was content to stand in our stead or place, so as to be made sin and curse for us—that is, to have all our debts and sorrows, all our sins and punishments laid upon him; and did engage himself to satisfy God by bearing and suffering what we would have borne and suffered. And therefore although Jesus Christ, absolutely considered in himself, was innocent and had no sin inherent in himself, which would have made him liable to death and wrath and curse—yet by becoming one with us, and sustaining the office of our surety—our sins were laid on him. And our sins being laid upon him, he made himself therefore liable, and that justly, to all those punishments which he did suffer for our sins. I do confess, that had Christ been unwilling and forced into this suretyship, or had any detriment or prejudice risen to any party concerned in this transaction, then some complaint might have been made concerning the justice of God. But,

First, There was a willingness on all sides for the passive work of Christ. First, **God the Father**, who was the offended party, he was willing, which Christ assures us of when he said, "Your will be done," Mat. 26:42; Acts 4:25-28.

Secondly, We poor **sinner**s, who are the offending party, are willing. We accept of this gracious and wonderful redemption, and bless the Lord who "so loved us as to give his Son for us."

And, thirdly, **Jesus Christ** was willing to suffer for us: "Behold I come," Psalm 40:7: "And shall I not drink of the cup which my Father has given me to drink?" John 18:11: "I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!" Luke 12:50. He calls the death of his cross a baptism, partly because it was a certain immersion into extreme calamities into which he was cast, and partly because in the cross he was so to be sprinkled in his own blood as if he had been drowned and baptized in it. The Greek word that is here rendered *distressed*, signifies to be pained, pressed, or pent up, with such grief as made him desire that it were once over. "There seems," says Grotius, "to be a similitude implied in the original word, taken from a woman with child, who is so distressed with the birth, that she would sincerely be eased of her burden."

John 10:11, "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep." Christ is that good Shepherd who laid down his dear life for his sheep's safety: ver 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep" verse 17, "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life:" verse 18, "No man takes it from me—but I lay it down of myself." A necessity there was, of our Savior's death—but it was a necessity of immutability—because God had decreed it, Acts 2:23—not a forced necessity. He laid down his life freely, he died willingly. But,

[2.] Secondly, None of the parties involved, receive any loss by it. **We** lost nothing by it, for we are saved by his death, and reconciled by his death. **Christ** lost nothing by it: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and enter into his glory?" Luke 24:26. "The Captain of our salvation is made perfect through sufferings," Heb. 2:10. You may see Christ's glorious rewards for his sufferings in Isaiah 53:10-12. And **God the Father** lost nothing by it, for he is glorified by it: "I have glorified you on earth, I have finished the work which you gave me to do," John 17:4. Yes, he is fully satisfied and restored again in all the honor which he lost by our sinning. I say he is now fully restored again by the sufferings of Christ, in which he found a price sufficient, and a ransom, and enough to make peace forever. In the day of account, a Christian's great plea is—that

Christ has been his surety, and paid his debts, and made up his accounts for him.

**II.** Now, from what has been said last, a Christian may form up this second plea to the ten scriptures in the margin, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:36, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10, 12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] that refer either to the general judgment or to the particular judgment, which will pass upon every Christian immediately after death.

"O blessed Lord! upon my first believing and closing with Jesus Christ, you did justify me in the court of glory from all my sins, both as to guilt and punishment. Upon my first act of believing, you did pardon all my sins, you did forgive all my iniquities, you did blot out all my transgressions! And as upon my first believing you did give me the remission of all my sins, so upon my first believing you did free me from a state of condemnation; and gave me a saving interest in the great salvation. Upon my first believing, I was united to Jesus Christ, and I was clothed with the righteousness of Christ, which covered all my sins and discharged me from all my transgressions, Romans 8:10; Heb. 2:3. And remember, O Lord, you did really, perfectly, universally, and finally forgive all my sins. Every debt, was at that moment was discharged; and every score, was at that moment was crossed; and every bill and bond, was at that moment was cancelled, so that there was not left in the book of your remembrance one sin, no, not the least sin, standing upon record against my soul! And besides all this, you know, O Lord, that all my sins were laid upon Christ my surety, Heb. 7:21-22, and that he became responsible for them all. He died, he laid down his life, he made his soul an offering for my sins, he became a curse, he endured your infinite wrath, he gave complete satisfaction, and a full compensation unto your justice for all my sins, debts, trespasses. This is my plea, O Lord! and by this plea I shall stand!"

"Well," says the Lord, "I allow of this plea, I accept of this plea as just, honorable, and righteous. Enter into the joy of your Lord!" But,

SEVENTHLY, Consider, that whatever we are bound to do, or to suffer by the law of God—all that did Christ do and suffer for us, as being our

surety and mediator. Now the law of God has a double challenge or demand upon us; one is of *active* obedience—in fulfilling what it requires; the other is of *passive* obedience—in suffering that punishment which lies upon us, for the transgression of it, in doing what it forbids. For as we are *created* by God, we did owe unto him all obedience which he required. And as we *sinned* against God, we did owe unto him a suffering of all that punishment which he threatened. And we being fallen by transgression, can neither pay the one debt, nor yet the other debt. We cannot do all that the law requires, nay of ourselves we can do nothing; neither can we so suffer as to satisfy God in his justice wronged by us, or to recover ourselves into life and favor again. And therefore Jesus Christ, who was God, made man, did become our surety, and stood in our stead or place; and he did perform what we should—but could not perform; and he did bear our sins and our sorrows. He did suffer and bear for us what we ourselves should have borne and suffered, whereby he did fully satisfy the justice of God, and made our peace, and purchased life and happiness for us. Let me a little more clearly and fully open this great truth in these few particulars.

**(1.)** First, Jesus Christ did perform that active obedience unto the law of God, which we should have performed—but, by reason of sin, could not perform; in which respect he is said, Gal. 4:4, "to be made under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law." So far was Christ under the law—as to redeem those who were under the law. But redeem those who were under the law he could not, unless by discharging the bonds of the law in force upon us; and all those bonds could not be, and were not discharged, unless a perfect righteousness had been presented on our behalf, who were under the law, to fulfill the law.

Now there is a twofold righteousness necessary to the actual fulfilling of the law: one is an *internal* righteousness of the nature of man; the other is an *external* righteousness of the life or works of man: both of these do the law require. The former, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," etc., which is the sum of the first table; "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself," which is the sum of the second table: the latter. "Do this and live," Lev. 18:5, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law," Gal. 3:10. Now

both these righteousnesses were found in Christ.

First, the *internal*: Heb. 7:26, "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners;" Heb. 9:14, "And offered himself without spot to God;" 2 Cor. 5:21, "He knew no sin."

Secondly, *external*: 1 Peter 2:22, "He did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth;" John 17:4, "I have finished the work which you gave me to do;" Mat. 3:15, "He must fulfill all righteousness," Romans 10:4; "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Now concerning **Christ's active obedience to the law of God**, these things are considerable in it.

[1] First, The **universality** of it: he did everything his Father required, and left nothing of his Father's will undone. He kept the whole law, and offended not in any one point. Whatever was required of us, by virtue of any law—that he did, and fulfilled. Hence he is said to be made under the law, Gal. 4:4, subject or liable to it, to all the precepts or commands of it. Christ was so made under the law—as those were under the law, whom he was to redeem. Now we were under the law, not only as liable to its penalties—but as bound to all the duties of it. That this is our being under the law, is evident by that challenge of the apostle: Gal. 4:21, "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law." Surely it was not the penalty of the law they desired to be under—but to be under it in respect of obedience. Just so, Mat. 3:15. Here Christ tells you, that "it became him to fulfill all righteousness," all manner of righteousness whatever; that is, everything that God required. But,

[2.] Secondly, The **exactness** and **perfection** of it. He kept the whole law exactly. As he was not lacking in matter, so he did not fail in the manner of performing his Father's will. There were no defects, nothing lacking in his obedience; he did all things well. What we are pressing towards, and reaching forth unto—he attained! He was perfect in every good work and stood complete in the whole will of his Father. And hence it is, that it is recorded of him, that he was without sin, knew no sin, did no sin—which could not be, if he had failed in anything. But,

[3.] Thirdly, The **constancy** of it. Christ did not obey by fits—but constantly. Though we cannot persevere in obedience—yet he "continued in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." This righteous One held on his way, he did not fail, nor was he discouraged; yes, when persecution and tribulation did arise against him, because of his doing the will of his Father, he did not give up—but did always do the things which pleased his Father, as he told the Jews, John 8:29.

[4.] Fourthly, The **delight** that he took "in doing the will of his Father." Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is within my heart," or in the midst of my heart, as the Hebrew runs. By the law of God we are to understand all the commandments of God. There is not one command which Christ did not delight to do. Christ's obedience was without murmuring or grudging; his Father's commandments were not grievous to him; he tells his disciples, that it was his "food to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work," John 4:34. But,

[5.] Fifthly, The **virtue** and **efficacy** of it. For his obedience—his righteousness never returns to him void—but it always "accomplishes that which he pleases, and prospers in the thing whereto he ordains it," and that is the making others righteous, according to the apostle Paul: Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the disobedience of one shall many be made righteous." 2 Cor. 5:21, "God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Accordingly we are righteous, "for of God he is made unto us righteousness," 1 Cor. 1:30.

The perfect complete obedience of Christ to the law, is certainly reckoned to us. That is an everlasting truth, "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments," Mat. 19:17. The commandments must be kept either by ourselves—or by our surety—or there is no entering into life. Christ did obey the law, not for himself but for us, and in our stead. Romans 5:18-19, "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life; by the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous." By his obedience to the law, we are made righteous. Christ's obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness. Christ, by his obedience to the royal law, is made righteousness to us, 1 Cor. 1:30. We are saved by that perfect obedience, which Christ, when he was in this world, yielded

to the blessed law of God.

Mark, whatever Christ did as mediator, he did it for those whose mediator he was, or in whose stead and for whose good he executed the office of a mediator before God. This the Holy Spirit witnesses: Romans 8:3-4, "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the *likeness* of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us." The word "likeness," is not simply to be referred to flesh—but to sinful flesh, as Basil well observes; "Christ was like unto us in all things—sin only excepted." If with our justification from sin, there is joined that active obedience of Christ, which is imputed to us, we are just before God, according to that perfection which the law requires.

Because we could not, in this condition of weakness whereinto we are cast by sin, come to God, and be freed from condemnation by the law, God sent Christ as a mediator to do and suffer whatever the law required at our hands for that end and purpose, that we might not be condemned—but accepted by God. It was all to this end, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us; that is, which the law required of us, consisting in duties of obedience. This Christ performed for us. This expression of the apostle, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," if you will add to it that of Gal. 4:4—that he was so sent forth, as that he was "made under the law;" that is, submissive to it, to yield all the obedience that it does require, comprises the whole of what Christ did or suffered. And all this, the Holy Spirit tells us was for us, verse 5. He who made the law as God, was made under the law as God-man, whereby both the obligations of the law fell upon him—both the Penal and the Preceptive obligations. First, The **penal** obligation to undergo the curse—and so to satisfy divine justice. Secondly, The **preceptive** obligation—to fulfill all righteousness, Mat. 3:15. This preceptive obligation he fulfilled by *doing*; the penal obligation he fulfilled by *dying*.

Mark, this double obligation could not have befallen the Lord Jesus Christ upon any natural account of his own—but upon his mediatory account only—as he voluntarily became the surety of this new and better

covenant, Heb. 7:22; so that the fruit and benefit of Christ's voluntary subjection to the law, redounds not at all to himself, "but unto the people who were given him of the Father," John 17, whose sponsor he became. For their sakes he underwent the penal obligation of the law, that it might do them no harm, "He being made a curse for us," Gal. 3:13; and for their sakes he fulfilled the preceptive obligation of the law, "do this," so that the law might do them good.

This the evangelical apostle clearly asserts, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone who believes," Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law." What end? why, the perfection and accomplishment of the law. He is the end of the law for righteousness, that is, to the end that by Christ's active obedience, God might have his perfect law perfectly kept, so that there might be a righteousness existing in the human nature, every way adequate to the perfection of the law. And who must wear this garment of righteousness, when Christ has finished it? Surely the believer who lacked a righteousness of his own; for so it follows, "for righteousness to everyone who believes," that is, that every poor naked sinner, believing in Jesus Christ, might have a righteousness, wherein being found, he might appear at God's tribunal. But his nakedness does not appear—but as Jacob in the garment of his elder brother Esau, so the believer in the garment of his elder brother Jesus, might inherit the blessing, even the great blessing of justification.

The only matter of man's righteousness, since the fall of Adam, wherein he can appear with comfort before the justice of God, and consequently, whereby alone he can be justified in his sight—is the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of the mediator. There is not any other way imaginable, how the justice of God may be satisfied, and we may have our sins pardoned in a way of justice—but by the righteousness of the Son of God. Therefore is his name *Jehovah Tsidkenu*, "The Lord our righteousness," Jer. 23:6. This is his name; that is, this is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus, a matter that appertains to him alone, to be able to bring in "an everlasting righteousness, and to make reconciliation for iniquity," Dan. 9:24. It is by Christ alone, that those who "believe are justified from all things, from which they cannot be justified by the law of Moses," Acts 13:39.

**III.** Now from the active obedience of Christ, a sincere Christian may form up this third plea as to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:36, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10, 12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:6.] which refer either to the general judgment, or to the particular judgment that will pass upon every Christian immediately after death.

"O blessed God, you know that Jesus Christ, as my surety, did perform all that active obedience unto your holy and righteous law that I should have performed—but by reason of the indwelling power of sin, and of the vexing and molesting power of sin, and of the captivating power of sin—could not!"

There was in Christ a **habitual** righteousness, a conformity of his nature to the holiness of the law: 1 Pet. 1:19, "For he is a lamb without spot and blemish." The law could never have required so much righteousness—as is to be found in him. And as for practical righteousness, there was never any aberration in his thoughts, words, or deeds, Heb. 7:25; "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me," John 14:30. The apostle tells us, that "we are made the righteousness of God *in him*," 2 Cor. 5:21. He does emphatically add that clause, *in him*, that he may take away all conceit of inherent righteousness in us, and establish the doctrine of imputation. As Christ is made sin in us by imputation, so we are made righteousness in him by the same way. "God the Father," says Augustine, "made Christ to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God, not our own; and *in him*, that is in Christ, not in ourselves. And being thus justified, we are so righteous, as if we were righteousness itself!"

"Oh, holy God, Christ my surety has universally kept your royal law, he has not offended in any one point!" Yes, he has exactly and perfectly kept the whole law of God; he stood complete in the whole will of the Father; his active obedience was so full, so perfect, and so adequate—as to all the law's demands. The law now says, 'I have enough, I am fully satisfied; I have found a ransom, I can ask no more.' Neither was the obedience of Christ fickle or transient—but permanent and constant; it was his delight, his food and drink, yes, his heaven, to be still a-doing the will of his Father, John 4:33-34. Assuredly, while our Lord Jesus Christ was in this

world, he did in his own person fully obey the law; he did in his own person perfectly conform to all the holy, just, and righteous commands of the law. Now this his most perfect and complete obedience to the law is made over to all his members, to all believers, to all sincere Christians; it is reckoned to them, it is imputed to them, as if they themselves, in their own persons, had performed it.

All sound believers being in Christ, as their head and surety—the law's righteousness is fulfilled in them legally and imputively, though it is not fulfilled in them formally, subjectively, inherently, or personally; suitable to that of the apostle, that "the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled *in us*," Romans 8:4. Mark, not *by us*—but *in us*; for Christ in our nature has fulfilled the demands of the law, and therefore in us, because of our communion with him, and our ingrafting into him. God has condemned sin in the flesh of his Son, that all that which the law by right could require of us—might be performed by him *for us*—as if we ourselves had in our own persons performed the same. The demands of the law must be met, before a sinner can be saved; we cannot of ourselves fulfill the demands of it. But here is the comfort—Christ our surety has fulfilled it in us, and we have fulfilled it in him.

Certainly, whatever Christ did concerning the law is ours by imputation so fully—as if we ourselves had done it. Does the law require obedience? says Christ, "I will give my obedience!" Mat. 3:15. Does the law threaten curses? says Christ, "I have borne all their curses!" Mat. 5:17-18. "The precept of the law," says Christ, shall be kept, and the promises received, and the punishments endured—that poor sinners may be saved!" Our righteousness and title to eternal life indispensably depend upon the imputation of Christ's active obedience to us. There must be a perfect obeying of the law, as the condition of life, either by the sinner himself or by his surety—or else no eternal life for us; which does sufficiently evince the absolute necessity of the imputation of Christ's active obedience to us. The sinner himself being altogether unable to fulfill the law, that he may stand righteous before the great and glorious God; Christ's fulfilling of it must necessarily be imputed to him in order to righteousness.

There are two great things which Jesus Christ undertook for his redeemed ones; the one was to make full satisfaction to divine justice for

all their sins. Now this he did by his blood and death. The other was to yield most absolute conformity to the law of God, both in nature and life. By the one he has freed all his redeemed ones from hell, and by the other he has qualified all the redeemed ones for heaven. "Christ alone is my plea, O Lord, and by this plea I shall stand!" "Well," says the Lord, "I accept of this plea as honorable, just, and righteous. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

(2.) Secondly, As Jesus Christ did perform for us, all that **active obedience** which the law of God required; so he did also **suffer** all those punishments which we had deserved by the transgression of the law of God, in which respect he is said, 2 Cor. 2:22, "To be made sin for us." 1 Pet. 2:24, "He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Pet. 3:18, "For Christ also has once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust—that he might bring us to God." Phil. 2:8, "He humbled himself and to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Gal. 3:13, "He was made a curse—an execration for us." Eph. 5:2, "He gave himself for us, as an offering and sacrifice unto God." Heb. 9:15, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant."

Now concerning the **PASSIVE obedience**, or suffering of Christ, I would present unto you these conclusions.

[1.] First, That the sufferings of Jesus Christ were **free** and **voluntary**, and not constrained or forced. John 10:17, "I lay down my life." Verse 18, "No man takes it from me—but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again;" Gal. 2:20, "Who *gave* himself for me." *Christ's sufferings rose out of obedience to his Father:* John 10:18, "This commandment have I received from my Father;" and John 18:11, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" *And Christ's sufferings also sprang and rose out of his love to us,* "who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20. Just so, in Eph. 5:25, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." And indeed, had Christ's sufferings been involuntary, they could not have been a part of his obedience, much less could they have mounted to anything of merit

for us.

Christ was very free and willing to undertake the work of man's redemption. When he came into the world, he said, "Sacrifice and offerings you would not—but a body have you prepared me. Look, I have come to do your will," Heb. 10:5, 7. It is the expression of one overjoyed to do the will of God.

Just so, Luke 12:50, "There is a terrible baptism ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished." There was no power, no force to compel Christ to lay down his life, therefore it is called the *offering* of the body of Jesus, Heb. 10:10. **Nothing could fasten Christ to the cross—but the golden link of his free love.** Christ was filled with love, and therefore he freely opens all the pores of his body, that his blood may flow out from every part, as a precious balm to cure our wounds. The heart of Christ was so full of love that he could not hold it in—but must needs burst out through every part and member of his body into a bloody sweat, "Being in anguish, He prayed more fervently, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground." Luke 22:44. At this time it is most certain that there was no manner of violence offered to the body of Christ; no man touched him, or came near him with whips, or thorns, or spears, or lances. Though the night was cold, and the air cold, and the earth on which he kneeled cold—yet such a burning love he had in his heart to his people, as cast him into a bloody sweat.

It is certain that Christ never repented of his sufferings: Isaiah 53:11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul—and shall be satisfied." It is a metaphor that alludes to a mother, who though she has had hard labor—yet does not repent of it, when she sees a child brought forth. Just so, though Christ had hard travail upon the cross—yet he does not repent of it—but thinks all his sweat and blood well bestowed, because he sees *the man-child of redemption* is brought forth into the world. He shall be *satisfied*: the Hebrew word signifies such a satiating as a man has, at some sweet feast or banquet. And what does this speak out—but his freeness in suffering?

**OBJECTION.** But here some may object, and say, that the Lord Jesus, when the hour of his sufferings drew near, did repent of his suretyship;

and in a deep passion prayed to his Father to be released from his sufferings: "Father, if it be possible—let this cup pass from me;" and that three times over, Mat. 26:39, 42, 44.

**ANSWER 1.** Now to this objection I shall answer, first more generally, and secondly more particularly.

[1.] First, in the **general**, I say that this earnest prayer of his does not denote absolutely, his unwillingness—but rather sets out the greatness of his willingness; for although Christ as a *man* was of the same natural affections with us, and desires, and abhorrences of what was destructive to nature, and therefore did fear and deprecate that bitter cup which he was ready to drink. Yet as our mediator and surety, and knowing it would be a cup of salvation to us, though of exceeding bitterness to himself—he did yield and lay aside his natural reluctancies as man, and willingly obeyed his Father's will to drink it, as our loving mediator. It is as if he should say, "O Father, whatever becomes of me, of my natural fear or desire, I am content to submit to the drinking of this cup; may your will be done." But,

[2.] Secondly, and more **particularly**, I answer, that in these words of our Lord there is a twofold voice. 1. There is the voice of nature; "Let this cup pass from me." 2. There is the voice of his mediatorial office; "Nevertheless, not as I will—but as you will."

The first voice, "Let this cup pass," expresses the voice of the inferior part of his soul, the sensitive part, proceeding from natural abhorrency of death as he was a creature. The latter voice, "Nevertheless, not as I will—but as you will," expresses the full and free consent of his will, complying with the will of his Father in that grand everlasting design of "bringing many sons unto glory, by making the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. 2:10.

It was an argument of the truth of Christ his human nature, that he naturally dreaded the cruel sufferings and death. He owed it to himself as a creature to desire the conservation of his being, and he could not become unnatural to himself, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh," Eph. 5:29: Phil. 2:8, "But being a son, he learned submission, and became

obedient to the death, even the death of the cross;" that shameful, cruel, cursed death of the cross, the suffering whereof he owed to that solemn agreement, which from everlasting passed between his Father and himself, the third person in the blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit being witness. And therefore, though the cup was the bitterest cup which ever was given man to drink, as wherein there was not *death* only—but *wrath* and *curse*! Yet seeing there was no other way left of satisfying the justice of his Father, and of saving sinners—he most willingly he took the cup, and having given thanks, as it were, in those words, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" **never did bridegroom go with more cheerfulness to be married to his bride, than our Lord Jesus went to his cross**, Luke 12:50.

Though the cup that God the Father put into Christ's hand was bitter, very bitter, yes, the bitterest that ever was put into any hand—yet he found it sweetened with three ingredients. 1. It was but a cup, it was not a sea; 2. It was his Father, and not Satan, who mingled it, and who put in all the bitter ingredients that were in it; 3. It was a gift, not a curse, as to himself: "The cup which my Father gives me." He drank it, I say, and drank it up every drop, leaving nothing behind for his redeemed people, but large draughts of love and salvation, in the sacramental cup of his own institution, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, for the remission of sins; this do you in remembrance of me," 1 Cor. 11:25; Mat. 26:28. Thus, my friends, look upon Christ as mediator, in which capacity only he covenanted with his Father for the salvation of mankind; and there was not so much as a shadow of any receding from, or repenting of what he had undertaken. But,

**Answer. 2.** Secondly, As the sufferings of Jesus Christ were very free and voluntary, so they were very great and heinous. What agony, what torment was our Savior racked with! How deep were his wounds! How weighty his burden! How full of trembling his cup, when he lay under the mountains of the guilt of all the elect! How bitter were his tears! How painful his bloody sweat! How sharp his encounters! How dreadful his death! Who can compute how many vials of God's inexpressible, insupportable wrath which Christ drank off? In that 53rd chapter of Isaiah you may read of despisings, rejections, stripes, smitings, wounds,

sorrows, bruising, chastisements, oppressions, afflictions, cutting off, putting to grief, and pouring out of his soul to death; all these put together speaks out Christ to be a very great sufferer.

Isaiah 53:3, "He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief!" He was a man of sorrows, as if he were a man made up of sorrows: as the man of sin, as if he were made up of sin, as if he were nothing else. He knew more sorrows than any man, yes, than all men ever did; for the iniquity, and consequently the sorrows, of all men met in him as if he had been their center; and he was acquainted with griefs; grief was his familiar acquaintance, he had no acquaintance with laughter. **We never read that Jesus laughed at all, when he was in the world.** His other acquaintances stood afar off—but grief followed him to the cross. From his birth to his death, from his cradle to the cross, from the womb to the tomb, he was a man of sorrows, and never were sorrows like his; he might say, "Never grief or sorrow like mine!"

It is indeed impossible to express the sufferings and sorrows of Christ; and the Greek Christians used to beg of God, that for the *unknown* sufferings of Christ—he would have mercy upon them! Though Christ's sufferings are abundantly made known—yet they are but little known; eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it or can it enter into the heart of man to conceive what Christ suffered; "who has known the power of God's wrath?" Christ Jesus knew it, for he underwent it. His whole life was made up of suffering. He was no sooner born—but sufferings came trooping in upon him. He was born in an inn, yes, in a stable, and had but a feeding-trough for his cradle. As soon as his birth was noised abroad, Herod, under a pretense of worshiping of him, had a design to murder him, so that his supposed father was forced to fly into Egypt to secure his life. He was persecuted before he could, humanly speaking, be sensible of persecution. And as he grew up in years, so his sufferings grew up with him. Hunger and thirst, journeyings and weariness, scorns and reproaches, false accusations and contradictions still waited on him, and he had not where to lay his head.

1 Pet. 3:18, "Christ has suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous." This is the wonderment of angels, the happiness of fallen

man, and the torment of devils, etc., that Christ has suffered. The apostle's words look like a riddle, "Christ has suffered;" as if he should say, "read if you can, what he has suffered; as for my part his sufferings are so *many*, that in this short epistle I have no mind to record them; and they are so *grievous*, that my passionate love won't allow me to repeat them, and therefore I content myself thus abruptly to deliver them, "Christ has suffered." Christ's sufferings were unspeakable, his sufferings were unutterable; and therefore the apostle satisfies himself with this imperfect, broken speech, "Christ has suffered." Oh, what woes and lamentations, what cries and exclamations, what complaints and sorrows, what wringing of hands, what beating of breasts, what weeping of eyes, what wailing of tongues—belong to the speaking and hearing of this doleful tragedy!

Even in the prologue I tremble, and at the first entrance I am as perplexed, that I know not with what woeful gesture to act it, with what moanful voice to pronounce it, with what mournful words, with what pitiful speeches, with what emphatic phrases, with what interrupted accents, with what passionate compassionate plaints to express it. The multiplicity of the plot, and the variety of the acts and scenes is so intricate, that my memory fails to comprise it! The matter so important, and the story so excellent, that my tongue fails to declare it! The cruelty so savage, and the massacre so barbarous, that my heart even fails to consider it! Therefore I must needs content myself, with the apostle here, to speak but imperfectly of it, and think this enough to say, "Christ has suffered!" And well may I think this enough, for behold what perfection there is in this seeming imperfect speech. For,

First, To say indefinitely, he "suffered" without any limitation of time, what is it but to say that he always suffered without exception of time? And so indeed the prophet speaks of him, namely, "That he was a man of sorrows," Isa, 53:3. His whole life was filled up with sufferings. But,

Secondly, To say only he "suffered," and nothing else, what is it but to say that he patiently suffered; he never resisted, never rebelled, never opposed? "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb is silent before the shearer, so opened he not his mouth," Acts 8:32; Isaiah 53:7. "And when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he

threatened not," 1 Pet. 2:23. But,

Thirdly, To say precisely he "suffered," and no more, what is it but to say that he freely suffered, that he voluntarily suffered? Christ was under no force, no compulsion—but freely allowed himself to suffer, and voluntarily allowed the Jews to make him suffer, having power to stop himself from suffering if he had pleased. "I lay down my life, no man takes it from me—but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," John 10:17. But of this before.

Fourthly, To say plainly he "suffered," what is it but to say that he innocently suffered, that he wrongfully suffered? For had he been a malefactor, or an offender, it would have been said that he was punished, or that he was executed—but he was full of innocence—he was holy and harmless; and so it follows in that 1 Pet. 3:18, "The just for the unjust." But,

Fifthly, To say peremptorily he "suffered," what is it but to say that he principally suffered, that he excessively suffered? To say he suffered, what is it but to say he was the chief sufferer, the arch-sufferer? and that not only in respect of the manner of his sufferings, that he suffered absolutely so as never any person did—but also in respect of the measure of his sufferings, that he suffered excessively beyond what ever any person did. And thus we may well understand and take those words, "He suffered."

That lamentation of the prophet, Lam. 1:12, is very applicable to Christ, "Look and see! Is there any pain like mine, which was dealt out to me, which the Lord made me suffer on the day of His burning anger?" Now, is it not enough for the apostle to say that "Christ has suffered;" but will you yet ask what he suffered? But please, friends, be satisfied to know that Christ suffered for your sins. For what sufferings can you think of, that Christ did not suffer? Christ suffered in his birth, and he suffered in his life, and he suffered in his death. He suffered in his *body*, for he was diversely tormented. He suffered in his *soul*, for his soul was exceeding sorrowful. He suffered in his estate, they parted his clothing, and he had nowhere to rest his head. He suffered in his reputation, for he was called a Samaritan, a devilish sorcerer, a drunkard, an enemy to Caesar, etc. He suffered from heaven, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have

you forsaken me?" He suffered from the earth, when, being hungry, the fig-tree proved fruitless to him. He suffered from hell, Satan assaulting and encountering of him with his most black and horrid temptations. He *began* his life lowly and basely, and was sharply persecuted. He *continued* his life poorly and distressedly, and was cruelly hated. He *ended* his life woefully and miserably, and was most grievously tormented with whips, thorns, nails, and, above all, with the terrors of his Father's wrath and horrors of hellish agonies!

"I am the man who have sinned—but these sheep, what have they done?" said David, when he saw the angel destroying his people, 2 Sam. 24:17. And the same speech may everyone of us take up for ourselves and apply to Christ, and say, "I have sinned, I have done wickedly—but this sheep—this Lamb of God—what has he done?" Yes, much more cause have we than David had to take up this complaint. For,

First, David saw them die, whom he knew to be sinners—but we see him die, who "knew no sin," 2 Cor. 5:21. But,

Secondly, David saw them die a quick, speedy death; we see him die with lingering torments. He was a-dying from six to nine, Mat. 27:45-46. Now in this three hours' darkness, he was set upon by all the powers of darkness with utmost might and malice—but he foiled and spoiled them all, and made an open show of them, as the Roman conquerors used to do, triumphing over them on his cross, as on his chariot of state, Col. 2:15, attended by his vanquished enemies, with their hands bound behind them, Eph. 4:8. But,

Thirdly, David saw them die, who, by their own confession, was worth ten thousand of them; we see him die for us, whose worth admits no comparison. But,

Fourthly, David saw the Lord of glory destroying mortal men, and we see mortal men destroying the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. 2:8. Oh, how much more cause have we then to say as David, "I have sinned, I have done wickedly—but this innocent Lamb, the Lord Jesus, what has he done? What has he deserved, that he should be thus greatly tormented?" Tully, though a great orator—yet when he comes to speak of the death of the cross, he

lacks words to express it, "What shall I say of this death?" says he. But,

**Answer. 3.** Thirdly, As the *sufferings* of Christ were very great—just so, the **punishments** which Christ did suffer for our sins, these were in their kinds and parts and degrees and proportion—all those punishments which were due unto us by reason of our sins, and which we ourselves would otherwise have suffered. Whatever we would have suffered as sinners—all that did Christ suffer as our surety and mediator, always excepting those punishments which could not be endured without a pollution and guilt of sin: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him," Isaiah 53:5; and including the punishments common to the nature of man—arising out of imperfection and defect and distemper. Now, the punishments due to us for sin were *corporal* and *spiritual*. And again, they were the punishments of *loss*, and punishments of *sense*. All these did Christ suffer for us, which I shall evidence by an induction of particulars.

I. First, That Christ suffered corporal punishments is most clear in Scripture. You read of the injuries to his body—of the crown of thorns on his head, of the smiting of his cheeks, of spitting on his face, of the scourging of his body, of the cross on his back, of the vinegar in his mouth, of the nails in his hands and feet, of the spear in his side, and of his crucifying and dying on the cross: 1 Pet. 2:24, "Who himself in his own body bore our sins." 1 Cor. 15:3, "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." Rev. 1:5, "And washed us from our sins in his own blood." Col. 1:14, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Mat. 26:28, "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Christ suffered derision in every one of his **offices**.

First, In his *kingly* office. They put a scepter in his hand, a crown on his head, and bowed their knees, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Mat. 27:29.

Secondly, In his *priestly* office. "They put upon him a gorgeous white robe," such as the priests wore, Luke 23:11.

Thirdly, In his *prophetic* office. "When they had blindfolded him,

Prophecy, say they, who it is that smites you," Luke 22:64. Sometimes they said, "You are a Samaritan, and have a devil," John 8:48; and sometimes they said, "He's out of his mind!" Mark 3:21.

And as Christ suffered in everyone of his offices, so he suffered in every member of his **body**. He suffered in his **hearing**, by their reproaches, and crying, "Crucify him, crucify him!" He suffered in his **sight**, by their scoffings and scornful gestures. He suffered in his **smell**—in his being in that noisome place Golgotha, Mat. 27:33. He suffered in his **taste**, by his tasting of vinegar mingled with gall, which they gave him to drink, Mat. 27:33. He suffered in his **feeling**, by the thorns on his head, blows on his cheeks, spittle on his face, the spear in his side, and the nails in his hands. He suffered in all parts and members of his body from head to foot. His **head**, which deserved a better crown than the best in the world, was crowned with thorns, and they smote him on the head.

Osorius, writing of the sufferings of Christ, says, "That the crown of thorns bored his head with seventy-two wounds." To see that **head**, before which angels cast down themselves and worshiped, as I may say—crowned with thorns—might well astonish us! To see those **eyes**, which were purer than the sun, put out by the darkness of death; to see those **ears** which heard nothing but halleluiahs of saints and angels, to hear the blasphemies of the multitude; to see that **face** which was fairer than the sons of men—for being born and conceived without sin, he was freed from the contagious effects of it, deformity, and was most perfectly beautiful, Psalm 45:2; Cant. 5:10—to be spit on by those beastly, wretched Jews; to see that mouth and tongue, which "spoke as never man spoke," accused for false doctrines, nay blasphemy; to see those hands, which freely swayed the scepter of heaven, nailed to the cross; to see those feet, "like unto fine brass," Rev. 1:15, nailed to the cross for man's sins! Who can behold Christ thus suffering in all the members of his body, and not be struck with astonishment?

Who can sum up the horrible abuses that were put upon Christ by the vile guards? The evangelist tells us that they spit in his face and buffeted him, and that others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy unto us, you Christ, who is he who smote you?" Mat. 26:67-68; and, as Luke adds, "many other things blasphemously spoke they against

him," Luke 22:65. What those many other things were, is not made known; only some ancient writers say, "That Christ in that night suffered so many and such hideous things, that the whole knowledge of them is reserved only for the last day of judgment." Maldonatus writes thus, "After Caiaphas and the priests had sentenced Christ as worthy of death, they committed him to their ministers, to keep until day, and they immediately threw him into the dungeon in Caiaphas's house; there they bound him to a stony pillar, with his hands bound on his back, and then they fell upon him with their palms and fists." Others add that the soldiers, not yet content, they threw him into a filthy, dirty puddle, where he abode for the remainder of that night; of which the psalmist seems to speak, "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, and in the deeps, and I sink in the deep mire, where there is no standing," Psalm 88:6, and 69:2. But that you may clearly see what horrible abuses were put upon Christ by his guards, consider seriously of these particulars—

[1.] First, "**They spit in his face.**" Mat. 26:67. Now, this was accounted among the Jews a matter of great infamy and reproach: Num. 12:14, "And the Lord said to Moses, If her father had spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?" Spitting in the face among the Jews was a sign of anger, shame, and contempt! Job 30:10, "They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spit in my face." The face is the place of beauty or loveliness—and when it is spit upon—it is made the seat of shame. Spitting in the face was a sign of the greatest disgrace that could be put upon a person; and therefore it could not but be very bitter to see base beggars spit in Job's face, which was accustomed to be honored by princes. But this we are not to wonder at, for there is no indignity so base and ignominious, but the choicest saints may meet with it in and from this evil world.

Afflicted people are sacred things, and by the laws of nature and nations, should not be misused and trampled upon—but rather pitied and lamented over. But barbarous miscreants, when they have an opportunity, they will not spare to exercise any kind of cruelty, as you see by their spitting in the very face of Christ himself! "I hid not my face," says Christ, "from shame and spitting," Isaiah 50:6, 2. Though "I was fairer than the children of men," Psalm 45:2, yet I used no mask to keep me fair. Though "I was radiant and ruddy," "the chief among ten

thousand," Cant. 5:10, yet I preserved not my beauty from their nasty spittle. Oh, that that sweet and blessed face of Jesus Christ, that is so much honored and adored in heaven, should ever be spit upon by such beastly wretches!

[2.] Secondly, "**They struck him.**" John 18:22, "One of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Do you answer the high priest so?" Because our Savior gave not the high priest his usual titles—but dealt freely with him, this impious officer, to curry favor with his master, strikes him with his hand, with his rod, say some, with his stick, say others; like master like man. Oh, that that holy face which was designed to be the central object of heaven, in the beholding of which much of the celestial glory does consist—that that face which the angels stare upon with wonder, like infants at a bright sunbeam—should ever be smitten by a base varlet servant in the presence of a judge! Among all the sufferings of Christ, one would think that there was no great matter in this, that a vain officer did strike him with the palm of his hand—and yet if the Scriptures are consulted, you will find that the Holy Spirit lays a great stress upon it. Thus Jeremiah: "He gives his cheek to him who smites him; he is filled full with reproach," Lam. 3:30.

Christ did patiently and willingly take the stripes that vain men did injuriously lay upon him; he sustained all kinds of vexations from the hands of all kinds of ungodly ones. Thus Micah, speaking of Christ, says, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek," Micah 5:1. Hugo, by this Judge of Israel, understands our Lord Jesus Christ, who was indeed at his passion devastatingly "buffeted and smitten with rods upon the cheek," Mat. 26:67. By smiting the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek, they express their scorn and contempt of Christ. *Smiting upon the face* the apostle makes a sign of great reproach: 2 Cor. 11:20, "If a man smites you on the face." "There is nothing more disgraceful," says Chrysostom, "than to be smitten on the cheek." And the diverse reading of the original word does fully evidence it: "He struck him with a rod," or he struck him with the palm of his hand. Now, the word, say some, refers to his being struck with a rod, or club, or shoe. Others say it refers to his being struck with the palm of men's hands. Now, of the two, it is generally judged more disgraceful to be struck with the palm of

the hand than to be struck with either a rod or a shoe; and therefore we read the text thus, "He struck Jesus with the palm of his hand," that is, with open hand, or with his hand stretched out.

Some of the ancients, commenting on this cuff, say, "Let the heavens be afraid, and let the earth tremble, at Christ's patience and his servant's impudence! O you angels! how were you silent? how could you contain yourselves when you saw that soldier's hand striking at God?" "If we consider him," says another, "who took the blow, was not he who struck him worthy to be consumed by fire, or to be swallowed up by the earth, or to be given up to Satan, and thrown down into hell." Bernard says, "That his hand that struck Christ was armed with an iron glove." And Vincentius affirms, "That by the blow Christ was felled to the earth." And Ludovicus adds, "That blood gushed out of his mouth; and that the impression of the soldier's fingers remained on Christ's cheek with a swelling and bruised color." If a subject should but lift up his hand against a sovereign, would he not be severely punished? But should he strike him, would it not be present death? Oh, what desperate madness and wickedness was it then to strike the King of kings and Lord of lords, whom not only men—but the cherubim and seraphim, and all the celestial powers above, adore and worship? Rev. 17:16; Heb. 1:6.

Those monsters in that Mat. 26:67 did not only strike Christ with the palm of their hands—but they buffeted him also. Now, some of the learned observe this difference between the two words; the one is given with the open hand, the other with the fist shut up; and thus they used him at this time. They struck him with their fists, and so the stroke was greater and more offensive; for by this means they made his face to swell, and to become full of bunches all over. One gives it in thus: By these blows of their fists his whole head was swollen, his face became black and blue, and his teeth ready to fall out of his jaws. Very probable it is that, with the violence of their strokes, they made him reel and stagger, they made his mouth, and nose, and face to bleed, and his eyes to startle in his head.

Now, concerning Christ's sufferings on the **cross**, I shall only hint a few things, and so close up this particular concerning Christ's corporeal sufferings. Take me thus,

1. First, The death of Christ on the cross, it was a **bitter** death, a **sorrowful** death, a **bloody** death. The bitter thoughts of his sufferings put him into a most dreadful agony: Luke 22:44, "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground." The Greek word that is here used, signifies a striving or wrestling against, as two combatants or wrestlers do strive each against other. The things which our Savior strove against was not only the terror of death, as other men are accustomed to do—for then many Christians and martyrs might have seemed more fearless and courageous than he—but with the terrible justice of God, pouring out his high anger and indignation upon him on the account of all the sins of his chosen ones, which were laid upon him, than which nothing could be more dreadful, Isaiah 53:4-6. Christ was in a vehement conflict in his soul, through the deepest sense of his Father's wrath against sinners, for whom he now stood as a surety and Redeemer, 2 Cor. 5:21. And for a close of this particular, let me say that God's justice which we have provoked, being fully satisfied by the inestimable merit of Christ's sufferings—is the surest and highest ground of consolation that we have in this world! ut for the more full opening of this blessed scripture, let us take notice of these following particulars:

(1.) First, "His sweat was, as it were blood." Some of the ancients look upon these words only as a similitude or figurative hyperbole, it being a usual kind of speech to call a vehement sweat a bloody sweat, as he who weeps bitterly is said to weep tears of blood. But the most and best of the ancients, understand the words in a literal sense, and believe it was truly and properly a bloody sweat, and with them I close. But some will object, and say it was—as *it were* drops of blood. Now to this I answer, first, if the Holy Spirit had only intended that for a similitude or hyperbole, he would rather have expressed it—as it were drops of *water*, than "as it were drops of *blood*;" for we all know that sweat is more like to water than to blood.

But, secondly, I answer that '*as it were*', as in Scripture phrase, does not always denote a similitude—but sometimes the very thing itself, according to the verity of it. Take an instance or two instead of many: "We beheld his glory, *as* the glory of the only begotten of the Father." "Their words seemed to them *as it were* idle tales, and they believed them not." The words in the original are the same. Certainly Christ's sweat in the garden was an astonishing sweat, not a sweat of water—but of red gore-blood. But,

(2.) Secondly, He sweat great drops of blood, clotty blood, issuing through flesh and skin in great abundance—clotted or congealed blood. There is a thin faint sweat, and there is a thick clotted sweat. In this sweat of Christ blood came not from him in small dew—but in great drops, they were drops, and great drops of blood, crassy [thick, fat] and thick drops. Some read it droppings down of blood; that is, blood distilling in greater and grosser drops; and hence it is concluded as preternatural; for though much may be said for sweating blood in a course of nature, according to what Aristotle affirms, and Austin says that he knew a man who could sweat blood, even when he pleased; and it is granted on all hands that in faint bodies a subtle thin blood like sweat may pass through the pores of the skin—but that through the same pores thick, and great drops of blood should issue out—it was not, it could not be without a miracle. Certainly the drops of blood that fell from Christ's body were great, very great; yes, so great as if they had started through his skin to outrun the streams and rivers of his cross. But,

(3.) Thirdly, These great drops of blood did not only *drip out*—but *run down like a stream*, so fast, as if they had issued out of most deadly wounds. They were great "drops of blood falling down to the ground!" Here is *magnitude* and *multitude*; great drops, and those so many, so plenteous, as that they went through his apparel, and all streamed down to the ground; now was the time that his garments were dyed with crimson red. That of the prophet, though spoken in another sense—yet in some respect may be applied to this, "Why are your *garments* red, like those of one treading the winepress?" Isaiah 63:2. Oh, what a sight was here! His head and members are all in a bloody sweat, and this sweat trickles down, and bedecks his garments, which stood like a new sky,

studded with stars, portending an approaching storm. The blood does not stay in the garment—but it falls down to the ground. Oh, happy garden that was watered with such tears of blood! Oh, how much better are these rivers than Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, yes, than all the waters of Israel; yes, than all those rivers which water the garden of Eden!

So great was Scanderbeg's ardor in battle, that the blood burst out of his lips. But from our Champion—not his lips only—but his whole body, burst out a bloody sweat. Not his eyes only were fountains of tears, or his head waters, as Jeremiah wished, Jer. 9:1—but his whole body was turned, as it were, into rivers of blood. A sweet comfort to such as are cast down, because their sorrow for sin is not so deep and penetrating as they could desire.

*Christ's blood* is put in Scripture by a *synecdoche* of the part—for all the sufferings which he underwent for all the sins of the elect, especially his bloody death with all its accompaniments, so called. First, because death, especially when it is violent, is joined with the effusion of blood: "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the *blood* of the prophets," that is, of their *death*. Mat. 23:30. And so again, Pilate said, "I am innocent of the *blood* of this just person," that is, of his *death*, Mat. 27:24.

Secondly, Herein respect is had to all the sacrifices of the law, whose blood was poured out when they were offered up. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin," Heb. 9:22; so that the blood of Christ is the antitype aimed at in the blood of those sacrifices, which were slain for sinners' sins. But,

2. Secondly, as the death of Christ on the cross, was a *bitter* death, a *bloody* death—so the death of Christ on the cross was a **lingering** death. It was more for Christ to suffer one hour—than for us to have suffered forever. But his death was lengthened out, he hung three hours on the cross, he died many deaths before he could die one: "from the sixth until the ninth hour"—that is, from twelve until three in the afternoon—"there was darkness over all the land," Mat. 27:45. About twelve, when the sun is usually brightest, it began now to darken, and this darkness was so great

that it spread over all the land of Jerusalem; yes, some think over all the world. Just so, we translate it in Luke, "And there was darkness over all the earth," Luke 23:44, to show God's dislike of their horrid cruelty. He would not have the sun give light to so horrid an act. The sun as it were, hid his face that he might not see the Sun of righteousness so unworthily, so wickedly handled.

It was **dark**:

1. To show the blindness, darkness, and ignorance of the Jews in crucifying the Lord of glory;
2. To show God's detestation of the fact;
3. To show the vileness of our sins.

This darkness was not a natural eclipse of the sun; for, first, it cannot be so total, so general; nor secondly, it could not be so long, for the interposed moon goes swiftly away. Certainly this was no ordinary eclipse of the sun, seeing the Passover was kept at the full moon, when the moon stands right opposite to the sun on the other side of the heaven, and for this cause cannot hinder the light of the sun. this was a supernatural work of God coming to pass by miracle, "like as the darkness in Egypt," Exod. 10:22. The moon being now in the full, it being in the midst of the lunar month when the Passover was killed, and so of necessity the body of the moon—which sometimes eclipsed the sun by its interposition, and being between us and the sun—must be opposite to and distant from the sun the diametrical breadth of the hemisphere, the full moon ever rising at the sun's setting, and therefore this eclipse could never be a natural eclipse. Many Gentiles besides Jews observed this darkness as a great miracle. Dionysius the Areopagite, could say at first sight of it, "Either the world is ending, or the God of nature is suffering in this darkness."

Amos long before had prophesied: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day," Amos 8:9. The opinion of authors concerning the cause of this darkness are various. Some think that the sun by divine power, withdrew and held back its beams; others say that the obscurity was

caused by some thick clouds which were miraculously produced in the air, and spread themselves over all the earth; others say that this darkness was by a wonderful interposition of the moon, which at that time was at full—but by a miracle interposed itself between the earth and sun. Whatever was the cause of this darkness, it is certain that it continued for the space of three hours as dark as the darkest winter nights.

About three in the afternoon, Mat. 27:46, the sun now beginning to receive his light, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And then, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said "I thirst;" and when he had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished," John 19:28, 30. And at last, crying with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit;" and having said thus, "he gave up the Spirit," Luke 23:46. Christ's words were ever gracious—but never more gracious than at this time. You cannot find in all the books and writings of men, in all the annals and records of time, either such *sufferings* or such *sayings*, as were these last words and wounds, sayings and sufferings of Jesus Christ. "And having said thus, he gave up the Spirit;" or as John relates it, "He bowed his head and gave up the Spirit," John 19:30. Christ would not come off the cross until all was done—which he was here to accomplish. Christ bowed not because he was dead—but first he bowed and then died; that is, he died freely and willingly without constraint, and he died cheerfully and comfortably without murmuring or repining. Oh, what a wonder of love is this, that Jesus Christ, who is the author of life, the fountain of life, the Lord of life, that he should so freely, so readily, so cheerfully lay down his life for us!

About four in the afternoon he was pierced with a spear, and there issued out of his side, both blood and water: "One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out." John 19:34. Out of the side of Christ, being now dead, there issues *water* and *blood*, signifying that he is both our *justification* and *sanctification*.

Thus was fulfilled that which was long before foretold: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced," Zech. 12:10. Thus "Jesus came by water and by blood," 1 John 5:6. Thus was there "a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," even to all the elect,

"for sin and for uncleanness," Zech. 13:1. The soldier's malice lived when Christ was dead. The water and blood forthwith issuing out as soon as it was pierced with a spear, did evidently show that he was truly dead. It is very likely that the very pericardium was pierced. Now the pericardium is a film or skin, like unto a purse, wherein is contained clear water to cool the heat of the heart. The *blood*, says one, signifies the perfect expiation of the sins of the Church. And the *water*, the daily washing and purging of it from the remainder of her corruption. "Water and blood issued out of Christ's side," says another, "to teach us that Christ justifies none by his merit—but such whom he sanctifies by his Spirit." Christ was pierced with a spear, and water and blood presently issued out of his side, that his enemies might not object that he rose again because he was but *half dead* on the cross, and being so taken down he revived in the grave. To testify the contrary truth, John so seriously affirms the certainty of his death, he being an eye-witness of the streaming out of Christ's blood as he stood by Christ's cross. O gates of heaven! O windows of paradise! O palace of refuge! O tower of strength! O sanctuary of the just! O flourishing bed of the spouse of Solomon! Methinks I see water and blood running out of his side more freshly than these golden streams which ran out of the garden of Eden and watered the whole world. But here I may not dwell, etc.

But to shut up this particular, about five, which the Jews call the eleventh and the last hour of the day, Christ was taken down and buried by Joseph and Nicodemus. But,

3. Thirdly, As the death of Christ on the cross was a lingering death, so the death of Christ was a **painful** death. This appears several ways.

[1.] First, His legs and hands were violently racked and pulled out to the places fitted for his fastenings, and then pierced through with nails. His hands and feet were nailed, which parts being full of sinews, and therefore very tender, his pains could not but be very acute and sharp.

[2.] Secondly, By this means he lacked the use both of his hands and feet, and so he was forced to hang immovable upon the cross, as being unable to turn any way for his ease, and therefore he could not but be under very dolorous pains.

[3.] Thirdly, The longer he lived, the more he endured; for by the weight of his body his wounds were opened and enlarged, his nerves and veins were rent and torn asunder, and his blood gushed out more and more abundantly still. Now the envenomed arrows of God's wrath shot to his heart. This was the direful catastrophe, and caused that vociferation and outcry upon the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The justice of God was now inflamed and heightened to its full. Romans 8:32, "God spared not his Son;" God would not abate one farthing of the debt. But,

[4.] Fourthly, He died by piece-meals, he died little by little, he died not all at once. He who died on the cross, was long a-dying. Christ was kept a great while upon the rack; it was full three hours between his crucifixion and his expiration; and certainly it would have been longer if he had not freely and willingly given up the Spirit. I have read that Andrew the apostle was two whole days on the cross before he died; and so long might Christ have been a-dying, if God had not supernaturally heightened the degrees of his torment. Doubtless when Christ was on the cross he felt the very pains of hell, though not locally—yet equivalently. But,

4. Fourthly, As the death of Christ on the cross was a painful death, so the death of Christ on the cross was a **shameful** death. Christ was hung between two thieves—as if he had been the principal malefactor, Mark 27:38. Here they placed him to make the world believe that he was the great ringleader of such men. Christ was crucified in the midst as the chief of sinners—that we might have place in the midst of heavenly angels. One of these thieves went railing to hell, the other went repenting right forth to heaven, living long in a little time, Zech. 3:7.

If you ask me the names of these two thieves who were crucified with Christ, I must answer, that although the Scripture nominates them not—yet some writers give them these names, Dismas and Gesmas; Dismas the happy, and Gesmas the miserable thief, according to the poet—  
When Gesmas died, to hell he was sent;  
When Dismas died, up to heaven he went.

Well might the lamp of heaven withdraw its light and mask itself with darkness, as blushing to behold the Sun of righteousness hanging

between two thieves! He shall be an Apollo to me—who can tell me which was the greater, the *suffering* of the cross, or the *shame* of the cross, Heb. 12:2. It was a mighty shame that Saul's sons were hanged on a tree, 2 Sam. 21:6. Oh, what a shameful death was it for Christ to hang on a tree between two notorious thieves! But,

5. Fifthly and lastly, As the death of Christ was a shameful death, so the death of Christ was a **cursed** death. "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree," Deut. 21:23. The *death on the tree* was accursed above all kinds of death—"as the serpent was accursed above all beasts of the field," Gen. 3:14, both for the first transgression, whereof the serpent was the instrument, the tree the occasion. Since the death of any malefactor might be a monument of God's curse for sin, it may be questioned, why this brand is peculiarly set upon this kind of punishment; that he who is hanged is accursed of God. To which I answer, because this was esteemed the most *shameful*, the most *dishonorable* and *infamous* of all kinds of death; and was usually therefore the punishment of those who had by some notorious wickedness provoked God to pour out his wrath upon the whole land, and so were hanged up to appease his wrath, as we may see in the hanging of those princes who were guilty of committing whoredom with the daughters of Moab, Num. 25:4; and in the hanging of those sons of Saul in the days of David, when there was a famine in the land, because of Saul's treacherous oppressing of the Gibeonites, 2 Sam. 21:6.

Nor was it without cause, that this kind of death was both by the Israelites and other nations esteemed the most shameful and accursed; because the very manner of the death did intimate that such men as were thus executed were such execrable and accursed wretches, that defiled the earth with treading upon it, and would pollute the earth if they should die upon it; and therefore were so trussed up in the air as not fit to live among men; and that others might look upon them as men made spectacles of God's indignation and curse, because of the wickedness they had committed, which was not done in other kinds of death. And hence it was that the Lord God would have his Son, the Lord Christ, to suffer this kind of death, that even hence it might be the more evident, that in his death he bore the curse due to our sins, according to the apostle: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law—being made a curse for us; for

it is written, *Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree,*" Gal. 3:13. The Chaldee translates it, "For because he sinned before the Lord—he is hanged." The *tree* whereon a man was hanged, the *stone* wherewith he was stoned, the *sword* wherewith he was beheaded, and the *napkin* with which his face was covered—they were all buried, that there might be no evil memorial of such a one, to say—This was the tree, sword, stone, napkin—with which Jesus was executed.

This kind of death was so execrable, that Constantine made a law that no Christian should die upon the cross; he abolished this kind of death out of his empire. When this kind of death was in use among the Jews, it was chiefly inflicted upon slaves, who either falsely accused, or treacherously conspired their master's death. But on whoever it was inflicted, this death in all ages among the Jews had been branded with a special kind of ignominy; and so much the apostle signifies when he says, "He abased himself to the death—even to the death of the cross," Phil. 2:2. I know Moses' law speaks nothing in particular of crucifying—yet he does include the same under the general of hanging on a tree; and some conceive that Moses, in speaking of that curse, foresaw what manner of death the Lord Jesus should die. And let thus much suffice concerning Christ's sufferings on the cross, or concerning his **bodily** sufferings.

II. I shall now, in the second place, speak concerning **Christ's SPIRITUAL sufferings**, his sufferings in his soul, which were exceeding high and great. Now here I shall endeavor to do two things: First, To prove that Christ suffered in his soul, and so much the rather because that the papists say and write, that Christ did not truly and properly and immediately suffer in his soul—but only by way of sympathy and compassion with his body to the mystical body; and that his bare bodily sufferings were sufficient for man's redemption. Second, That the sufferings of Christ in his soul were exceeding high and great. For the first, that Christ suffered in his soul, I shall thus demonstrate.

(1.) First, **Express Scriptures do evidence this:** Isaiah 53:10, "When

you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed," etc.; John 12:27, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour—but for this cause came I unto this hour;" Mat. 26:37-38, "He *began* to be sorrowful and very heavy." These were but the *beginnings* of sorrow: he *began*, etc. Sorrow is a thing which drinks up our spirits, and he was heavy, as feeling a heavy load upon him; verse 38, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Christ was as full of sorrow as his heart could hold. Every word is emphatic—"My soul;" his sorrow pierced his heaven-born soul. As the soul was the first agent in transgression, so it is here the first agent in affliction. The sufferings of his body—were but the body of his sufferings. The soul of his sufferings—were the sufferings of his soul, which was now beset with sorrows, and heavy as heart could hold. Christ was sorrowful, his soul was sorrowful, his soul was exceeding sorrowful, his soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death.

Christ's soul was in such extremity of sorrow, that it made him cry out, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass;" and this was with "strong cryings and tears," Heb. 5:7. To cry, and to cry with a loud voice, argues great extremity of sufferings. Mark 14:33 says, "And he began to be filled with horror and deep distress!" Or we may more fully express it thus, according to the original, He begun to be terrified with horror, and to be satiated, filled brimful with heaviness—a very sad condition! All the sins of the elect, like a huge army, meeting upon Christ—made a dreadful onset on his soul! Luke 22:43-44, it is said "He was in an agony." That is—a conflict in which a poor creature wrestles with deadly pangs, with all his might, mustering up all his faculties and force to grapple with them and withstand them. Thus did Christ struggle with the indignation of the Lord, praying once and again with more intense fervency, "Oh, that this cup may pass away! If it is possible, let this cup pass away!" Luke 22:42-43; while an angel strengthened his outward man from utter sinking in the conflict.

Now, if this weight which Christ bore, had been laid on the shoulders of all the angels in heaven—it would have sunk them down to the lowest hell! It would have cracked the axle-tree of heaven and earth. It made his blood startle out of his body in congealed clotted heaps. The heat of God's

fiery indignation made his blood to boil up until it ran over; yes, divine wrath affrighted it out of its accustomed channel. The *creation of the world* cost him but a *word*; he spoke and the world was made! But the *redemption of souls* cost him bloody sweats and soul-distress. What conflicts, what strugglings with the wrath of God! With the powers of darkness! What weights! what burdens! what wrath did he undergo when his soul was heavy unto death "beset with terrors," as the word implies, when he drank that bitter cup, that cup of bitterness, that cup mingled with curses—which made him sweat drops of blood! which, if men or angels had but sipped of, it would have made them reel, stagger, and tumble into hell!

The soul of Christ was overcast with a cloud of God's displeasure. The Greek Church, speaking of the sufferings of Christ, calls them "*unknown sufferings*." Ah Christians! who can speak out this sorrow? "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity—but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Proverbs 18:14. Christ's soul is *sorrowful*—but give me that word again, his soul is *exceeding* sorrowful—but if that word be yet too low, then I must tell you that "his soul was exceeding sorrowful—even unto death!" Not only *extensively* sorrowful, such as must continue for the space of seventeen or eighteen hours, even until death itself should finish it—but also *intensively* such. Of this sorrow is that especially spoken, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto Me, with which the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger," Lam. 1:12.

Many a sad and sorrowful soul has, no question, been in the world—but the like sorrow to Jesus'—has never been seen since the creation. The very terms or phrases used by the evangelists speak no less. He was "sorrowful and heavy," says one; "amazed, and very heavy," says another; "in an agony," says a third; "in a soul-trouble," says a fourth. Certainly, the *bodily* torments of the cross were much inferior, to the agony of his *soul*. The pain of the body—is the body of pain. Oh—but the very soul of sorrow—is the soul's sorrow, and the very soul of pain is the soul's pain.

(2.) Secondly, That which Christ assumed or took of our nature, he assumed to this end—to suffer in it; and by suffering, to save and redeem it. But he took the whole nature of man, both body and soul;

consequently, he suffered in both.

First, the assumption is evident, and needs no proof; that Christ took upon him both our soul and body, the apostle assures us, where he says, "That in all things it became him to be like unto us," Heb. 2:17; therefore he had both body and soul as we have.

Secondly, concerning the proposition, namely, That what Christ took of our nature, he took it by suffering in it properly and immediately—to redeem us. Now this is evident by that blessed word, where the apostle says, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." Hebrews 2:14-15. Hence I reason thus, that wherein Christ delivered us, he took part with us in—but he delivered us from fear of death; accordingly, he did therein communicate with us. Now mark, this fear was the proper and immediate passion of the soul, namely, the fear of death and God's anger. And the text gives this sense, Because the fear of this death kept them in bondage—but the fear only of the bodily death does not bring us into such bondage; witness that Song of Zacharias; "That we, being delivered from the hands of our enemies, should serve him without fear," Luke 1:74. This then is a spiritual fear, from the which Christ did deliver us; consequently, he did communicate with us in this fear; for the apostle says, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Heb. 2:18. Certainly that fear which fell on Christ was a real fear, and it was in his soul, and did not arise from the mere contemplation of bodily torments only, for the very martyrs in the encountering with them have feared little. Assuredly there was some great matter that lay upon the very soul of Christ, which made him so heavy, and sorrowful, and so afraid, and in such an agony.

But if you please, take this second argument in another form of words, thus: what Christ took of ours, that he in suffering offered up for us, for his assuming of our nature, was for this end, to suffer for us in our nature—but he took our nature in body and in soul, and he delivered our souls as well as our bodies; and the sins of our *souls* did need his sacrifice as well as the sins of our *bodies*; and our souls were crucified with Christ, as

well as our bodies. Surely if our whole man was lost—then our whole man needs the benefit and help of a whole Savior; and if Christ had assumed only our flesh, our body—then our souls adjudged, adjudged to punishment, had remained under transgression without hope of pardon.

Several sayings of the ancients does further strengthen this argument. Take a taste of some. "If the whole man perished, the whole man needed a Savior. Christ therefore took the whole man, body and soul. If he had taken only flesh, the soul should remain liable to punishment of the first transgression, without hope of pardon. By the same reason, Christ must also suffer properly in soul, because not by taking our soul—but by satisfying in his soul, our soul is delivered."

"He took all our passions, or affections, to sanctify them all in himself—but Christ was sanctified and consecrated by his death, and so does he consecrate us," says Damascene. "For by one offering, he has perfected forever, those who are sanctified," Heb. 10:14. Consequently, by his offering of his soul, and suffering in his soul, has he consecrated our soul and affections.

He took my heart to amend it, etc. Now he has amended it, in that he consecrated it by his offering, Heb. 10:14; He has taken that for us, which was most in danger for us, etc., that is, our soul. But Christ has not otherwise delivered us from the danger—but by entering into the danger for us; this danger of the soul is the fear and feeling of God's wrath.

(3.) Thirdly, **Christ bore our sorrows**, Isaiah 53:4. Now what sorrows should we bear—but the sorrows due unto us for our sins; and surely these were not *corporal* only—but *spiritual* also, and those did Christ bear in his soul. The same prophet says, verse 10, "He shall make his soul an offering for sin;" accordingly, Christ offered his soul as well as his body. Again, our Savior himself says, "My soul is very heavy unto death," Mat. 26:38. Certainly it was not the bodily death which Christ feared, for then he would have been weaker than many martyrs, yes, than many of the Romans, who made no more of dying, than of dining; therefore Christ's *soul* was truly and properly stricken with heaviness, and not with the beholding of *bodily* torments only, as some dream. But,

(4.) Fourthly, That whereby Adam and we ever since, do most properly commit sin (in our souls)—by his soul sufferings, has Christ, the second Adam, made satisfaction properly for our sin. But Adam did, and we all do properly commit sin in our *souls*; our *bodies* being but the instruments. Consequently, Christ by, and in his soul, has properly made satisfaction.

[1.] First, The truth of the **proposition** is confirmed by the apostle, "As by one man's disobedience we are made sinners, so by the obedience of one, the many shall be made righteous," Romans 5:19. Christ then satisfied for us by the same way wherein Adam disobeyed. Now Adam's *soul* was in the transgression as well as his *body*, and accordingly was Christ's very soul in his sufferings and satisfaction, and Christ obeyed, that is, in his soul; for obedience belongs to the soul, as one observes upon those words of the apostle: Phil. 2:8, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Who does not understand," says the same author, "that obedience belongs to the human soul?"

That there is a kind of *dying in the soul* when it is pierced with grief, besides the death of the soul, either by sin or damnation—is not disagreeing to the Scripture. Simeon says to Mary, "A sword shall pierce through your soul," Luke 2:35. Look, as then the body dies, being pierced with a sword, so the soul may be said to die or languish, when it is pierced with grief. What else is crucifying but dying? Now, the soul is said to be crucified, as is evident by that passage of the apostle, "I am crucified to the world," Gal. 6:14, when as yet his body was alive.

[2.] Secondly, For the **assumption**.

1. However it is admitted that *the body is the instrument of the soul*, both in sinning and suffering—yet the conclusion is this—that because sin is committed in the soul principally and properly, therefore the satisfaction must be made in the soul principally and properly. The bodily pains affecting the soul are not the proper passions of the soul, neither is the soul said to suffer properly, when the body suffers—but by way of compassion and consent.

2. We grant that in the proper and immediate sufferings of the *soul*, the

body also is affected: as when Christ was in his agony in the garden—his whole body was therewith stirred and moved, and it did sweat drops of blood. But it is one thing when the grief begins immediately in the soul and so affects the body, and when the pain is first inflicted upon the body and so works upon the soul, there the soul suffers properly and principally; of which sufferings we speak here neither properly nor principally, which is not the thing in question.

3. It is not the reasonable soul which is affected with the body, for it is a ground in philosophy that the soul suffers not—but only the sensitive part. But the grief that we speak of, which is an atonement for sin, must be in the very reasonable soul where sin took the beginning, and so Ambrose says upon those words of Christ, "My soul is heavy to death." It is referred to the assumption of the reasonable soul, and human affection.

Pride, ambition and infidelity began in Adam's *soul*, and had their determination there. In the committing of those sins, the *body* had no part. Indeed with the ear they heard the suggestion of Satan—but it was no sin until in their minds they had consented unto it. Therefore seeing the first sin committed was properly and wholly in the soul—for the same the soul must properly and wholly satisfy.

Because sin took beginning from Adam's soul, the satisfaction also must begin in Christ's soul—as Ambrose says, "I begin there to win in Christ, where in Adam I was overcome." Then it follows that the sufferings of Christ's soul took beginning there, and were not derived by sympathy from the stripes and pain of the body. We infer, then, that therefore Christ's soul had proper and immediate sufferings, besides those which proceeded from sympathy with his body, and all Christ's sufferings were satisfactory. Consequently, Christ did satisfy for our sins properly and immediately, in his soul.

But if you please, take this fourth argument in another form of words, thus—The punishment which was pronounced against the first Adam, our first surety, and in him against us—that same punishment, did Christ, the second Adam, our next and best surety, bear for us—or else it must still lie upon us to suffer the punishment ourselves. But the punishment threatened and denounced against Adam for transgression, was not only

corporal, respecting our bodies—but spiritual also, respecting our souls. There was a spiritual malediction due unto our souls, as well as a corporal, etc.

Look, as God put a sanction on the law and covenant of works made with all of us in Adam, that he and his posterity should be liable to death, both of body and soul; which covenant being broken by sin, all sinners became liable to the death in both of body and soul; so it was necessary that the redeemed should be delivered from the death of both by the Redeemer's tasting of death in both kinds, as much as should be sufficient for their redemption. O sirs, as sin infected the whole man, soul and body, and the curse following on sin left no part nor power of the man's soul free; just so, justice required that the Redeemer, coming in the place of the people redeemed, should feel the force of the curse both in body and soul. But,

(5.) Fifthly, "He shall see of the travail of his soul," Isaiah 53:11. Here the soul is taken properly, and the travail of Christ's soul is his sufferings; for it follows, "and he shall bear their iniquities." But,

(6.) Sixthly, Christ gave himself for his people's sins. "Who gave himself for our sins," Tit. 2:14; "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquities," etc., Eph. 5:25; 1 Tim. 2:6. But the *body* only is not himself; consequently, the apostle says, Phil. 2:7, "Christ did empty (or evacuate) himself;" or, as Tertullian expounds it, "he drew out himself, or was exhausted himself," which agrees with the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 9:26, "Messiah shall have nothing, being brought to nothing by his death, without life, strength, esteem, honor," etc. Hence we conclude that if Christ were exhausted upon the cross, if nothing was left him, that he suffered in body and soul, that there was no part within or without free from the cross—but all was emptied and poured out for our redemption.

Again, we read that Christ, "through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God," Heb. 9:14. Whatever was in Christ, did either offer or was offered; his eternal Spirit only did offer; consequently, his whole human nature, both body and soul, was offered. Thus Origen witnesses in these words, "See how our true priest, Jesus Christ, taking the censer of his human flesh, putting to the fire of the altar—that is, his magnificent soul, wherewith he was born in the flesh—and adding incense—that is, an

immaculate spirit—stood in the midst between the living and the dead. Thus you see that he makes Christ's soul a part in the sacrifice."

(7.) Seventhly and lastly, Christ's love unto man, in suffering for him, was in the highest degree and greatest measure that could be; as the Lord says, "What could I have done any more for my vineyard that I have not done unto it?" But if Christ had given his *body* only, and not his *soul* for us—he had not done for us all he could, and so his love should have been greatly impaired and diminished. Consequently, he gave his soul also, together with his body, to be the full price of our redemption. And certainly the travail and labor of Christ's soul was most acceptable unto God. "Therefore I will give him a portion with the great, because he has poured out his soul unto death," etc., "and bore the sins of many," Isaiah 53:12. Doubtless the sufferings of Christ in his *soul*, together with his *body*—does most fully and amply commend and set forth God's great love to poor sinners. Before I close up this particular, take a few testimonies of the fathers, which do witness with us for the sufferings of Christ—both in soul and body.

It is evident that as his *body* was whipped—just so, his *soul* was truly and truly grieved, lest some part of Christ's suffering should be true, some part false. Consequently, Christ's soul as properly and truly suffered as his body. The soul had her proper grief, as the body had whipping; the whipping, then, of the body was not the proper grief of the soul. Whole Christ gave himself, and whole Christ offered himself; consequently, he offered his soul, not only to suffer by way of compassion with his body, as it may be answered—but he offered it as a sacrifice, and suffered all passions whatever incident to the soul. The same author expounds himself further thus: "Because this God took whole man, therefore he showed in truth in himself the passions of whole man; and having a reasonable soul, whatever infirmities of the soul without sin he took and bare." If Christ, then, did take and bear all the passions of the soul without sin, then the proper and immediate grief and anguish thereof, and not the compassion only with the body. To these let me add the consent of the Reformed churches: "Christ did suffer both in body and soul, and was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted."

Now the testimonies of the fathers, and the consent of the Reformed

churches, affirming the same, that Christ was crucified in his soul, and that he gave his soul a price of redemption for our souls. . . . Who can then doubt of this—but that Christ truly, properly, immediately suffered in his soul, in all the proper passions thereof, as he endured pains and torments in his flesh; and if you please, this may go for an eighth argument to prove that Christ suffered in his soul.

2. Secondly, That **the sufferings of Christ in his soul were very high, and great, and astonishing, both as to the punishment of LOSS, and as to the punishment of SENSE.** All which I shall make evident in these four particulars:

[1.] First, That Jesus Christ did really suffer neglect from God; that he was indeed deserted and forsaken by God is most evident: Mat. 27:46, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But to prevent mistakes in this high point, seriously consider, 1. That I do not mean that there was any such desertion of Christ by God as did dissolve the union of the natures in the person of Christ. [Forsaken, 1. By denying of protection; 2. By withdrawing of solace: The union was not dissolved—but the beams, the influence was restrained. —Leo.] For Christ in all his sufferings still remained God and man. Nor, 2, do I mean an absolute desertion in respect of the presence of God. For God was still present with Christ in all his sufferings, and the Godhead did support his humanity in and under his sufferings. But that which I mean is this—that as to the sensible and comforting manifestations of God's presence, thus he was for a time left and forsaken of God. God for a time had taken away all sensible consolation and felt joy from Christ's human soul, so that divine justice might in his sufferings be the more fully satisfied. In this desertion, Christ is not to be looked upon simply as he is in his own person, the Son of the Father, Mat. 3:17, in whom he is always well pleased, Mark 1:11—but as he stands in the room of sinners, surety and cautioner, paying their debt; in which respect it concerned Christ to be dealt with as one standing in our stead, as one guilty, and paying the debt of being forsaken of God, which we were bound to suffer fully and forever, if he had not interposed for us.

There is between Christ and God, 1. An eternal union natural of the person; 2. Of the Godhead and manhood; 3. Of grace and protection. In

this last sense, he means forsaken according to his feeling. Hence he said not, My Father, my Father—but, My God, my God; which words are not words of complaining—but words expressing his grief and sorrow. Our Lord Christ was forsaken, not only of all creature comforts—but that which was worse than all, of his Father's favor, to his present apprehension, left forlorn and destitute for a time, that we might be received forever. Christ was for a time left and forsaken of God, as David, who in this particular was a type of Christ's suffering, cried out, Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? why are you so far from my help?" He was indeed really forsaken of God; God did indeed leave him in respect of his sense and feeling. ["My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." Christ spoke these words that thereby he might draw the Jews to a serious consideration of his death and passion, which he underwent, not for his own but for our sins.] So was Christ truly and really forsaken of God, and not in pretense or show, as some affirm. Athanasius, speaking of God's forsaking of Christ, says, "All things were done naturally and in truth, not in opinion or show." Though God did still continue a God to David—yet in David's apprehension and feeling he was forsaken of God. Though God was still a God to Christ—yet as to his feeling he was left of God, to wrestle with God, and to bear the wrath of God, due unto us. Look, as Christ was scourged, that we might not be scourged, so Christ was forsaken, that we might not be forsaken. Christ was forsaken for a time, that we might not be forsaken forever (Ambrose).

Fevardentius absolutely denies that Christ did truly complain upon the cross that he was forsaken of God; and therefore he thus objects and reasons: "If Christ were truly forsaken of God, it would follow that the hypostatic union was dissolved, and that Christ was personally separated from God, for otherwise he could not be forsaken."

To what he objects we thus reply, first, If Christ had been totally and eternally forsaken, the personal union must have been dissolved—but upon this temporal and partial rejection there follows not a personal or general dissolution. But secondly, As the body of Christ, being without life, was still hypostatically united to the Godhead, so was the soul of Christ, though for a time without feeling of his favor. The forsaking of the

one does no more dissolve the hypostatic union than the death of the other. If life went from the body, and yet the deity was not separated in the personal consecration—but only suspended in operation, so the feeling of God's favor, which is the life of the soul, might be intermitted in Christ, and yet the divine union not dissolved.

Thirdly, Augustine does well show how this may be when he says, That the passion of Christ was the sweet sleep of his divinity; like as when in sleep the soul is not departed, though the operation thereof be deferred; so in Christ's sleep upon the cross the Godhead was not separated, though the working power thereof were for a time sequestered. Look, as the elect members of Christ may be forsaken, though not totally or finally—but in part and for a time, and yet their election remain firm still; the same may be the case of our head, that he was only in part forsaken, and for a time, always beloved for his own innocency—but for us and in our person, as our pledge and surety, deserted.

There are two kinds of forsaking; one is for a time and in part; so the elect may be, and so Christ was forsaken upon the cross: another which is total, final, and general; and so neither Christ nor his members ever was nor never shall be forsaken. Christ, in the deepest anguish of his soul, is upheld and sustained by his faith, "My God, my God," whereby he shows his singular confidence and trust in God, notwithstanding the present sense of his wrath.

QUESTION. But how can Christ be forsaken of God, himself being God; for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all three but one and the same God? Yes, how can he be forsaken of God, seeing he is the Son of God? and if the Lord leaves not his children, who hope and trust in him, how can he forsake Christ, his only-begotten Son, who depended upon him and his mighty power?

Answer. 1. First, By God here we are to understand God the Father, the first person of the blessed Trinity. According to the vulgar and common rule, when God is compared with the Son or Holy Spirit, then the Father is meant by this title God; not that the Father is more God than the Son—for in dignity all the three people are equal—but they are distinguished in order only; and thus the Father is the first person, the Son the second,

and the Holy Spirit the third.

Answer. 2. Secondly, Our Savior's complaint, that he was forsaken, must be understood in regard of his human nature, and not of his Godhead; although the Godhead and manhood were never severed from the first time of his incarnation—but the Godhead of Christ, and so the Godhead of the Father, did not show forth his power in his manhood—but did as it were lie asleep for a time, that the manhood might suffer.

Answer. 3. Thirdly, Christ was not indeed utterly forsaken of God in regard of his human nature—but only as it were forsaken—that is, although there were some few minutes and moments in which he received no sensible consolations from the Deity—yet that he was not utterly forsaken is most clear from this place, where he flees unto the Lord as unto his God, "My God, my God," as also from his resurrection the third day.

Answer. 4. Fourthly, Divines say that there are six kinds of forsakings—

1. By disunion of person;
2. By loss of grace;
3. By diminution and weakenings of grace;
4. By lack of assurance of future deliverance and present support;
5. By denial of protection;
6. By withdrawing of all solace and comfort.

Now it is foolish and impious to think that Christ was forsaken any of the first four ways, for the unity of his person was never dissolved, his graces were never either taken away or diminished, neither was it possible that he should lack assurance of future deliverance and present support that was eternal God and Lord of life. But the two last ways he may rightly be said to have been forsaken, in that his Father denied to protect and keep him out of the hands of his cruel, bloody, and merciless enemies, no ways restraining them—but allowing them to do the uttermost that their

wicked hearts could imagine, and left him to endure the extremity of their fury and malice. And, that nothing might be lacking to make his sorrows beyond measure sorrowful, withdrew from him that solace and comfort that he was accustomed to find in God, and removed far from him all things for a little time that might any way lessen and assuage the extremity of his pain.

[2.] Secondly, That Jesus Christ did feel and suffer the wrath of God which was due unto us for our sins. The prophet Isaiah, chapter 53:4, says, "That he was plagued and smitten of God"; and verse 5, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." To be plagued and smitten of God is to feel and suffer the stroke of his wrath. And so to be chastised of God, as to make peace with God or to appease him, is so to suffer the wrath of God as to satisfy God and to remove it. And truly how Christ should possibly escape the feeling of the wrath of God incensed against our sins, he standing as a surety for us with our sins laid upon him, and for them fully to satisfy the justice of God, is not Christianly or rationally imaginable.

And whereas some do object that Christ was always the beloved of his Father, and therefore could never be the object of God's wrath:

I answer, By distinguishing of the person of Christ, whom his Father always loved, and as sustaining our sins, and in our room standing to satisfy the justice of God; and as so the wrath of God fell upon him and he bore it, and so satisfied the justice of God, that we thereby are now delivered from wrath through him. Just so, the apostle, Romans 5:9, "Much more, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath by him;" 1 Thes. 1:10, "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

It is a groundless conceit of some learned heads, who deny the cause of Christ's agony to be the drinking of that cup of wrath that was given to him by his Father, John 18:11, saying that the sight of it only, and of the peril he saw we were in, was the cause of his agony; for the cup was not only showed unto him, and the great wrath due to our sins set before him, that he should see it and tremble at the apprehension of the danger we were in—but it was poured not only on him—but into him, that he for the

sins of his redeemed ones should suffer it sensibly, and drink it, that the bitterness thereof might affect all the powers of his soul and body; for the Scripture does sufficiently testify that not only upon the sight and apprehension of this wrath and curse coming on him the holy human nature did holily abhor it—but also that he submitted to receive it upon the consideration of the divine decree and agreement made upon the price to be paid by him, and that upon the feeling of this wrath, this agony in his soul, the bloody sweat of his body was brought on. [Heb. 5:7; Mat. 26:38, 39, 42, 44; 1 Cor. 6:20, and 7:23.]

QUESTION. But how could the pourings forth of the Father's wrath upon his innocent and dear Son, consist with his Fatherly love to him? etc.

ANSWER. Even as the innocency and holiness of Christ could well consist with his taking upon him the punishment of our sins; for even the wrath of a just man, inflicting capital punishment on a condemned person, even if it is his own child, can well consist with fatherly affection towards his child suffering punishment. Did you never see a father weep over such a son that he has corrected most severely? Did you never see a judge shed tears for those very people that he has condemned? There is no doubt but wrath and love can well consist in God, in whom affections do not war one with another, nor fight with reason, as it often falls among men; for the emotions ascribed unto God are effects rather of his holy will towards us, than properly called emotions in him; and these effects of God's will about us do always tend to our happiness and blessedness at last, however they are diverse one from another in themselves.

[3.] Thirdly, That Jesus Christ did feel and suffer the very torments of hell, though not after a hellish manner. I readily grant that Jesus Christ did not locally descend into hell, to suffer there among the damned, neither did he suffer hellish darkness, nor the flames of hell, nor the worm that never dies, nor final despair, nor guilt of conscience, nor gnashing of teeth, nor great indignation, nor eternal separation from God. These things were absolutely inconsistent with the holiness, purity, and dignity of his person, and with the office of a mediator and redeemer. But yet I say that our Lord Jesus Christ did suffer in his soul for our sins such pain, horror, terror, agony, and consternation, as amounted unto, and are in Scripture called "The sorrows of hell." "The sorrows of hell did

compass me about," Psalm 18:5, or the cords of hell did compass me about, such as with which they bind malefactors when they are led forth to execution. Now these sorrows, these cords of hell, were the things that extorted from him who passionate expostulation, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mat. 27:46. Christ's sufferings were unspeakable, and somewhat answerable to the pains of hell. Hence the Greek Litany, "By your *unknown* sufferings, good Lord deliver us."

Funinus, an Italian martyr, being asked by one why he was so merry at his death, since Christ himself was so sorrowful; "Christ," said he, "sustained in his soul all the sorrows and conflicts with hell and death due to us; by whose sufferings we are delivered from sorrow and the fear of them all." It was a great saying of a very learned man, that "setting the eternity of punishment aside, which Christ might not sustain, Christ did more vehemently and sharply feel the wrath of God than ever any man did or shall, no not any person reprobated and damned excepted." And certainly the reason annexed to prove this expression is very weighty, because all the wrath that was due for all the sins of the elect, all whose sins were laid on Christ, Isa 53:6, was greater than the wrath which belonged to any one sinner, though damned for his personal sinning. And besides this, if you do seriously consider those sufferings of Christ in his agony in the garden, you may by them conjecture what hellish torments Christ did suffer for us. In that agony of his, he was afraid and amazed, and fell flat on the ground, Mat. 14:33-34. He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and says unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death," Luke 22:44; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. He did sweat clotted blood to such abundance, that it streamed through his apparel, and did wet the ground; which dreadful agony of Christ, how it could arise from any other cause than the sense of the wrath of God, parallel to that in hell, I know not.

Orthodox divines do generally take Christ's sufferings in his soul, and the detaining his body in the grave, put in as the close and last part of Christ's sufferings, as the true meaning of that expression, "He descended into hell," not only because these pains which Christ suffered both in body and soul were due to us in full measure—but also because that which Christ in

point of torment and vexation suffered, was in some respect of the same kind with the torment of the damned. For the clearing of this, consider, that in the punishment of the damned there are these three things:

1. The perverse disposition of the mind of the damned in their sufferings;
2. The duration and perpetuity of their punishment;
3. The punishment itself, tormenting soul and body.

Of these three, the first two could have no place in Christ. Not the first, because he willingly offered himself a sacrifice for our sins, and upon agreement paid the ransom fully, Heb. 9:14, and 10:5-8. Not the second, because he could no longer be held under sorrows and sufferings than he had satisfied divine justice, and paid the price that he was to lay down, Acts 2:24. And his infinite excellency and glory made his short sufferings to be of infinite worth, and equivalent to our everlasting sufferings, 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:20. The third, then, only remains, which was the real and sensible torments of his soul and body, which he did really feel and experience when he was upon the cross. O sirs! why must you question Christ's undergoing of hellish pains, when all the pains, torments, curse, and wrath which were due to the elect—fell on Christ, until divine justice was fully satisfied. Though Christ did not suffer eternal death for sinners—yet he suffered that which was equivalent, and therefore the justice of God is by his death wholly appeased.

It is good seriously to ponder upon these scriptures: Psalm 18:51, "The sorrows of hell compassed Me about." Psalm 88:31, "My soul is filled with evil, and my life draws near to hell;" Psalm 86:13, "You have delivered my soul from the nethermost hell." In these places the prophet speaks in the person of Christ, and the Papists themselves do confess that the Hebrew word Sheol, that is here used, is taken for hell properly, and not for the grave; therefore these places do strongly conclude for the hellish sorrows or sufferings of Christ. Just so, Acts 2:27, "You will not leave my soul in hell." If Christ's soul be not left or forsaken in hell—yet it follows it was in hell; not that Christ did feel the sorrows of hell after death—but that he did feel the very sorrows of hell in his soul while he lived.

Certainly the whole punishment of body and soul which was due unto us, Christ our Redeemer was in general to suffer and satisfy for in his own person—but the torments and terrors of hell, and the vehement sense of God's wrath, are that punishment which did belong to the soul; consequently, Christ did suffer the torments and terrors of hell. By the whole punishment you are to understand the whole kind or substance of the punishment, not all the circumstances, and the very same manner. The whole punishment then is the whole kind of punishment—that is, in body and soul—which Christ ought to have suffered, though not in the same manner and circumstance.

1. Neither for the place of hell locally; nor
2. For the time eternally; nor
3. For the manner sinfully.

When we say Christ was to suffer our whole punishment, all such punishments as cannot be suffered without sin, as desperation and final reprobation, are manifestly excepted. Christ bore all our punishment, though not as we would have borne it—that is, 1. Sinfully; 2. Eternally; 3. Hellishly. But he did so bear all our punishment as to finish all upon the cross; and in such sort as God's justice was satisfied, his person not disgraced, nor his holiness defiled, and yet man's salvation fully perfected, Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 9:14, and 10:15. We constantly affirm that Christ did suffer the pains of hell in his soul, with these three restrictions

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1. That there be neither indignity offered to his royal person;
2. Nor injury to his holy nature;
3. Nor impossibility to his glorious work. All such pains of hell then as Christ might have suffered—
  1. His person not dishonored;
  2. His nature with sin not defiled;

3. His work of our redemption not hindered, we do steadfastly believe were sustained by our blessed Savior. Consider a few things.

First, Consider the ADJUNCTS of hell, which are these four:

1. The **place**, which is infernal;
2. The **time**, which is perpetual;
3. The **darkness**, which is unspeakable;
4. The **tormentors** the spirits and devils, who are irreconcilable. Now these adjuncts of hell Christ is freed from. For the dignity of his person, it was not fit that the Son of God, the heir of heaven, should be shut up in hell, or that he should forever be tormented, who is never from God's presence sequestered, or that the light of the world should be closed up in darkness, or that he who binds the evil spirits should be bound by them, etc.

Secondly, Consider the EFFECTS, or rather the DEFECTS, of hell, which are chiefly these two:

First, The deprivation of all virtue, grace, holiness;

Secondly, The real possession of all vice, impiety, blasphemy, etc.

Now the necessity of the work of Christ does exempt him from these effects; for if he had been either void of grace, or possessed with vice, he could not have been the Redeemer of poor lost souls; for the lack of virtue he could not have redeemed others; for the presence of sin he would need to have been redeemed himself; and from fretting indignation and fearful desperation, the piety and sanctity of his nature does preserve him, who, being without sin, could neither by indignation displease his Father, nor by desperation destroy himself. Just so, that, if you consider either the adjuncts of hell or the effects, then I say we do remove all them as far off from the holy soul of Christ as heaven is from hell, or the east from the west, or darkness from light, etc.

Thirdly, Consider **the punishment itself**. Now, concerning this, we say

that our blessed Savior, as in himself he bore all the sins of the elect: so he also suffered the whole punishment of body and soul in general that was due unto us, for the same which we would have endured if he had not satisfied for it; and so consequently we affirm that he felt the anguish of soul and horror of God's wrath, and so in soul entered into the torments of hell for us, sustained them and vanquished them. Calvin, speaking in honor of Christ's passion, says, "When he saw the wrath of God set before him, presenting himself before God's tribunal laden with the sins of the whole world, it was necessary for him to fear the deep bottomless pit of death." Again says the same author, "Such an object being offered to Christ's view, as though God being set against him, he were appointed to destruction; he was with horror affrighted, which was able a hundred times to have swallowed up all mortal creatures—but he, by the wonderful power of his Spirit, escaped with victory." "What dishonor was it to our Savior Christ," says another Fulk, "to suffer that which was necessary for our redemption," namely, that torment of hell which we had deserved, and which the justice of God required that he should endure for our redemption; or rather, what is more to the honor of Christ, than that he vouchsafed to descend into hell for us, and to abide that bitter pain which we had deserved to suffer eternally; and what may rather be called hell than the anguish of soul which he suffered, when, he being yet God, complained that he was forsaken of God? O sirs, this we need not fear to confess, that Christ, bearing our sins in himself upon the cross, did feel himself during that combat as rejected and forsaken of God and accursed for us, and the flames of his Father's wrath burning within him; so that to the honor of Christ's passion we confess that our blessed Redeemer refused no part of our punishment—but endured the very pains of hell, so far as they tended not neither to the derogation of his person, deprivation of his nature, destruction of his office, etc.

Here it may be queried whether the Lord Jesus Christ underwent the very self-same punishment that we should have undergone, or only that which did amount and was equivalent thereunto? To which I answer, that in different respects both may be affirmed. The punishment which Christ endured, if it be considered in its substance, kind, or nature, so it was the same with that the sinner himself would have undergone. But if it be considered with respect to certain circumstances, adjuncts, or accidents

which attend that punishment, as inflicted upon the sinner, so it was but equivalent, and not the same. The punishment due to the sinner was death, the curse of the law, upon the breach of the first covenant. Now this Christ underwent, for "he was made a curse for us," Gal. 3:13. The adjuncts attending this death were the eternity of it, desperation going along with it, etc. These Christ was freed from, the dignity of his person supplying the former, the sanctity of his person securing him against the latter; therefore in reference unto these, and to some other things already mentioned, it was but the equivalent, not the identical sufferings. But suppose there had been nothing of sameness, nothing beyond equivalency in what Christ suffered—yet that was enough, for it was not required that Christ should suffer every kind of curse which is the effect of sin—but in the general accursed death. Look, as in his fulfilling of the law for us, it was not necessary that he should perform every holy duty that the law requires; for he could not perform that obedience which magistrates or married people are bound to do—it is enough that there was a fulfilling of it in the general for us. So here it was not necessary that Jesus Christ should undergo in every respect the same punishment which the offender himself was liable unto—but if he shall undergo so much as may satisfy the law's threatenings, and vindicate the lawgiver in his truth, justice, and righteous government, that was enough. Now that was unquestionably done by Christ.

**Objection 1.** But some may object and say, How could Christ suffer the pains of the second death without disunion of the Godhead from the manhood? For the Godhead could not die. Or what interest had Christ's Godhead in his human sufferings, to make them both so short and so precious and satisfactory to divine justice for the sins of so many sinners, especially when we consider that God cannot suffer?

**Answer 1.** I answer, It follows not that because Christ is united into one person with God, that therefore he did not suffer the pains of hell; for by the same reason he should not have suffered in his body, for the union of his person could have preserved him from sufferings in the one as well as in the other, and neither God, angels, nor men compelled him to undertake this difficult and bloody work—but his own free and unspeakable love to mankind, as himself declares, John 10:17, "Therefore

my Father loves me, because I lay down my life;" verse 18, "No man takes it from me—but I lay it down of myself." If Christ had been constrained to suffer, then both men and angels might fear and tremble—but as Bernard says well, "The willingness of him who died pleased God, who offered himself to be the Redeemer of fallen man." Isaiah 53:12; Pa. 40:7-8; Heb. 10:9-10.

**Answer 2.** But secondly, I answer from 1 John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." The person dying was God, else his person could have done us no good. The person suffering must be God as well as man—but the Godhead suffered not. Actions and passions belong to people. Nothing less than that person who is God-man could bear the brunt of the day, satisfy divine justice, pacify divine wrath, bring in an everlasting righteousness, and make us happy forever. But,

**Answer 3.** Thirdly, I answer thus, Albeit the passion of the human nature could not so far reach the Godhead of Christ, that it should in a physical sense suffer, which, indeed, is impossible—yet these sufferings did so affect the person, that it may truly be said that God suffered, and by his blood bought his people to himself; for albeit the proper and formal subject of physical sufferings is only the human nature—yet the principal subject of sufferings, both in a physical and moral sense, is Christ's person, God and man, from the dignity whereof the worth and excellency of all sorts of sufferings, the merit and the satisfactory sufficiency of the price did flow, Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:20, and 7:23.

O sirs! you must seriously consider, that though Christ as God in his Godhead could not suffer in a physical sense—yet in a moral sense he might suffer and did suffer. For he being "in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God—but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. 2:6-8. Oh, who can sum up the contradictions, the railings, the revilings, the contempts, the despisings and calumnies that Christ met with from sinners, yes, from the worst of sinners!

**Objection 2.** But how could so low a debasing of the Son of man, or of the human nature assumed by Christ, consist with the majesty of the person of the Son of God?

**Answer.** We must distinguish those things in Christ, which are proper to either of the two natures, from those things which are ascribed to his person in respect of either of the natures or both the natures; for infirmity, physical suffering, or mortality are proper to the human nature. The glory of power, and grace, and mercy, and super-excellent majesty, and such like, are proper to the Deity. But the sufferings of the human nature are so far from diminishing the glory of the divine nature, that they do manifest the same, and make it appear more clearly and gloriously; for by how much the human nature was weakened, depressed, and despised for our sins, for our sakes, by so much the more the love of Christ—God and man in one person—toward man, and his mercy, and power, and grace to man, do shine in the eyes of all who judiciously do look upon him.

**Objection 3.** How could Christ endure hell fire without grievous sins, as blasphemy and despair, etc.?

**Answer. 1.** I answer, That we may walk safely and without offence, these things must be premised: First, That the sorrows and sufferings of hell be no otherwise attributed to Christ, than as they may stand with the dignity and worthiness of his person, the holiness of his nature, and the performance of the office and work of our redemption.

[1.] First, then, For the soul of Christ to suffer in the local place of hell, to remain in the darkness thereof, and to be tormented with the material flames there, and eternally to be damned, was not for the dignity of his person, to whom for his excellency and worthiness both the place, manner, and time of those torments were dispensed with.

[2.] Secondly, Final rejection and desperation, blasphemy, and the worm of conscience, agrees not with the holiness of his nature, "Who was a lamb without a spot," Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19, and therefore we do not, we dare not ascribe them to him. But,

[3.] Thirdly, Destruction of body and soul, which is the second death, could not fall upon Christ; for this were to have destroyed the work of our redemption, if he had been subject to destruction. But,

[4.] Fourthly and lastly, Blasphemy and despair are no parts of the pains of the damned—but the consequents, and follow the sense of God's wrath in a sinful creature that is overcome by it. But Christ had no sin of his own, neither was he overcome of wrath, and therefore he always held fast his integrity and innocency, Rev. 16:9, 11. Despair is an unavoidable companion, attending the pains of the second death, as all reprobates do experience. Desperation is an utter hopelessness of any good, and a certain expectation and waiting on the worst that can befall; and this is the lot and portion of the damned in hell. The wretched sinner in hell, seeing the sentence passed against him, God's purpose fulfilled, never to be reversed, the gates of hell made fast upon him, and a great gulf fixed between hell and heaven, which renders his escape impossible; he now gives up all, and reckons on nothing but uttermost misery, Luke 16:26.

Now mark, this despair is not an essential part of the second death—but only a consequent, or, at the most, an effect occasioned by the sinner's view of his remediless, woeful condition. But this neither did nor could possibly befall the Lord Jesus. He was able, by the power of his Godhead, both to suffer and to satisfy and to overcome; therefore he expected a good outcome, and knew that the end should be happy, and that he should not be ashamed, Isaiah 50:6-7, etc.; Psalm 16:9-10; Acts 2:26, 28, 31. Though a very shallow stream would easily drown a little child, there being no hope of escape for it unless one or another should step in seasonably to prevent it—yet a man who is grown up may groundedly hope to escape out of a far more deep and dangerous place, because by reason of his stature, strength, and skill he could wade or swim out. Surely the wrath of the Almighty, manifested in hell, is like the vast ocean, or some broad, deep river; and therefore when the sinful sons and daughters of Adam, which are without strength, Romans 5:6, are hurled into the midst of it, they must needs lie down in their confusion, as altogether hopeless of deliverance or escaping. But this despair could not seize upon Jesus Christ, because, although his Father took him and cast him into the sea of his wrath, so that all the billows of it went over him,

Isaiah 63:1-3, seq.—yet being the mighty God, with whom nothing is impossible, he was very able to pass through that sea of wrath and sorrow, which would have drowned all the world, and come safe to shore.

**Objection 4.** But when did Christ suffer hellish torments? They are inflicted after death, not usually before it—but Christ's soul went straight after death into paradise. How else could he say to the penitent thief, "This day shall you be with me in paradise"? Now, to this objection I shall give these following answers:

**Answer 1.** First, That Christ's soul, after his passion upon the cross, did not really and locally descend into the place of the damned, may be thus made evident:

[1.] First, All the evangelists, and so Luke among the rest, intending to make an exact narrative of the life and death of Christ, has set down at large his passion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension; and besides, they make rehearsal of very small circumstances; therefore we may safely conclude, that they would never have omitted Christ's local descent into the place of the damned, if there had been any such thing. Besides, the great end why they penned this history was, that we might believe that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and that thus believing we might have life everlasting," John 20:31. Now there could not have been a greater matter for the confirmation of our faith than this—that Jesus, the son of Mary, who went down to the place of the damned, returned thence to live in all happiness and blessedness forever. But,

[2.] Secondly, If Christ did go into the place of the damned, then he went either in soul, or in body, or in his Godhead. Not in his Godhead, for that could not descend, because it is everywhere, and his body was in the grave; and as for his soul, it went not to hell—but immediately after his death it went to paradise—that is, the third heaven, a place of joy and happiness: "This day shall you be with me in paradise," Luke 23:43; which words of Christ must be understood of his manhood or soul, and not of his Godhead; for they are an answer to a demand, and therefore unto it they must be suitable. The thief makes his request, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom," verse 42; to which Christ answers, "Truly I say unto you, Today shall you be with me in

paradise." "I shall," says Christ, "this day enter into paradise, and there shall you be with me." Now, there is no entrance but in regard of his soul or manhood, for the Godhead, which is at all times in all places, cannot be properly said to enter into a place, Psalm 139:7, 13; Jer. 23:23-24. But,

[3.] Thirdly, When Christ says, "Today shall you be with me in paradise," he does intimate, as some observe, a resemblance which is between the first and second Adam. The first Adam quickly sinned against God, and was as quickly cast out of paradise by God. Christ, the second Adam, having made a perfect and complete satisfaction to the justice of God, and the law of God, for man's sin, must immediately enter into paradise, Heb. 9:26, 28, and 10:14. Now to say that Christ, in soul, descended locally into hell, is to abolish this analogy between the first and second Adam. But,

**Answer 2.** Secondly, It is not impossible that the pains of the second death should be suffered in this life. Time and place are but circumstances. The main substance of the second death is the bearing of God's fierce wrath and indignation. Divine favor shining upon a man in hell, would turn hell into a heaven. All sober, seeing, serious Christians will grant, that the true, though not the full joys of heaven may be felt and experienced in this life: 1 Pet. 1:8, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not—yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," or glorious; either because this their rejoicing was a taste of their future glory, or because it made them glorious in the eyes of men. The original word is *glorified already*; a piece of God's kingdom and heaven's happiness aforehand. Ah, how many precious saints, both living and dying, have cried out, "Oh the joy! the joy! the inexpressible joy that I find in my soul!" Eph. 2:6, "He has made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." What is this else—but even while we live, by faith to possess the very joys of heaven on this side heaven!

Now look, as the true joys of heaven may be felt on this side heaven, so the true, though not the full pains of hell, may be felt on this side hell; and doubtless Cain, Judas, Julian, Spira, and others have found it so. That writer hit the mark, who said, "The judge's tribunal-seat is in your soul, God sits there as judge, your conscience is the accuser, and fear is the tormentor." Now if there be in the soul a judge, an accuser, and a

tormentor, then certainly there is a true taste of the torments of hell on this side hell.

**Answer 3.** Thirdly, The place hell is no part of the payment. The laying down of the price makes the satisfaction. This is all that is spoken and threatened to Adam, "You shall die the death," Gen. 2:17; and this may be suffered here. **The wicked go to hell as their prison, because they can never pay their debts**, otherwise the debt may as well be paid in the market as the jail. [Peter says, the devils are cast down to hell, and kept in chains of darkness, 2 Pet. 2:4. And Paul calls the devil the prince that rules in the air, Eph. 2:2. The air then is the devil's hell. Well, then, seeing this air is the devil's present hell, we may safely conclude that hell may be in this present world; and therefore it is neither impossible nor improbable that the cross was Christ's hell.]

Now Christ did discharge all his people's debts in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries and tears, Heb. 5:7, and not after death. Look, as a king entering into prison to loose the prisoners' chains, and to pay their debts, is said to have been in prison; so our Lord Jesus Christ, by his soul's sufferings, which is the hell he entered into, has released us of our pains and chains, and paid our debts, and in this sense he may be said to have entered into hell, though he never actually entered into the local place of the damned, which is properly called hell; for in that place there is neither virtue nor goodness, holiness nor happiness, and therefore the holiness of Christ's person would never allow him to descend into such a place. In the local place of heaven and hell, it is not possible for any either to be at once, nor yet at sundry times successively, for there is no passing from heaven to hell, or from hell to heaven, Luke 16:26. The *place* of suffering is but a circumstance in the business. Hell, the place of the damned, is no part of the debt, therefore neither is suffering there locally any part of the payment of it, no more than a prison is any part of an earthly debt, or of the payment of it. The surety may satisfy the creditor in the place appointed for payment, or in the open court, which being done, the debtor and surety both are acquitted, that they need not go to prison. If either of them go to prison, it is because they do not or cannot pay the debt; for all that justice requires is to satisfy the debt, to the which the prison is merely extrinsic. Even so the

justice of God cannot be satisfied for the transgression of the law—but by the death of the sinner—but it does not require that this should be done in the place of the damned. The wicked go to prison because they do not, they cannot, make satisfaction; otherwise Christ, having fully discharged the debt, needed not go to prison.

**Objection 5.** But the pains and torments which are due to man's sins are to be everlasting, so how then can Christ's short sufferings counterbalance them?

**Answer 1.** That Christ's sufferings in his soul and body were equivalent to it; although, to speak properly, eternity is not of the essence of death, which is the payment of sin and threatened by God—but it is accidental, because man thus dying is never able to satisfy God, therefore, seeing he cannot pay the last farthing, he is forever kept in prison, Mat. 18:28, 35. Look, as eternal death has in it eternity and despair necessarily in all those who so die, so Christ could not suffer. But what was lacking in *duration* was supplied—

1. By the immensity of his sorrows conflicting with the sense of God's wrath, because of our sins imputed to him, so that he suffered more grief than if the sorrows of all men were put together. Christ's hell-sorrows on the cross were meritorious and fully satisfactory for our everlasting punishment, and therefore in greatness were to exceed all other men's sorrows, as being answerable to God's justice.

2. By the dignity and worth of him who suffered. Therefore the Scripture calls it the blood of God. The damned must bear the wrath of God to all eternity, because they can never satisfy the justice of God for sin. Therefore they must lie in hell, world without end. But **Christ has made an infinite satisfaction in a finite time**, by undergoing that fierce battle with the wrath of God, and getting the victory in a few hours, which is equivalent to the creatures bearing it and grappling with it everlastingly. This length or shortness of duration is but a circumstance, not of any necessary consideration in this case. Suppose a man indebted £100, and likely to lie in prison until he shall pay it—yet utterly unable, if another man comes and lays down the money on two hours' warning, is not this as well, or better done? that which may be done to as good or

better purpose in a short time, what need is there to draw it out at length? The justice of the law did not require that either the sinner or his surety should suffer the eternity of hell's torments—but only their extremity. It does abundantly counterpoise the eternity of the punishment, that the person who suffered was the eternal God. Besides, it was impossible that he should be detained under the sorrows of death, Acts 2:24. And if he had been so detained, then he had not "spoiled principalities and powers, nor triumphed over them," Col. 2:15—but had been overcome, and so had not attained his end. But,

**Answer 2.** Secondly, The pains of hell which Christ suffered, though they were not infinite in time—yet were they of an infinite price and value for the dignity of the person who suffered them. Christ's temporal enduring of hellish sorrows was as effectual and meritorious, as if they had been perpetual. The dignity of Christ's person did bear him out in that which was not fit for him to suffer, nor fit in respect of our redemption; for if he should have suffered eternally, our redemption could never have been accomplished. But for him to suffer in soul as he did in body, was neither derogatory to his person nor harmful to his work. Infinitely in time Christ was not to suffer.

*Times* are in the world where the sun rises and sets. Unto this time he died. But where there is no time, there he was found, not only living—but conquering. Christ, God-man, suffered punishment in measure infinite, and therefore there is no ground why he should endure it eternally; and indeed it was impossible that Christ should be held by death, Acts 2:24, because he was both the Lord of life and the Lord's Holy One, 1 Cor. 2:8; Acts 2:27. But,

**Answer 3.** Thirdly, If the measure of a man's punishment were infinite, the duration needs not be infinite. Sinful man's measure of punishment is finite, and therefore the duration of his punishment must be infinite, because the punishment must be answerable to the infinite evil of sin committed against an infinite God. O sirs, **continual imprisonment in hell arises from man's not being able to pay the price**; for could he pay the debt in one year, he needs not lie two years in prison. Now the debt is the first and second death; and because sinful man cannot pay it in any time, he must endure it eternally. But now Christ has

laid down the price to the full, for all his chosen ones, and therefore it is not required of him, that he should suffer forever, neither can it stand with the holiness or justice of God to hold him under the second death, he having paid the debt to the utmost farthing. Now that he has fully paid the debt himself, witnesses John, chapter 19:30, saying when he had received the vinegar, "It is finished;" so verse 28, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were accomplished." Though there are many interpretations given of this—yet doubtless this alone will hold water—namely, that the heavy wrath of the Lord which did pursue Christ, and the second death which filled him with grievous terrors, is now over and past, and man's redemption finished. He speaks here of that which presently should be, and in the yielding up his Spirit was accomplished.

And thus you see that Jesus Christ did feel and suffer the very torments of hell, though not after a hellish manner; and you see also that Christ did not locally descend into hell. We shall make a few **INFERENCES** from hence:

**1. First, then, Oh, how should these sad sufferings of Christ for us endear Christ to us!** Oh, what precious thoughts should we have of him! Psalm 136:17-18. Oh, how should we prize him! how should we honor him! how should we love him! and how should we be swallowed up in the admiration of him! As his love to us has been matchless, so his sufferings for us has been matchless. I have read of Nero, that he had a shirt made of a salamander's skin, so that if he did walk through the fire in it, it would keep him from burning. Just so, Christ is the true salamander's skin that will keep the soul from everlasting burnings, Isaiah 33:14; and therefore well may Christians cry out with that martyr Lambert, "None but Christ, none but Christ!" So every believer should esteem nothing worth a looking on—but that Jesus who has redeemed him with his own blood, 1 Cor. 6:20; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19.

Oh, then, what infinite cause have we to exalt and cry up our dear Lord Jesus, who by the hellish sorrows that he suffered for us, has freed us from that more dreadful bondage of sin, Satan, and wrath that we lay under! Oh, prize that Jesus! Oh, exalt that Christ! Oh, extol that Savior, who has saved you from that eternal wrath—which all the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth could never have saved you from!

"The name of Jesus," says Chrysostom, "has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it, and is therefore used by Paul some five hundred times." "The name of a Savior," says Bernard, "is honey in the mouth, and music in the ears, and a jubilee in the heart." "Christ is a whole paradise of delight," says Justin Martyr. "I had rather," says Luther, "be in hell with Christ, than in heaven without him, for Christ is the crown of crowns, the glory of glories, and the heaven of heaven." Austin says, "that he would willingly go through hell to Christ." Bernard says, "he had rather be in his chimney-corner with Christ, than in heaven without him." One cried out, "I had rather have one Christ, than a thousand worlds!"

*Jesus*, in the Chinese tongue, signifies the *rising sun*, and such a rising sun was he to Julius Palmer, that when all concluded that he was dead, being turned as black as a coal in the fire, at last he moved his scorched lips, and was heard to say, "Sweet Jesus!" Mal. 4:2. It was an excellent answer of one of the martyrs, when he was offered riches and honors if he would recant: "Do but," said he, "offer me something that is better than my Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall see what I will say to you." Now, oh that the hellish sorrows and sufferings of Christ for us, might raise in all our hearts such a high estimation, and such a deep admiration, as has been raised in those worthies last mentioned! It was a sweet prayer of him who thus prayed, "Lord, make your Son dear, very dear, exceeding dear, and alone dear and precious to me." Whenever we seriously think of the great and sore sufferings of Christ, it will be good to pray as he prayed. But,

**2. Secondly, If Jesus Christ did feel and suffer the very torments of hell, (though not after a hellish manner,) then let me infer—that certainly there is a hell, a place of torment provided and prepared for all wicked and ungodly people.** Danaeus reckons up no less than nineteen different kinds of heretics, which deny the doctrine of hell; and are there not many erroneous and deluded people, who stoutly and daily assert that there is no hell but what men feel in their own consciences? Ah, how many are there that rejoice to do evil, and delight in their abominations, and take pleasure in unrighteousness! [Jer. 11:15; Proverbs 2:14; Isaiah 65:3; 2 Thes. 2:11; Mat. 25:41; Isaiah 30:33.] But could men do thus, dared men do thus—

did they really believe that hell was prepared and fitted for them, and that the fiery lake was but a little before them? Heaven is a place where all is joyful, and hell is a place where all is doleful. In heaven there is nothing but happiness, and in hell there is nothing but heaviness, nothing but endless, easeless, and remediless torments. Did men believe this, how could they go so merrily on in the way to hell?

Cato once said to Caesar, "I believe that you think all that is said of hell to be false and mythical." Just so, I may say to many in this day, Surely you think that all that is spoken and written of hell is but a story. Don't you look upon the people of God to be of all men the most miserable, and yourselves of all men the most happy? Yes! Oh—but how can this be, did you really believe that there was a heaven for the righteous and a hell for the wicked? It is an Italian proverb, "He who has not seen and lived some time in Venice does not understand what a city it is." This in a sense is true of hell.

### **Hell is a place of endless, easeless, and remediless torment**

But now for the fact, that there is a hell, that there is such a place of misery prepared and appointed for the wicked—I shall briefly demonstrate against the high atheists and Socinians of this day.

**[1.] First, God created angels and men after his own image.** Man must be so much honored as to be made like God; and no creature must be so much honored as to be made like man. The pattern after which man was made is sometimes called *image* alone. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him," Gen. 1:27. Sometimes *likeness* alone: Gen. 5:1, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." Sometimes both: Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" which makes a prudent interpreter think that when they are joined, that the Holy Spirit means an image most like

his own. It is exceeding much for man's honor that he is an epitome of the world, an abridgment of other creatures, partaking with the stones in being, with the stars in motion, with the plants in growing, with the beasts in sense, and with angels in knowledge. But his being made after God's image is far more. You know, when great men erect a stately building, they cause their own picture to be hung upon it, that spectators may know who was the chief builder of it. Just so, when God had created the fabric of this world, the last thing he did was the setting up his own picture in it, creating man after his own image.

When the great Creator went about that noble work, that prime piece of making of man, he does, as it were, call a solemn council of the sacred persons in the Trinity: "And God said, Let *us* make man in our image," etc., Gen. 1:26. Man before his fall was the best of creatures—but since his fall he is become the worst of creatures. ["Man," says one, "in his creation is angelic; in his corruption diabolical; in his renovation theological; in his translation majestic. Man was angel in Eden, a devil in the world, a saint in the church, a king in heaven."] He who was once the image of God, the glory of Paradise, the world's master, and the Lord's darling, has now become an abomination to God, a burden to heaven, a plague to the world, and a slave to Satan. When man first came out of God's mint, he did shine most gloriously, as being bespangled with holiness and clad with the royal robe of righteousness; his understanding was filled with knowledge; his will with uprightness; his affections with holiness, etc. But yet, being a mutable creature, and subject to temptations, Satan quickly stripped him of his happiness, and cheated and cozened him out of his imperial crown—with an apple.

If God had created angels and men immutable, he had created them gods and not creatures—but being made mutable we know they did fall from their primitive purity and glory; and we know that out of the whole host of angels, he kept *some* from falling; and when all mankind was fallen, he redeemed *some* by his Son. Now mark, as he shows mercy upon some in their salvation, so it is fit that he should glorify his justice upon others in their condemnation, Romans 7:21-23. And because there must be distinct places for the exercise of the one and for the execution of the other, which are in God equally infinite by an irreversible decree from the foundation

of the world—a glorious habitation was prepared for the one, and a most hideous dungeon for the other. "These shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal," Mat. 25:46. Yes, so certain are both these places, that they were of old prepared for that very purpose. "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" and so, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," verse 41.

Look! As God foresaw the different estates and conditions of men and angels, so he provided for them distinct and different places. Doubtless, hell was constituted before angels or men fell. Hell was framed before sin was hatched—just as heaven was formed and fitted before any of the inhabitants were produced. But,

**[2.] Secondly, That there is a hell, both the Old and New Testament cloth clearly and fully testify.** Take some instances: Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." In the Hebrew there are two "intos," "into, into" hell; that is, "The wicked shall certainly be turned into the nethermost hell;" yes, they shall forcibly be turned into the lowest and darkest place in hell. [Sheol is often put for the grave, Psalm 16:10—but not always.] God will, as it were, with both hands thrust him into hell. If Sheol here signify the grave only, what punishment is here threatened to the wicked, which the righteous is not equally liable to? Doubtless, Sheol here is to be taken for that prison or place of torment where divine justice detains all those in hold that have all their days rebelled against him, scorned his Son, despised the means of grace, and died in open rebellion against him.

"The psalmist," says Mollerus, "declares the miserable condition of all those who live and die in their sins—They shall be everlastingly punished." And Musculus reads the place thus: "The souls of the ungodly shall be punished in hell with deserved torments." Certainly, the very place in which the wicked shall lodge and be tormented to all eternity—namely, hell, the bottomless pit, a dungeon of darkness, a lake of fire and brimstone, a fiery furnace,—will extremely aggravate the dolefulness of their condition. O sirs, were all the water in the sea ink, and every blade of grass a pen, and every hair on all the men's heads in the world the hand of a ready writer, all would be too short graphically to delineate the

nature of this dungeon, where all lost souls must lodge forever. Where is the man who, to gain a world, would lodge one night in a room that is haunted with devils; and is it nothing to dwell in hell with them forever?

So Solomon, Proverbs 5:5, says of the harlot, "that her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell." Here Sheol is translated hell, and in the judgment of Lavater is well translated too: "which," says he, "is spoken not so much of natural death as of spiritual, and that eternal destruction which follows thereupon." And he gives this for a reason why we should understand the place so, because whoredom being an abominable sin, defiling the members of the body of Christ, dissolving and making void the covenant between God and man, must needs be accompanied with an equivalent judgment, even excluding those who are guilty thereof, without repentance, the kingdom of heaven, into which pure and undefiled place no unclean thing can enter. ["By death and hell is in this place meant not only temporal death and the visible grave—but also eternal death and hell itself, even the place of the damned." The Dutch Annotations.]

And mark those words of the apostle, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." If men will not judge them, God himself will, and give them a portion of misery answerable to their transgression. [1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:27; Heb. 13:4.] Though the magistrate be negligent in punishing them—yet God will judge them. Sometimes he judges them in this life, by pouring forth of his wrath upon their bodies, souls, consciences, names, and estates—but if he does not thus judge them in this life—yet he will be sure to judge them in the life to come; which Bishop Latimer well understood when he presented to Henry the Eighth, for a New-year's gift, a New Testament, with a napkin, having this note on it, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;" yes, he has already adjudged them "to the fiery lake of burning sulfur," Rev. 21:8. "Nothing," says one, "has so much enriched hell as beautiful faces." The Germans have a proverb that "the pavement of hell is made of the skulls of shaved priests and the glorious crests of gallants." Their meaning is, that these sorts of people being most given up to fleshly lusts and pleasures, they shall be sure to have the lowest place in hell. The harlot's feet go down to death, and her steps take hold on hell. Immorality brings

men to hell. "Whoremongers shall have their part in fiery lake of burning sulfur," Rev. 21:8. "For fornication and uncleanness the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience," Col. 3:5-6. The adulterer herself goes there; and is it not fit that her companions in sin should be her companions in misery? "I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation," Rev. 2:22. She hastens with sails and oars to hell, and draws her lovers with her. All her courses tend towards hell. The unchaste are the foundations and upholders of hell; they are the devil's best customers.

Oh, the thousands of men and women who are sent to hell for sexual immorality! Hell would be very thin and empty were it not for these. Other sins are toilsome and troublesome—but sexual immorality is pleasant, and sends men and women merrily to hell.

I have read a story, that one asking the devil which were the greatest sins? he answered, "Covetousness and lust." The other asking again, whether perjury and blasphemy were not greater sins? the devil replied, "that in the schools of divinity they were the greater sins—but for the increase of his revenues the other were the greater." Bede, therefore, styles lust, "the daughter of the devil, which brings forth many children to him." Oh, that all wantons would take that counsel of Bernard, "Let the fire of hell extinguish the fire of lust in you; let the greater burning overcome the lesser," 1 Tim. 5:6. Ponder upon that Proverbs 9:18, "But he knows not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell." Namely, those who are spiritually dead, and who are in the highway to be cut off, either by filthy diseases, or by the rage of the jealous husband, or by the sword of the magistrate, or by some quarrels arising among those who are rivals in the harlot's love, and are as sure to be damned as if they were in hell already. It is a metaphor from a dungeon. He knows not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell. Aben Ezra will have the original word "there," to be referred to hell; and the meaning of the whole verse to be more plainly thus, "He knows not that her guests being dead are in the depth of hell."

But the Hebrew word here used and translated dead, is Rephaim, which word properly signifies giants. The meaning of this place seems to be no other—but that the immoral woman will bring those who are her guests

to hell, to keep the apostate giants company,—those mighty men of renown of the old world, whose wickedness was so great in the earth, that it repented and grieved God that he had made man, Gen. 6:4-5; and to take vengeance on whom he brought the general deluge upon the earth, and destroyed both man and beast from the face thereof. These giants are called in Hebrew Nephilim, such as, being fallen from God, fell upon men, and by force and violence made others fall before them, even as the beasts of the field do fall before the roaring lions. These great oppressors were first drowned, and then damned, and sent to that accursed place which was appointed for them. Now to that place and condition, in which they are, the harlot will bring all her wanton lovers.

Take one scripture more: Proverbs 15:11, "Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more then the hearts of the children of men." [Destruction is put as an epithet of hell.] Some by Sheol understand the grave, and by Abaddon hell. There is nothing so deep, or secret, that can be hid from the eyes of God. He knows the souls in hell, and the bodies in the grave, and much more men's thoughts here in this place, Proverbs 15:11. The Jews take the word Abaddon, which we render destruction, for Gehenna, that is, elliptically for Beth-Abaddon, the house of destruction.

Though we know not **where** hell is, nor **what** is done there—though we know not what is become of those who are destroyed, nor what they suffer—yet God does; and if the secrets of hell and devils are known to him, then much more the secrets of the hearts of the children of men. The devil, who is the great executioner of the wrath of God, is expressed by this word; as hell is called destruction in the abstract, so the devil is called a destroyer in the concrete. "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, or hell, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon—but in the Greek tongue has his name Apollyon," Rev. 9:11. Both the one and the other, the Hebrew and the Greek, signify the same thing—a destroyer. The devil, who is the jailer of hell, is called a destroyer, as hell itself is called destruction. Oh, sirs! hell is destruction; those who are once there are lost, yes, lost forever, Rev. 14:11. The reason why hell is called destruction, is because those who are cast to hell are undone to all eternity. "If hell," said one, "were to be endured a thousand years, methinks I could bear it—but **forever**—that astonishes me."

Bellarmino tells us of a learned man, who after his death appeared to his friend, complaining that he was adjudged to hell-torments, which, says he, were they to last but a thousand thousand years, I should think it tolerable—but alas! they are **eternal**. The fire in hell is like that stone in Arcadia I have read of, which being once kindled, could not be quenched. There is no estate on earth so miserable—but a man may be delivered out of it—but out of hell there is no deliverance. *No prayers can rescue any who are once become hell's prisoners!* I might add other scriptures out of the Old Testament—but let these suffice.

That there is such a place as hell is, prepared for the torment of the bodies and souls of wicked and impenitent sinners, is most clear and evident in the New Testament as well as in the Old. Among the many that might be produced, take these for a taste: Mat. 5:22, "Whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." "You fool," the word signifies unsavory, or without relish; a fool here is, by a metaphor, called insipid, Hebrew, *Sote*, which we call *Sot*.

"Shall be in danger of hell-fire," or to be cast into Gehenna. Gehenna comes from the Hebrew word Gettinnom, that is, the valley of Hinnom, lying near the city of Jerusalem; in which valley, in former times, the idolatrous Jews caused their children to be burned alive between the glowing arms of the brazen image of Moloch, imitating the abominations of the heathen, Josh. 15:8. And hence the Scripture often makes use of that word to signify the place of eternal punishment, where the damned must abide under the wrath of God forever, 2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 7:31, 32:35, and 19:4- 6.

There were four kinds of punishments exercised among the Jews—

1. Stranglings;
2. The sword;
3. Stoning;
4. The fire.

Now this last they always judged the worst. In these words, "shall be in danger of hell-fire," Christ alludes to the highest degree of punishment that was inflicted by them, namely, to be burned in the valley of Hinnom, which, by a known metaphor, is transferred to hell itself, and the inexpressible torments thereof. For as those poor wretches being inclosed in a brazen idol, heated with fire, were miserably tormented in this valley of Hinnom; so the wicked being cast into hell, the prison of the damned, shall be eternally tormented in unquenchable fire. This valley of Hinnom, by reason of the pollution of it with slaughter, blood, and stench of carcasses, did become so execrable, that hell itself did afterwards inherit the same name, and was called Gehenna of this very place. And that,

1. In respect of the hollowness and depth thereof, being a low and deep valley.
2. This valley of Hinnom was a place of misery, in regard of those many slaughters that were committed in it through their barbarous idolatry; so hell is a place of misery and sorrowfulness, wherein there is nothing but sorrow.
3. Thirdly, by the bitter and lamentable cries of poor infants in this valley, is shadowed out the cries and lamentable torments of the damned in hell.
4. In this valley of Hinnom was another fire which was kept continually burning for the consuming of dead carcasses, and filth, and the garbage that came out of the city. Now our Savior, by the fire of Gehenna, in Mat. 5:22, has reference principally to this fire, signifying hereby the perpetuity and everlastingness of hellish pains. To this last judgment of burning, does Christ appropriate that kind of open reviling of a brother, that he might notify the heinousness of that sin.

See also Mat. 5:29-30, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell-fire." Julian, taking these commands literally, mocked at the Christian religion, as foolish, cruel, and vain, because they require men to maim their members. He

mocked at Christians because no man did it; and he mocked at Christ because no man obeyed him. But this apostate might have seen from the scope that these words were not to be taken literally—but figuratively. Some of the ancients, by the right hand, and the right eye, do understand relations, friends, or any other dear enjoyments which draws the heart from God. Others of them, by the right eye, and the right hand, do understand such darling sins which are as dear to men as their right eyes or right hands. That this hell here spoken of is not meant of the grave, into which the body shall be laid, is most evident, because those Christians who do pull out their right eyes, and cut off their right hands—that is, mortify those special sins which are as dear and near to them as the very members of their bodies—shall be secured and delivered from this hell, whereas none shall be exempt from the grave, though they are the choicest people on earth for grace and holiness.

Death knows no difference between robes and rags, between prince and peasant. "All flesh is grass," Isaiah 40:6. The flesh of princes, nobles, counselors, generals, etc., is grass, as well as the flesh of the lowest beggar that walks the streets. "The mortal scythe," says one, "is master of the royal scepter, it mows down the lilies of the crown, as well as the grass of the field." Never was there orator so eloquent, nor monarch so potent, who could either persuade or withstand the stroke of death when it came! Death's motto is, "I spare none!" It is one of Solomon's sacred aphorisms, "The rich and the poor meet together," Proverbs 22:2, sometimes in the same bed, sometimes at the same board, and sometimes in the same grave. Death is the common inn of all mankind. "There is no defense against the stroke of death, nor no discharge in that war," Heb. 9:27; Eccles. 8:8. Death is that only king against whom there is resistance, Proverbs 30:31. If your houses be on fire, by good help they may be quenched; if the flood breaks out, by art and industry it may be repaired; if princes invade by power and policy, they may be repulsed; if devils from hell shall tempt, by assistance from heaven they may be resisted. But death comes into royal palaces, and into the poorest cottages, and there is not a man to be found, who can make resistance against this king of terrors and terror of kings.

Thus you see that by hell in Mat. 5:29-30, you may not, you cannot,

understand the grave; and therefore by it you must understand the place of the damned.

But if you please you may cast your eye upon another scripture, namely, Mat. 10:28, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." We should not fear man at all—when he stands in competition with God. Just so, Victorian, the proconsul of Carthage, being solicited to Arianism by the ambassadors of King Hunnerick, answered thus, "Being assured of God and my Lord Christ, I tell you, what you may tell the king, Let him burn me, let him drive me to the beasts, let him torment me with all kinds of torments, I shall never consent to be an Arian!" And though the tyrant afterwards did torture him with very great tortures—yet he could never force him over to Arianism. The best remedy against the slavish fear of tyrants, is to set that great God up as the object of our fear, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Mark, Jesus does not say to destroy soul and body simply or absolutely, so that they should be no more—but to punish them eternally in hell, where the worm never dies, nor the fire ever goes out. Now by hell in Mat. 10:28, the *grave* cannot be meant, because the soul is not destroyed with the body in the grave, as they both shall be, if the person be wicked, after the morning of the resurrection, in hell, Eccles. 12:7, and Phil. 1:3.

From the immortality of the soul, we may infer the eternity of man's future condition. The soul being immortal, it must be immortally happy or immortally miserable.

Take one scripture more, namely, 1 Pet. 3:19-20, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which once were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." [Spirits, that is, the souls departed, not men—but spirits, to keep an analogy to the 18th verse, Christ suffered, being made dead in the flesh, and made alive by the Spirit; in which Spirit he had gone and preached to those who are now spirits in prison, because they disobeyed, when the time was, when the patience of God once waited in the days of Noah.] That is, Christ by his Spirit, in the ministry of Noah, did preach to the men of the old world, who are now in hell. In Noah's time they were on earth—but in Peter's

time they were in hell. Mark, Christ did not preach by his Spirit, in his ministry, or any other way, to spirits who were in prison or in hell while he preached to them. There are no sermons in hell, nor any salvation there. The loving-kindness of God is abundantly declared on earth—but it shall never be declared in hell. Look, as there is nothing felt in hell but destruction, so there is nothing found in hell of the offers of salvation. **One offer of Christ in hell would turn hell into a heaven!**

One of the ancients has reported the opinion of some in his time who thought, that though there is destruction in hell—yet not eternal destruction—but that sinners should be punished, some a lesser, others a longer time, and that, at last, all shall be freed. "And yet," says he, "Origen was more merciful in that point than these men, for he held that the devil himself should be saved at last." Of this opinion I shall say no more in this place, than this one thing which he there said. These men will be found to err by so much the more foully, and against the right words of God so much the more perversely, by how much they seem to themselves to judge more mercifully; for indeed the justice of God in punishing of sinners is as much above the reach of man's thoughts—as his mercies in pardoning them are, Isaiah 55:7-9. Oh, let not such who have neglected the great salvation when they were on earth, Heb. 2:3, ever expect to have an offer of salvation made to them when they are in hell! Consult these scriptures, Mat. 25:30, 13:41-42; Rev. 9:2, 14:19-20, 20:1-3, 7. I must make haste, and therefore may not stand upon the opening of these scriptures, having said enough already to **prove both out of the Old and New Testament that there is a hell, a place of torment, provided and prepared for all wicked and ungodly men.** But the third argument to prove that there is a hell, is this,

**[3.] The beams of natural light in some of the heathens have made such impressions on the heart of natural conscience, that several of them have had confused notions of a hell, as well as of a judgment to come.** Though the poor blind heathens were ignorant of Christ and the gospel, and the great work of redemption, etc.—yet by the light of nature, and reasonings from thence, they did attain to the understanding of a deity, who was both just and good; as also, that the soul was immortal, and that both rewards and punishments were

prepared for the souls of men after this life, according as they were found either virtuous or wicked. Profound Bradwardine, and several others, have produced many proofs concerning their apprehensions of hell, of wrath to come. What made the heathen Emperor Adrian when he lay a-dying, cry out, "O my little wretched wandering soul, where are you now hastening? Oh, what will become of me! Live I cannot, die I dare not!" Look, as these poor heathens did imagine such a place as the Elysian fields, where the virtuous should spend an eternity in pleasures; so also they did feign a place called Tartarum, or hell, where the wicked should be eternally tormented. Tertullian, and after him Chrysostom, affirms that poets and philosophers, and all sorts of men, speaking of a future retribution, have said that many are punished in hell. Plato is very plain, that the profane shall go into hell to be tormented for their wickednesses, with the greatest, most bitter and terrible punishments, forever in that prison in hell.

And Jupiter, speaking to the other gods concerning the Grecians and Trojans, says—

If any shall so hardy be,  
To aid each part in spite of me;  
Him will I tumble down to hell,  
In that infernal place to dwell.

So Horace, speaking concerning Jove's thunderbolts, says—  
With which earth, seas, the Stygian lake,  
And hell with all her furies quake.

And Trismegistus affirms concerning the soul's going out of the body defiled, that it is tossed to and fro with eternal punishments. Nor was Virgil ignorant thereof when he said—

They all shall pack,  
Sentence once past, to their deserved rack.

The horror of which place he acknowledges he could not express,  
No heart of man can think, no tongue can tell,  
The direful pains ordained and felt in hell.

It was the common opinion among the poor heathen that the wicked were

held in chains by Pluto—so they called the prince of devils—in chains which cannot be loosed. To conclude, the very Turks speak of the house of perdition, and affirm that they who have turned the grace of God into impiety, shall abide eternally in the fire of hell, and there be eternally tormented. I might have spent much more time upon this head—but that I do not judge it expedient, considering the people for whose sakes and satisfaction I have sent this piece into the world. But,

**[4.] Fourthly, The secret checks, gripes, stings, and the amazing horrors and terrors of CONSCIENCE, which sometimes astonish, affright, and even distract sinful wretches—do clearly and abundantly evidence that there is a hell, that there is a place of torment prepared and appointed for ungodly sinners.** ["Every man is tormented with his own conscience," says the philosopher.] Doubtless, it was not merely the dissolution of nature—but the sad consequences, which so startled and terrified Belshazzar when he saw the handwriting on the wall, Dan. 5:5-6. Guilty man, when conscience is awakened, fears an after-reckoning, when he shall be paid the wages of his sins, proportionate to his demerits.

Wolffius tells you of one John Hufmeister, who fell sick in his inn as he was traveling towards Augsburg in Germany, and grew to that horror that they had to bind him in his bed with chains, where he cried out that "he was for ever cast off from before the face of God, and should perish forever, he having greatly wounded his conscience by sin," etc.

James Abyes, who suffered martyrdom for Christ's sake and the gospel's, as he was going along to execution he gave all his money and his clothes away to one, and another to his shirt, upon which one of the sheriff's attendants scoffingly said that "he was a madman and a heretic;" but as soon as the godly man was executed this wretch was struck mad, and threw away his clothes, and cried out that "James Abyes was a godly man, and gone to heaven—but he was a wicked man, and was damned!" And thus he continued crying out until his death.

Dionysius was so troubled with fear and horror of conscience, that, not daring to trust his best friends with a razor, he used to singe his beard with burning coals—says Cicero.

Bessus having slain his father, and being afterwards banqueting with several nobles, arose from the table and beat down a swallow's nest which was in the chimney, saying they lied "to say that he slew his father," for his guilty conscience made him think that the swallows, when they chattered, proclaimed his parricide to the world.

Theodoricus the king having slain Boetius and Symmachus, and being afterwards at dinner, began to change countenance, his guilty conscience so blinding his eyes that he thought the head of a fish which stood before him to have been the head of his cousin Symmachus, who bit at him and threatened him, the horror whereof did so amaze him, that he presently died.

Nero, that monster of nature, having once slain his mother, had never more any peace within—but was plagued with horrors, fears, visions, and clamors which his guilty conscience set before him and suggested unto him. He suspected his nearest and dearest friends and favorites, he trembled at the barking of a puppy, and the crowing of a rooster, yes, the shaking of a leaf, and neither dared speak unto others nor could endure others to speak to him, when he was retired into a private house, lest the noise should be heard by some who lay in wait for his life.

Now were there not a hell, were there not a place of torment where God will certainly inflict unspeakable miseries and intolerable torments upon wicked and ungodly men, why should their consciences thus plague, torture, and torment them? Yes, the very heathen had so much light in their natural consciences, as made such a discovery of that place of darkness, that some of them have been terrified with their own inventions concerning it, and distracted with the very sense of those very torments which they themselves have described. The very flashes of hell-fire which sinners daily experience in their own consciences—may be an argument sufficient to satisfy those who there is a hell, a place of torment provided for them in the eternal world.

**[5.] Fifthly, Those matchless, easeless, and endless torments that God will certainly inflict upon the bodies and souls of all wicked and ungodly men, after the resurrection, does sufficiently evidence that there is a hell—that there is a place of**

torment provided, prepared, and fitted by God, wherein he will, "pour forth all the vials of his wrath upon wicked and ungodly men."

Isaiah 30:33, "*Topheth* has long been prepared. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze." This place that was so famous for judgment and vengeance is used to express the torments of hell, the place of the damned. Tophet was a place in the valley of Hinnom; it was the place where the angel of the Lord destroyed the host of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, Isaiah 30:31, 33; and this was the place where the idolatrous Jews were slain and massacred by the Babylonian armies, when their city was taken and their carcasses left, for lack of room for burial, for food for the fowls of heaven and beasts of the field, according to the word of the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah, Jer. 7:31-33, and 19:4-6. And this was the place where the children of Israel committed that abominable idolatry in making their children pass through the fire to Moloch; that is—burnt them to the devil, 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 33:6. Therefore king Josiah polluted it, and made it a place execrable, ordaining it to be the garbage dump where dead carcasses, rubbish, and other unclean things should be cast out. For consuming whereof, to prevent annoyance, a continual fire was there burning, 2 Kings 33:8. Now this place, being so many ways execrable for what had been done therein, especially having been as it were the gate to eternal destruction, by so remarkable judgments and vengeance of God there executed for sin, it came to be translated to signify *the place of the damned*—as the most accursed, execrable, and abominable place of all places.

The Spirit of God, in Scripture, by metaphors of all sorts of things which are dreadful unto sense—sets forth the condition of the damned, and the torments that he has reserved for them in the life to come. Hell's punishments do infinitely exceed all other punishments, that there is no pain so extreme—as that of the damned. Look, as there are no joys which can compare to the joys of heaven, so there are no pains which can compare to the pains of hell, Psalm 116:3. All the cruelties in the world cannot possibly make up any horror comparable to the horrors of hell. The brick-kilns of Egypt, the furnace of Babylon—are but as a fleeting spark—compared to this tormenting Tophet which has been prepared of

old to punish the bodies and souls of sinners with. Hanging, racking, burning, scourging, stoning, sawing asunder, flaying of the skin, etc., are not to be compared with the tortures of hell. If all the pains, sorrows, miseries, and calamities which have been inflicted upon all men, since Adam fell in Paradise, should meet together and center in one man--they would not so much as amount to one of the least of the pains of hell.

Who can sum up the diversity of torments which are in hell!

1. In hell there is darkness; hell is a dark region.
2. In hell there are sorrows!
3. In hell there are bonds and chains!
4. In hell there are pains and pangs!
5. In hell there is the worm that never dies!
6. In hell there is a lake of fire!
7. In hell there is a furnace of fire!
8. In hell there is the devil and his demons! And oh, how dreadful must it be to be shut up forever with those roaring lions!
9. In hell there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! [Jude 13; Psalm 116:3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Mark 9:44; Rev. 20:15; Mat. 13:41-42, 25:41, 24:51, 25:30, 13:42.]
10. In hell there is unquenchable fire! Mat. 3:12, "He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire;" in hell there is "everlasting burnings." "The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless—Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" Isaiah 33:14 Wicked men, who are now the only jolly fellows of the time, shall one day go from burning to burning; from burning in sin to burning in hell; from burning in flames of lusts to burning in flames of torment, except there be found true repentance on their sides, and pardoning grace on God's. [Gen. 4:17; Amos 6:7; Job 21:12; Dan. 5:21;

Amos 6:4.]

O sirs! in this devouring fire, in these everlasting burnings, Cain shall find no cities to build, nor shall his posterity have any instruments of music to invent there; none shall take up the timbrel or harp, or rejoice at the sound of the organ. There Belshazzar cannot drink wines in bowls, nor eat the lambs out of the flocks, nor the calves out of the midst of the stall. In everlasting burnings there will be no merry company to pass time away, nor any dice or cards to pass care away. Nor shall there be bottles of wine wherein to drown the sinner's grief. By fire in the scriptures last cited, is meant, as I conceive, all the positive part of the torments of hell; and because they are not only upon the soul but also upon the body. As in heaven there shall be all bodily perfection, so there shall be also in hell all bodily miseries. Whatever may make a man perfectly miserable shall be in hell; therefore the wrath of God and all the positive effects of this wrath is here meant by fire.

I have read of Pope Clement the Fifth, that when a nephew of his, whom he had loved sensually and sinfully, died, he sent one to a necromancer to learn how it fared with him in the other world. The conjuror showed him the nephew lying in a fiery bed in hell; which when it was told the Pope, he never more joyed after it—but, within a short time after, died also. Out of this fiery bed there is no deliverance. When a sinner is in hell, shall another Christ be found to die for him, or will the same Christ be crucified again? Oh, no!

O sirs, the torments of hell will be exceeding great and dreadful, such as will make the stoutest sinners to quake and tremble! If the handwriting upon the wall, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, made Belshazzar's "countenance to change, his thoughts to be troubled, and his joints to be loosed, and his knees to knock one against another," Dan. 5:5, 6:25. Oh, how terrible will the torments of hell be to the damned! The torments of hell will be universal torments. All torments meet together in that place of torment. Hell is the center of all punishments, of all sorrows, of all pains, of all wrath, and of all vengeance, etc.

One of the ancients says that, "the least punishment in hell is more grievous than if a child-bearing woman should continue in the most

violent pangs and throes a thousand years together, without the least ease or intermission."

A heathen poet, speaking of the multitude of the pains and torments of the wicked in hell, affirmed, "that although he had a hundred mouths, and as many tongues, with a voice as strong as iron—yet were they not able to express the names of them." But this poet spoke more like a prophet, than a poet. The poets tell you of a place called Tartarum, or hell, where the impious shall be eternally tormented. This Tartarum the poets did set forth with many fictions to affright people from wicked practices, such as of the four lakes of Acheron, Styx, Phlegethon, and Cocytus; over which Charon, in his boat, did waft over the departed souls. They also tell of the three judges, Aeacus, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, who were to call the souls to an account, and judge them to their state. They also tell of the three furies, Tisiphone, Megaera, and Alecto, who lashed guilty souls to extort confession from them. They also tell of Cerberus, the dog of hell, with three heads, which would let none come out when once they were in. They also tell of several sorts of punishments inflicted, as iron chains, horrid stripes, gnawing of vultures, wheels, rolling great stones, and the like. In the chapel of Ticam, the China Pluto, the pains of hell were so pictured, that they could not but strike terror into the beholders—some roasted in iron beds, some fried in scalding oil, some cut in pieces, or divided in the middle, or torn by dogs, etc. In another part of the chapel were painted the dungeons of hell, with horrible serpents, flames, devils, etc.

"In hell," says one "there is the floor of brimstone, smoky, pitchy, with stinking flames, deep pits of scalding pitch, and sulphurous flames wherein the damned are punished daily." There the wicked shall be fed with the tree Ezezum, which shall burn in their bellies like fire; there they shall drink fire, and be held in chains. In the midst of hell, they say, is a tree full of fruit, every apple being like to the head of a devil, which grows green in the midst of all those flames, called the tree of bitterness; and the souls that shall eat thereof, thinking to refresh themselves, shall so find them, and by them and their pains in hell, they shall grow mad; and the devils shall bind them with chains of fire, and shall drag them up and down in hell; with much more which I am not free to transcribe.

Now, although most of those things which you may find among many poets, heathens, and Turks, concerning the torments of hell, are fictions of their own brains—yet that there is such a place as hell, and that there are diversity of torments there, the very light of nature does witness, and has forced many to confess, etc.

And as there are **diversity** of torments in hell, so the torments of hell are **everlasting**. Mark, everything that is conducive to the torments of the damned is eternal.

1. **God** himself, who damns them, is eternal, Deut. 33:27; 1 Tim. 1:17.
2. The **fire** which torments them is eternal, Isaiah 30:33, and 66:24; Jude 7.
3. The **prison** and **chains** which hold them are eternal, Jude 6-7, 13; 2 Pet. 2:17.
4. The worm which gnaws them is eternal, Mark 9:44. 5.
5. The **sentence** which shall be passed upon them, shall be eternal, Mat. 25:41, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

You know that fire is the most tormenting element. Oh, the most dreadful impression that it makes upon the flesh—everlasting fire! There is the **vengeance** and **continuance** of it—You shall go into fire, into everlasting fire—which shall never consume itself, nor consume you. **The eternity of hell—is the hell of hell.**

The fire in hell is like that stone in Arcadia, which being once kindled could never be quenched. If all the fires which ever were, or which be in the world, were contracted into one fire—how terrible would it be! Yet such a fire would be but as a *painted fire*—compared to the fire of hell. For to be tormented without end, this is that which goes beyond all the bounds of desperation. Grievous is the torment of the damned, for the **bitterness** of the punishments—but it is more grievous for the **diversity** of the punishments—but most grievous for the **eternity** of the punishments! If, after so many millions of years as there are drops in the

ocean, there might be a deliverance out of hell, this would yield a little ease, a little comfort to the damned. Oh—but this word Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! this word Everlasting! Everlasting! Everlasting! this word Forever! Forever! Forever! will even break the hearts of the damned in ten thousand pieces!

Oh, that word 'never', said a poor despairing creature on his deathbed, breaks my heart. "The reprobate shall have punishment without pity; misery without mercy, sorrow without support, crying without compassion, mischief without measure, and torment without end," (Drexelius.) Plato could say, "That the profane shall go into hell, to be tormented for their wickedness, with the greatest, the most bitter and terrible punishments, forever in that prison of hell." And Trismegistus could say, "That souls going out of the body defiled, were tossed to and fro with eternal punishments." Yes, the very Turks, speaking of the house of perdition, do affirm, "That they who have turned God's grace into wantonness, shall abide eternally in the fire of hell, and there be eternally tormented."

A certain man going to visit Olympius, who lived cloistered up in a dark cell, which he thought uninhabitable, by reason of heat, and swarms of gnats and flies, and asking him how he could endure to live in such a place, he answered, "All this is but a light matter, that I may escape eternal torments: I can endure the stinging of gnats, that I might not endure the stinging of conscience, and the gnawing of that worm that never dies; this heat you think grievous, I can easily endure, when I think of the eternal fire of hell; these sufferings are but short—but the sufferings of hell are eternal." [There is no Christian which does not believe the fire of hell to be everlasting. Jackson]

Certainly, infernal fire is neither tolerable nor terminable. Impenitent sinners in hell shall have end without end, death without death, night without day, mourning without mirth, sorrow without solace, and bondage without liberty. The damned shall live as long in hell as God himself shall live in heaven. Their imprisonment in that land of darkness, in that bottomless pit, is not an imprisonment during the king's pleasure—but an imprisonment during the everlasting displeasure of the King of kings.

Suppose that the whole world were turned to a mountain of sand, and that a little bird should come once every thousand years and carry away from that heap, one grain of sand. What an infinite number of years, not to be numbered by all finite beings, would be spent before this great mountain of sand would be fetched away! Just so—if a man should lie in everlasting burnings so long a time as this, and then have an end of his woe—it would give some ease, some hope, and some comfort to him. But when that immortal bird shall have carried away this great mountain of sand—a thousand times over and over—alas, alas, sinful man shall be as far from the end of his anguish and torment as ever he was! He shall be no nearer coming out of hell, than he was the very first moment that he entered into hell! If the fire of hell were terminable, it might be tolerable—but being endless, it must needs be easeless, and remediless. We may well say of it, as one does, "Oh, killing life! oh, immortal death!"

Suppose, say others, that a man were to endure the torments of hell as many years, and no more, as there be sands on the sea-shore, drops of water in the sea, stars in heaven, leaves on trees, blades of grass on the ground, hairs on the heads of every person who ever was, or shall be in the world, from the beginning of it to the end of it—yet he would comfort himself with this poor thought, "Well, there will come a day when my misery and torment shall certainly have an end." But woe and alas, this word, "Forever! Forever! Forever!" will fill the hearts of the damned with the greatest horror and terror, anger and rage, bewilderment and astonishment.

Suppose, say others, that the torments of hell were to end, after a little bird should have emptied the sea, and only carry out one drop once in a thousand years.

Suppose, say others, that the whole world, from the lowest earth to the highest heavens, were filled with grains of sand, and once in a thousand years an angel should fetch away one grain, and so continue until the whole heap were gone.

Suppose, say others, if one of the damned in hell, should weep after this manner, namely—that he should only let fall one tear in a thousand years;

and these tears should be kept together, until such time as they should equal the water in the sea. How many millions of *ages* would pass! And when that were done, that he must weep again after the same manner, until he had filled a second, a third, and a fourth sea!

If then there should be an end of their miseries, there would be some hope, some comfort, that they would end at last. But that they shall never, never, never end—this is that which sinks them under the most tormenting terrors and horrors.

You know that the *extremity* and *eternity* of hellish torments is set forth by **the worm which never dies**. And it is observable that Christ, at the close of his sermon, makes a threefold repetition of this worm: Mark 9:44, "where their worm never dies;" and again, verse 46, "where their worm never dies;" and again, verse 48, "where their worm never dies, and their fire never goes out." Certainly, those punishments are beyond all conception and expression, which our Lord Jesus does so often inculcate within so small a space.

Now if there be such a diversity, extremity, and eternity of hellish pains and torments, which the great God will certainly inflict upon the bodies and souls of all impenitent people, after the day of judgment; then there must certainly be some hell, some place of torment, wherein the wrath of God shall be executed upon wicked and ungodly men. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, The greatest part of wicked and ungodly men escape unpunished in this present world.** The greatest number of ungodly people spend their days in pride, ease, pleasures, and delights, in lust and luxury, in voluptuousness and wantonness. "For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. They say, 'How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?' This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth." Psalms 73:3-12

"Why do the wicked continue to live, growing old and becoming powerful? Their homes are secure and free of fear; no rod from God strikes them. Their children skip about, singing to the tambourine and lyre and rejoicing at the sound of the flute. They spend their days in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace. Yet they say to God: Leave us alone! We don't want to know Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?" Job 21:7-15

God does not punish all here on earth, that he may make way for the displaying of his mercy and goodness, his patience and forbearance. Nor does he forbear all here, that he may manifest his justice and righteousness, lest the world should turn atheist, and deny his providence, Romans 2:4-5; 2 Pet. 3:9-15. He spares that he may punish, and he punishes that he may spare. God smites some sinners in the very acting of their sins, as he did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and others, Num. 16; not until they have filled up the measure of their sins, as you see in the men of the old world, Gen. 6:5-7. But the greatest number of sinners God reserves for the great day of his wrath, Mat. 7:13.

There is a *sure* punishment, though not always a *present* punishment, for every sinner, Eccles. 8:12-13. Those wicked people which God allows to go uncorrected here, he reserves to be punished forever hereafter, 2 Thes. 1:7-10. Sinners, know your doom—you must either smart for your sins in this world, or in the world to come. Augustine hit the mark when he said, "Many sin are punished in this world, who the providence of God might be more apparent; and many, yes, most, reserved to be punished in the world to come, that we might know that there is yet judgment behind."

Sir James Hamilton, having been murdered by the Scottish king—he appeared to the king in a vision, with a naked sword drawn, and strikes off both his arms, with these words, "Take this, before you receive a final payment for all your impieties;" and within twenty-four hours—two of the king's sons died. If the glutton in that historical parable being in hell, Luke 16:22-24, only in part, namely, in soul—yet cried out that he "was horribly tormented in that flame," what shall that torment be, when *body* and *soul* come to be united for torture! It being just with God, that as they have been, like Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity, and have sinned together desperately and impenitently, so they should suffer together

jointly, eternally, Gen. 49:5.

The Hebrew doctors have a pretty parable to this purpose: A man planted an orchard, and going from home, was careful to leave such watchmen as both might keep it from strangers and not deceive him themselves; therefore he appointed one blind—but strong of his limbs, and the other seeing—but a cripple. These two, in their master's absence, conspired together; and the blind man took the lame man on his shoulders, and so gathered and stole the fruit. Their master returning, and finding out this subtlety, punished them both together. Just so, shall it be with those two sinful yoke-fellows, the soul and the body, in the great day; they have sinned together, and they shall suffer at last together, 2 Cor. 5:10-11.

But now, in this world the greatest number of transgressors do commonly escape all sorts of punishments; and therefore we may safely conclude that there is another world, wherein the righteous God will revenge upon the bodies and souls of sinners the high dishonors that have been done to his name by them. But,

**[7.] Seventhly, In all things natural, and supernatural, there is an opposition and contrariety.** There is good, and there is evil; there is light and darkness, joy and sorrow. Now as there are two distinct ways, so there are two distinct ends:

1. Heaven, a place of admirable and inexpressible happiness, where the holy angels convoy the souls of the saints who have, by a holy life, glorified God, and adorned their profession, Luke 16:22.

2. Hell, a place of horror and confusion, where the evil angels hurry the souls of wicked, incorrigible, and impenitent wretches, when they are once separated from their bodies. "The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," Luke 16:22-23.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal," Mat. 25:46. In these words we have described the different estate of the wicked and the righteous after judgment, "They shall go away into everlasting punishment—but these into life eternal."

After the sentence is past, the wicked go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. Everlasting punishment, the end thereof is not known, its duration is infinite. Hell is a bottomless pit, and therefore shall never be fathomed. It is an unquenchable fire, and therefore the smoke of their torments ascends forever and ever, Rev. 14:11. Hell is a prison from whence is no escape, because there is no ransom to be paid. No price will be accepted for one in that estate. And as there is no end of the punishments of hell, into which the wicked must enter, so there is no end of the joys of heaven, into which the saints must enter.

"In your presence is fullness of joy, and at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore," Psalm 16:11. Here is as much said as can be said. For *quality*, there is in heaven joy and pleasures; for *quantity*, a fullness, a torrent; for *constancy*, it is at God's right hand; and for *perpetuity*, it is for evermore. The joys of heaven are without measure, mixture, or end.

Thus you see that there are two distinct ends, two distinct places, to which the wicked and the righteous go. And, indeed, if this were not so, then the bloody Nero would be as blessed a man as Paul, and Esau as happy a man as Jacob, and Cain as blessed a man as Abel. Then as believers say, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. 15:19; because none out of hell ever suffered more, if so much, as the saints have done. So might the wicked say, "If in this life only we were miserable, we were then of all men most happy." But,

**[8.] Eighthly, and lastly, You know that all the princes of the world, for their greater grandeur and state, as they have their royal palaces for themselves, their nobles and attendants; so they also have their jails, prisons, and dark dungeons for rogues and robbers, for malefactors and traitors.** And shall not he who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, Rev. 19:16; he who is the Prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. 1:5; he who removes kings and sets up kings, Dan. 2:21; shall not he have his royal palace, a glorious heaven, where he and all his noble attendants, angels, and saints shall live forever? Shall not the great king have his royal and magnificent court in that upper world, as poor petty princes have theirs in this lower world? Surely he shall, as you may see by comparing these scriptures. [Eph. 2:3

John 14:1-4 Luke 12:32; Neh. 9:6; 1 Kings 8:27; Heb. 8:1; Rev. 3:21.]

And shall not the same great King have his hell, his prison, his dungeon, to secure and punish impenitent sinners in? Surely yes! And doubtless, the least glimpse of this hell, of this place of torment, would strike the proudest, and the stoutest sinners dead with horror. O sirs! those who have seen the flames, and heard the roarings of Mount Etna, the flashing of Vesuvius, the thundering and burning flakes evaporating from those lava rocks, have not yet seen, no, not so much as the very glimmering of hell. A *painted* fire is a better shadow of these, than these can be of hell torments, and the miseries of the damned therein!

Now these eight arguments are sufficient to demonstrate that there is a hell, a place of torment, to which the wicked shall be sent at last. Now certainly, Socinians, atheists, and all others who are men of corrupt minds, and that believe that there is no hell—but what they carry about with them in their own consciences; these are worse than those poor Indians, who believe that there are thirteen hells, according to the differing demerits of men's sins; yes, they are worse than devils, for they believe and tremble, James 2:19. The original word seems to imply an extreme fear, which causes not only tremblings—but also a roaring and shrieking out. Their hearts ache and quake within them, they quiver and shake as men do when their teeth chatter in their heads in extreme cold weather, Mark 6:49, and Acts 16:29.

The devils acknowledge four articles of our faith: Mat. 8:29, "And behold, they cried out, saying—Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

1. They acknowledge God;
2. They acknowledge Christ;
3. They acknowledge the day of judgment;
4. That they shall be tormented then.

Those who scorn the day of judgment are worse than devils; and they who

deny the deity of Christ are worse than devils. The devils are, as it were, for a time respited and reprieved, in respect of full torment, and they are allowed as free prisoners to flutter in the air, and to course about the earth until the great day of the Lord, which they tremble to think on. But those who mock at, or make light of the day of judgment, are worse than devils. The devils knew that torments were prepared for them, and a time when these torments shall be fully and fatally inflicted on them, and they were loath to suffer before that time. Ah, sirs, shall not men tremble to deny what the devils are forced to confess! Shall I now make a few short **INFERENCES** from what has been said, and so conclude this head?

**1. First, then, Oh labor to set up God as the great object of your fear.** This grand lesson Christ commands us to take out, "Fear not those who kill the body—but are not able to kill the soul—but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell; yes, I say unto you, fear him!" Mat. 10:28. Christ doubles the precept, that it might stick with more life and power upon us, Luke 12:5. As one fire drives out another, so one fear drives out another. Both the punishment of *loss* and the punishment of *sense* may be the objects of a filial fear—the fear of a son, of a saint, of a soul who is espoused and married to Christ. The fear of God, and the fear of sin, will drive out the fear of death, and the fear of hell, 2 Cor. 11:2; Hos. 2:19-20.

O sirs, will you not fear that God who has the keys of hell and death in his own hand, who can speak you into hell at pleasure, who can by a word of command bring you to dwell with a devouring fire, yes, to dwell with everlasting burnings? Rev. 1:18.

Ah, friends, will you fear a burning fever, and will you not fear a burning in hell? Will you fear when your house is on fire, and when the bed you lie on is on fire, though it may be quenched; and will you not fear that fire which is unquenchable? Isaiah 33:14. When men run through the streets and cry, *Fire! fire! fire!* how do your hearts quake and tremble in you. And will you not fear the fire of hell? Will you not fear everlasting fire? Mat. 3:12, 25:41.

Sir Francis Bacon, in his history, relates how it was a byword of Cordes, who was a profane, popish, atheistical French Lord, that he could be

content to lie seven years in hell, so he might win Calais from the English. But had this popish Lord lain but seven minutes under unsupportable torments, he would quickly have repented of his mad bargain. It was good counsel which Bernard gave, "Let us go into hell while we are alive, by a serious meditation and holy consideration, that we may not go into it when we be dead, by real miseries."

God can kill, and more than that, he can cast into hell. Here is both temporal and eternal destruction, both rods and scorpions. He can kill the body, and then damn both body and soul, and cast them into hell. Therefore it behooves every person to set up God as the great object of their fear. "Yes, I say unto you, fear him! Yes, I say unto you, fear him!" This redoubling of the speech adds a greater enforcement to the admonition. It is like the last stroke of the hammer, that rivets and drives up all to the head. Thus David uses this reinforcement, "You, *even you*, are to be feared; who may stand in your sight when you are angry—you can look them to death, yes, to hell," Psalm 76:7.

O sirs, temporal judgments are but the *smoke* of his anger—but in hell there are the *flames* of his anger! That fire burns fiercely, and there is no quenching of it. Thus said the martyr, "You threaten bonds and imprisonments, O emperor—but God's threatenings are much more terrible. He threatens hell torments and everlasting damnation!" Certainly, where there is the greatest danger, there it is fit that there should be the greatest dread. But,

**2. Secondly, Then flee from the wrath to come!** "Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" Luke 3:7. O sirs, that you would seriously and frequently dwell upon those short hints!

[1.] The coming wrath is the **greatest** wrath. It is the greatest evil which can befall a soul. "Who knows the power of your wrath?" Psalm 19:11. Wrath to come is such wrath as no unsaved man can either avoid or abide, and yet such is most men's stupidity, that **they will not believe it until they feel it!** As God is a great God, so his wrath is a great wrath. I may allude to that which Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, "As the man is, so is his strength," Judges 8:21. Just so, may I say, "as the Lord is, so is his wrath!" The wrath of an earthly king is compared to the roaring

of a lion, Proverbs 19:12; that is—of a young lion, which, being in his prime, roars most terribly. He roars with such a force that he terrifies the creatures whom he hunts, so as that they have no power to fly from him. Now if the wrath of a king is so terrible, oh how dreadful must the wrath of the King of kings then be! The greater the evil is, the more cause we have to flee from it. Now wrath to come is the greatest evil, and therefore the more it concerns us to flee from it, Rev. 17:14. But,

[2.] The coming wrath is **treasured-up** wrath. Sinners are still "a-treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," Romans 2:5. In treasuring there is, 1. Laying in; 2. Lying hid; 3. Bringing out again as there is occasion.

While wicked men are following their own lusts, they think that they are still adding to their own happiness—but alas, they do but add wrath to wrath, they do but heap up judgment upon judgment, punishment upon punishment! Look, as men are daily adding to their treasure more and more, so impenitent sinners are daily increasing the treasury of wrath against their own souls. Now, who would not flee from this storehouse of wrath? But,

[3.] The coming wrath is **pure** wrath. It is "judgment without mercy," James 2:13. The cup of wrath which God will put into sinners' hands at last will be a cup of pure wrath, all wrath, nothing but wrath, Rev. 14:10, "They must drink the wine of God's wrath. It is poured out undiluted into God's cup of wrath. And they will be tormented with fire and burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb." Look! as there is nothing but the pure glory of God, which can make a man perfectly and fully happy; just so, there is nothing but the pure wrath of God, which can make a man fully and perfectly miserable. Reprobates shall not only sip of the top of God's cup—but they shall drink the dregs of his cup. They shall not have one drop of mercy, nor one crumb of comfort. They have filled up their lifetime with sin, and God will fill up their eternity with torments. But,

[4.] The coming wrath is **everlasting** wrath. Rev. 14:11, "And the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever!" "Would to God," says Chrysostom, "that men would everywhere think and talk more of hell,

and of that eternity of punishment—which they shall never be able to avoid, or to abide." See the scriptures in the margin. [2 Thes. 1:8; Jude 6, 7; Mat. 25:46; Isaiah 33:14, etc.] "The damned," says Gregory, "shall suffer an end without end, a death without death, a decay without decay; for their death ever lives, their end ever begins, their decay never ceases, they are ever healed to be newly wounded, and always repaired to be newly devoured; they are ever dying and never dead, eternally broiling and never burnt up, ever roaring in the pangs of death, and never rid of those pangs; for they shall have punishment without pity, misery without mercy, sorrow without support, crying without comfort, mischief without measure, and torment without ease—where the worm dies not, and the fire is never quenched." The torments of the damned shall continue as many eternities as there are stars in the skies, as there are grains of sand on the sea-shore, and as there are drops of water found in the sea! When the present worlds are ended, the pains and torments of hell shall not cease—but begin afresh, and thus this wheel shall turn round and round, without end.

Oh the folly and vanity, the madness and baseness of poor wretched sinners who expose themselves to everlasting torments, for a few fleshly momentary pleasures! O sirs! "Who can stand before his fierce anger? Who can survive his burning fury? His rage blazes forth like fire, and the mountains crumble to dust in his presence!" Nahum 1:6. Now how should these things work poor sinners to flee from wrath to come by fleeing to Christ, "who alone is able to save them from wrath to come," 1 Thes. 1:10.

Themistocles, understanding that King Admetus was highly displeased with him, he took up the king's young son in his arms, and so talked with the father, holding his darling in his bosom; and by that means pacified his wrath. Ah sinners, sinners! the King of kings is highly offended with you, and there is no way to appease his wrath—but by taking up Christ in your arms, and so present your suits to him. But,

**3. Thirdly, If there is a hell, then don't let fly so fiercely against those faithful ministers who seriously and conscientiously do all they can to prevent your dropping into hell.** 2 Cor. 5:20, 12:15. Don't call them legal preachers, who tell you that there is a hell, and that there are no torments compared to hellish torments, if either you

consider their *extremity* or *eternity*. Be not so hot nor so angry with those ambassadors of Christ who are willing to spend and be spent that they may keep you from running headlong to hell. "To think of hell," says one, "preserves a man from falling into it!" Says the same author, "I could wish men would discourse much and oft of hell." It was a saying of Gregory Nyssen, "He who does but hear of hell is, without any further labor or study, taken off from sinful pleasures." But what minister can say so now? Surely men's hearts are grown worse since, for how do most men run headlong to hell, and take a pleasure to dance hoodwinked into everlasting burnings! [Millions of years multiplied by millions, make not up one minute to this eternity—but who considers it, who believes it? etc.] Oh, had but the sinners of this day who swear and curse, drink and party, and drown themselves in fleshly pleasures—but one sight of this hell, how would it shut their mouths, appall their spirits, and strike fear and astonishment into their hearts!

I cannot think that the high transgressors of this day dared be so highly wicked as they are, did they but either see or foresee what they shall one day certainly feel—except there be sound and serious repentance on their sides, and pardoning grace on God's. Bellarmine was of opinion that one glimpse of hell were enough to make a man, not only turn Christian and sober. And yet, he tells us of a certain advocate of the court of Rome, who being, at the point of death, stirred up by those who were about him to repent and call upon God for mercy, he, with a constant countenance, and without sign of any fear, turned his speech to God, and said, "Lord, I have longed much to speak to you, not for myself—but for my wife and children; for I am hastening to hell, I am now a-going to dwell with devils, neither is there anything that I would have you to do for me." And this he spoke with as placate, serene and tranquil a mind, as if he had been speaking of going to the next town or village. Ah, who can read or write such a story without horror and terror! But,

**4. Fourthly, If there is a hell, then do not fret, do not envy the prosperity and flourishing estate and condition of wicked and ungodly men;** for God has given it under his hand, that they shall be turned into hell: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Psalm 37:1-2, 73:21; Proverbs 3:31; Psalm 9:17. It was a

wise saying of Marius to those who envy great men their honor, "Let them envy them their burdens!" I have read a story of a Roman, who was by a court-martial condemned to die for breaking his rank to steal a bunch of grapes; and as he was going to execution, some of the soldiers envied him—that he had grapes, and they had none. Says he, "Do you envy me my grapes, I must pay dearly for them!" Ah sirs! do not envy wicked men's grapes, do not envy their riches, their honors, their greatness, their offices, their dignities; for they shall one day pay dearly for their things.

High seats to many are uneasy, and the downfall terrible: "How have you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Isaiah 14:12. It is spoken of the Chaldean monarch, who, though high—yet had a sudden change befell him. It is not a matter of so great joy to have been high and honorable, as it is of grief, anguish, and vexation to be afterwards despicable and contemptible: "Come down, and sit in the dust," Isaiah 47:1. Babylon was the lady of kingdoms—but, says God, "sit in the dust; take the mill-stones, and grind," verse 2; "The Lord Almighty has purposed to stain (Hebrew, *to pollute*) the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth," Isaiah 23:9; "He shall bring down their pride together," Isaiah 25:11; "Woe to the crown of pride: the crown of pride shall be trodden under feet," Isaiah 28:1, 3. God will bring down the crown of pride to the dust, to ashes, yes, to hell; and, therefore, do not envy the crown of pride.

Croesus was so puffed up with his crown of pride, with his great riches and worldly glory, that he boasted himself to be the happiest man who lived—but Solon told him, that no man was to be accounted happy before death. Croesus little regarded what Solon had said unto him, until he came, by miserable experience, to find the uncertainty of his riches, and all worldly glory, which before he would not believe. For when he was taken captive by King Cyrus, and condemned to be burned, and saw the fire preparing for him, then he cried out, "O Solon, Solon!" Cyrus asking him the cause of the outcry, he answered, that now he remembered what Solon had told him in his prosperity—that no man was to be accounted happy before death. Who can sum up those crowns of pride that in Scripture and history God has brought down to the dust, yes, to the ash-heap! Have not some wished, when they have been breathing out their

last, that they had never been kings, nor queens, nor lords, nor ladies? etc. Where is there one of ten thousand who is advanced, and thereby anything bettered?

Few men believe what vexations lie under the pillows of princes. "You look upon my crown and my purple robes," says Artaxerxes—"but did you know how they were lined with thorns, you would not stoop to take them up." Damocles highly extolled Dionysius. Dionysius, to convince him of his mistake, provides a royal feast, invites him to it, commands his servants to attend him. No dainties, no mirth, no music are lacking—but over the table, a sharp sword was hung by a horse hair, which made Damocles tremble, and to forbear both food and mirth. "Such, even such," says Dionysius the Sicilian tyrant, "is my life, which you deem so pleasant and happy." O sirs! there is a sword of wrath which hangs over every sinner's head, even when he is surrounded with all the mirthful and gallant things of this world!

Outward prosperity is commonly given in God's wrath, as you may see by comparing these scriptures. [Hos. 13:11; Psalm 73 and 78:30-31; Proverbs 1:32; Luke 12:16-22; Eccles. 5:12-13.] **Prosperity kills and damns more than adversity.** It had been infinitely better for the great men of this world that they had never been so great, for their horrid abuse of God's mercy and bounty will but increase their misery and damnation at last. Augustine hit it on the head when he said, "Because they have tasted so liberally of God's kindness, and have employed it only against God's glory, their felicity shall be short—but their misery shall be endless; and therefore to see the wicked prosper and flourish in this world is matter rather of pity than envy. It is all the heaven they must have." ["The whole Turkish empire is nothing else but a *crust* cast by our Father to his dogs, and it is all they are likely to have, let them make them merry with it," said Luther.]

These are as terrible texts as any in the whole Book of God: Mat. 6:2, "Truly I say unto you, they have their reward." Luke 6:24, "Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation." James 5:1-3, "Go now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered: and the rust of them shall be a witness

against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire!" Gregory, being advanced to places of great preferment, professed that there was no scripture that went so near his heart, and that struck such a trembling into his spirit, as that speech of Abraham to Dives, Luke 16:25, "Son, remember you in your lifetime received your good things." Those who have their heaven here—are in danger to miss it hereafter. "It is not God's usual way," says Jerome, to move from delights to delights—to bestow two heavens, one here and another hereafter!" Doubtless hence it was, that David made it his solemn prayer, "Deliver me from the wicked, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly you fill with your hid treasure," Psalm 17:14. It is a very difficult thing to have earth and heaven too. God did not turn man out of one paradise, that he should here provide himself of another. Many men with the prodigal cry out, "Give me the portion that belongs to me," Luke 15:12. "Give me riches, and give me honor, and give me preferment, etc." And God gives them their desires—but it is with a vengeance; as the Israelites had *quail* to choke them, and afterwards a *king* to vex them, and a table to be a snare unto them, Psalm 78:24-32. When the Israelites had eaten of their dainty dishes, justice sent in a sad reckoning which spoiled all.

Ah friends, there is no reason why we should envy the prosperity of wicked men. "Suppose," says Chrysostom, "that a man one night should have a pleasant dream that for the time might much delight him; yet for the pleasure of such a dream should be tormented a thousand years together with extreme torments; would any man desire to have such a dream upon such conditions? All the contentments of this life are not so much, compared to eternity—as a dream is to a thousand years! And, oh, how little is that man's condition to be envied, who for these short pleasures of sin must endure an eternity of torments!"

O sirs! do wicked men purchase their present pleasures at so dear a rate as eternal torments? And do we envy their enjoyment of them so short a time? Would any envy a man going to execution, because he saw him in prison nobly feasted and nobly attended and bravely courted? or because he saw him go up the ladder with a gold chain about his neck and a scarlet gown upon his back? or because he saw him walk to execution through pleasant fields or delightful gardens? or because there went

before him drums beating, colors flying, and trumpets sounding, etc.? Surely not! Oh, no more should we envy the grandeur of the men of the day, for every step they take is but a step to an eternal execution! The sinner is cursed, and all his blessings are cursed! Who in their wits would envy a man under a curse? Oh, how much more worthy of our *pity* than *envy*, is that man's condition who has all his happiness confined to the narrow compass of this life—but his misery extended to the uttermost bounds of an everlasting duration! Mal. 2:2. But,

**5. Fifthly, If there is a hell, then, Christians, spend your days in admiring and in being greatly affected with the transcendent love of Christ—in undergoing hellish punishments in your stead!** Oh pray, pray hard that you "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the *breadth*, and *length*, and *depth*, and *height* of that love of Christ, which passes knowledge," Eph. 3:18-19—of that love of Christ, which put him upon these bodily and spiritual sufferings which were so exceeding great, acute, extreme, universal and continual—and all to save us from wrath to come! 1 Thes. 1:10. Christ's outward and inward miseries, sorrows, and sufferings are not to be paralleled, and therefore Christians have the more cause to lose themselves in the contemplation of his matchless love. Oh, bless Christ! oh, kiss Christ! oh, embrace Christ! oh, welcome Christ! oh, cleave to Christ! oh, follow Christ! oh, walk with Christ! oh, long for Christ! who for your sakes has undergone insupportable wrath and most hellish torments, as I have evidenced at large before, and therefore a touch here may suffice. [Psalm 103:1-2, and 2:12; Cant. 3:4; Rev. 14:4-5; Isaiah 63:8; Gen. 6:9; Cant. 8:14.]

Oh, look up to dear Jesus, and say, "O blessed Jesus, you were accursed that I might be blessed, Gal. 3:13; you were condemned that I might be justified, Isaiah 53; you did for a time undergo the very torments of hell, that I might forever enjoy the pleasures of heaven, Romans 8:30, 34; Psalm 16:11; and therefore I cannot but dearly love you, and highly esteem you, and greatly honor you, and earnestly long after you!"

But, for a close, you will say, "**Where is hell?** where is this place of torment? where is that very place that is so frequently called hell in the Scripture? That there is a hell, you have sufficiently proved—but, please, where is it? where is it?" Now, to this I answer,

[1.] **First**, That it becomes all sober, serious Christians to rest satisfied and contented with those scriptural arguments that do undeniably prove that there is a hell, a place appointed where the wicked, the damned, shall be tormented forever and ever—though they do not know, nor for the present cannot understand, where this hell is. But,

[2.] **Secondly**, I answer, Curiosity is one of the most dangerous engines, which the devil uses to undo souls with. When Satan observes that men do in good earnest set themselves to the obtaining of knowledge, then he strives to turn them to vain inquiries and curious speculations; so that, if they will are knowing, he may keep them busied about unprofitable curiosities. [Curious inquirers have always lain under the lash of Christ, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together: Job 21:22; Acts 1:6, 7; Luke 13:22, 24.] The way to make us mere fools, is to attempt to know more than God would have us to know. Adam's tree of knowledge made him and his posterity fools, Gen. 3:5-6. Curiosity was the bait whereby the devil caught our first parents—and undid us all! Curiosity is the spiritual adultery of the soul. Curiosity is spiritual drunkenness. Look, as the drunkard, be the cup ever so deep, he is not satisfied unless he sees the bottom of it; so the curious searcher into the depths of God, he is unsatisfied until he comes to the bottom of them, and by this means they come to be 'mere fools', as the apostle says, Romans 1:22. Adam had a mind to know as much of God as God himself; and by this means he came to know nothing. Curiosity is that green-sickness of the soul, whereby it longs for novelties, and loathes sound and wholesome truths; it is the epidemic distemper of this age.

Ah! how many are there who spend their precious time in inscrutable and curious questions! [Basil says that multitudes of questions may be made about 'a fly'—which no philosopher is ever able to answer; how much rather about heaven, hell, or the work of grace!] Ah, what did Christ dispute of, among the doctors? Where did Paradise stand? In what part of the world is local hell? What fruit was it that Adam ate, and ruined us all? What became of Moses his body? How many orders and degrees of elect angels are there? etc. Oh, that we could learn to be **contentedly ignorant**, where God would not have us knowing; and let us not account it any disparagement to acknowledge some depths in God's counsels,

purposes, decrees, and judgments, which our shallow reason cannot fathom, Romans 11:33.

It is sad when men will be wise above what is written, and love to pry into God's secrets, and scan the mysteries of religion by carnal reason, Romans 12:3, and 1 Cor. 4:6. God often plagues such pride and curiosity by leaving that sort of men to strange and fearful falls. When a curious inquisitor asked Austin what God did before he created the world, Austin told him that "God was making hell for such busy questionists, for such curious inquirers into God's secrets!" Such sharp replies are the best answers to men of curious minds. But,

[3.] **Thirdly**, I answer, It concerns us but little to know whether hell is in the air, or in the concave of the earth, or of what longitude, latitude, or profundity it is. ["Let us not be inquisitive where hell is—but rather let our care be to escape it!" says Chrysostom.] Let hell be where it has pleased God in his secret counsel to place it—to men unknown, whether it is in the north or in the south, under the frozen zone, or under the burning zone, or in a pit or a gulf. Our great care should be to avoid it, to escape it, and not to be curiously inquisitive about where it is—which the Lord in his infinite wisdom has not thought fit clearly to reveal or make known to the sons of men.

In hell there's nothing heard but yells and cries;  
In hell the fire never slacks, nor worm ever dies.  
But where is this hell placed? My muse, stop there:  
Lord, show me **what** it is—but never **where**!

Look, as there are many who please themselves with discourses of the degrees of glory—while others make sure their saving interest in glory; just so, many please themselves with discourses of the degrees of the torments of hell—while others make sure their escaping those torments! Look, as many take pleasure to be discoursing about the place where hell is—so some take pleasure to make sure their escaping of that place; and certainly they are the best and wisest of men who spend most thoughts, and time, and pains how to keep out of hell—than to exercise themselves with disputes about it. ["As in heaven one is more glorious than another, so in hell one shall be more miserable than another." Augustine.] But,

[4.] **Fourthly**, I answer, That it has been the common opinion of the fathers, that hell is in the heart of the earth; yes, Christ and the blessed Scriptures, which are the highest authority, do strongly seem to favor this opinion, by speaking of a descent unto hell, in opposition unto heaven; and, therefore, we may as well doubt whether heaven be above us, as doubt of hell being beneath us. Among other scriptures ponder upon these: Psalm 140:10, "Let them be cast into the deep pits, that they rise not up again. Bring them down into the pit of destruction." Proverbs 9:18, "Her guests are in the depths of hell." Proverbs 15:24, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." Sheol is sometimes taken for a pit, sometimes for the grave, and sometimes, and that significantly too, for hell—all downwards. One says that Sheol generally signifies all places under the earth; whence some conclude that hell is in the heart of the earth, or under the earth. Without doubt it is below, because it is everywhere opposed to heaven, which is above. It is therefore called Abyssus, a deep pit, a vast gulf; such a pit as, by reason of the depth thereof, may be said to have no bottom. The devils entreated Christ that he would not send them to this place, Luke 8:31, in Abyssum, which is, says one, "a gulf of immeasurable depth," etc.

The apostle, 2 Pet. 2:4, speaking of the angels that sinned, says, "God cast them *down* into hell." So Beza, in his Annotations, tells us the Greeks called that place which was ordained for the prison and torment of the damned. And reason itself does teach us that it must needs be opposite and contrary to that place in which the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. 12:23, do reside, which, on all hands, is granted to be *above*. Some have been of opinion that the pit spoken of, into which Korah, Dathan, and Abiram went down alive, when the earth opened up and swallowed them up, was the pit of hell, into which both their souls and bodies were immediately conveyed, Num. 16:33.

As we know little in respect of the height of heaven, so we know as little in respect of the lowness of hell. *Some* of the upper part of the earth is to us yet an unknown land—but *all* of the lowest parts of hell is to us an unknown land. Many thousands have traveled there—but none have returned thence, to make reports or write books of their travels. That piece of geography is totally unknown to us. Heaven and hell are the

greatest opposites, or remotest extremes: "And you people of Capernaum, will you be exalted to *heaven*? No, you will be brought down to *hell*!" Mat. 11:23. Heaven and hell are at farthest natural distance, and are therefore the everlasting receptacles of those who are at the farthest moral distance—believers and unbelievers, saints and impenitents. And it is observable, that as the height of heaven, so the depth of hell, is ascribed to wisdom, to show the unsearchableness of it. "Oh the *depth*," as well as "Oh the *height*," "of the wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33. Certainly God's depths, and Satan's depths, and hell's depths, lie far out of our view, and are hard to be found out, 1 Cor. 10, and Rev. 2:24.

Though I ought piously to reverence the wonderful wisdom of God, and to wonder at his unsearchable judgments—yet I ought not curiously and profanely to search beyond the compass of that which God has revealed to us in his word.

The Romans had a certain lake, the depth whereof they knew not. Doubtless hell is such a lake, the depth whereof no man knows; it is such a bottomless pit that no mortal can sound. But,

[5.] **Fifthly** and lastly, I answer, Some of the learned are of opinion, that hell is outside this visible world, which will pass away at the last day, 2 Pet. 3:10-13, and removed at the greatest distance from the place where the righteous shall forever inhabit: Mat. 8:12, "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." Mat. 22:30, "Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness." Mat. 25:30, "And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." Into a darkness beyond a darkness, into a dungeon beyond and beneath the prison. The darkness of hell is compared to the darkness of those prisons, which were oftentimes outside of the city.

A prison was outside the gate, near mount Calvary, and it was the loathsome and vilest prison of all, for in it the thieves who were carried to Calvary to be executed were kept; and Christ alludes to this prison in Mat. 8:12, and Mat. 22:13, and that Mat. 25:30, "Cast him into utter darkness;" which allusion could not be understood, unless there had been

a dark prison without the city, where was utter darkness. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Acts 12:10. By outer darkness, the Holy Spirit would signify to us that the wicked should be in a state most remote from all heavenly happiness and blessedness; and that they should be expelled out of the blessed presence of God, who is highest good. By *outer* darkness we are to understand the greatest darkness that is, as in a place most remote from all light. They shall be cast into outer darkness, that is, they shall be cast into the palpable darkness of the infernal prison. Immediately after death, sinners' souls shall be cast into the infernal prison, and in the day of judgment both their souls and their bodies shall be cast into outer darkness. Darkness is no other thing than a privation of light. Now light is twofold, namely,

1. Spiritual light—as wisdom, grace, truth. Now the privation of this light is internal darkness, and ignorance in the spirit and inward man.

2. There is a sensible and physical light, whose privation is outer darkness; and this is the darkness spoken of in the three scriptures last cited. For although there is fire in hell—yet it is a dark and smoky fire, and not clear, except only so as the damned may see one another, for the greater increase of their misery, as some write. Now I shall leave the ingenuous reader to conclude as he pleases concerning the place where hell is—desiring and hoping that he will make it the greatest business of his life to escape hell, and to get to heaven, etc.

### **The Divinity and Humanity of Christ**

**6. Sixthly, If Jesus Christ did feel and suffer the very torments of hell, though not after a hellish manner, then let me infer that certainly the papists are greatly mistaken, and do greatly err—who boldly and confidently assert that Christ's soul in substance, went really and locally into hell.** Bellarmine takes a great deal of pains to make good this assertion—but this great champion of the Romish church may easily be confuted. First, Because that *limbus patrum*, and Christ's fetching the fathers from the skirts of hell, about which he makes so great a noise, is a mere fable, and not founded upon

any solid grounds of Scripture. Secondly, Because upon Christ's dying, and satisfying for our sins, his soul went that very day into paradise—as Adam sinning was that very day cast out of paradise—and his soul could not be in two places at once. Thirdly, Because this descent of Christ's soul into hell was altogether needless, and to no purpose. What need was there of it, or to what end did he descend? Not to suffer in hell, for that was finished on the cross; not to redeem or rescue the fathers out of hell, for the elect were never there, and redemption from hell was wrought by Christ's death, as the Scriptures do clearly evidence; not to triumph there over the devils, etc., [Luke 23:43; Gen. 3:23-24; John 18:30; Heb. 9:12; 1 Thes. 1:10; Eph. 4:8; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15.] for Christ triumphed over them when he was on the cross.

Christ, in the day of his solemn inauguration into his heavenly kingdom, triumphed over sin, death, devils, and hell. When Christ was on the cross, he made the devils a public spectacle of scorn and derision; as Tamerlane did Bajazet the great Turk, whom he shut up in an iron cage made like a grate, in such sort as that he might on every side be seen, and so carried him up and down all Asia, to be scorned and derided by his own people. By these few hints you may see the vanity and folly of the papists, who tell you that Christ's soul and substance went really and locally into hell. I might make other inferences—but let these suffice at this time.

**7. Seventhly, As Jesus Christ did feel and suffer the very torments of hell, though not after a hellish manner, so Jesus Christ was really, certainly made a curse for us.** Jesus Christ did in his soul and body bear that curse of the law, which by reason of transgression was due to us. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree," Gal. 3:13. He does not say that Christ was cursed—but made a curse, which is more: it shows that the curse of all did lie upon him. The death on the tree was accursed above all kinds of deaths, as the serpent was accursed above all the beasts of the field, Gen. 3:14. This scripture refers to Deut. 21:33, "Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse." [Not that all who are hanged should be damned, for the contrary appears in that Luke 23:43. Neither is hanging in itself, or by the law of nature, or by civil law, more execrable than any other death.]

The holy and wise God appointed this kind of punishment, as being the most cruel and reproachful, for a type of the punishment which his Son must suffer to deliver us from the curse. Hanging on a tree was accounted the most shameful, the most dishonorable, the most odious and infamous, and accursed, of all kinds of death, both by the Israelites and other nations, because the very manner of the death did intimate that such men as were thus executed were such execrable, base, vile, and accursed wretches, that they did defile the earth with treading on it, and would pollute the earth if they should die upon it, and therefore were hanged up in the air, as people not fit to converse among men, or touch the surface of the ground any more.

But what should be the reason why the *ceremonial law* affixed the curse to this death rather than any other death?

I answer, first, because this was reckoned the most shameful and dishonorable of all deaths, and was usually therefore the punishment of those who had by some notorious wickedness provoked God to pour out his wrath upon the whole land, and so were hanged up to appease his wrath; as you may see in the hanging of those princes that were guilty of committing whoredom with the daughters of Moab, Num. 25:4; and in the hanging of Saul's seven sons in the days of David, when there was a famine in the land because of Saul's perfidious oppressing of the Gibeonites, 2 Sam. 21:6-9; and in Joshua's hanging of the five kings of the Amorites, Josh. 16:26.

But, secondly and mainly, it was with respect to the death Christ was to die. God would have his Son, the Lord Jesus, to suffer this kind of death, that hence it might be the more evident that in his death he bore the curse due to our sins, according to that of the apostle, Gal. 3:13. Christ was certainly made that curse which he redeemed us from, otherwise the apostle does not reason either soundly or fairly, when he tells us we are redeemed from the curse because Christ was made a curse for us; he remits that curse to us which he received in himself. He hit the mark on the head, who says, Christ has taken our punishment without guilt, to loose the guilt and end the punishment. We were subject to the curse, because we had transgressed the law; Christ was not subject, because he had fulfilled it. He therefore took that curse, to the which he was not

subject, when he hanged upon the tree, to loose the curse which was against us. Such a curse or execration was Christ made for us, as was that from which he redeemed us; and that curse from which he redeemed us was no other than the curse of the law, and that the curse of the law included all the punishment which sinners were to bear or suffer for transgression of the law, of which his hanging on the cross was a sign and symbol; and this curse was Christ made for us, that is—he did bear and suffer it to redeem us from it. Christ was truly made a curse for us, and did bear both in his body and soul that curse, which by reason of the transgression of the law was due to us; and therefore I may well conclude this head with that saying of Jerome, "The Lord's injury is our glory."

The more we ascribe to Christ's suffering, the less remains of ours; the more painfully that he suffered, the more fully are we redeemed; the greater his sorrow was, the greater our solace; his dissolution is our consolation, his cross our comfort; his annoy our endless joy; his distress in soul our release, his calamity our comfort; his misery our mercy, his adversity our felicity, his hell our heaven. Christ is not only accursed—but a curse; and this expression is used both for more significancy and usefulness, to note out the truth and realness of the thing, and also to show the order and way he took for bringing us back unto that blessedness which we had lost. The law was our righteousness in our innocent condition, and so it was our blessedness. But the first Adam, falling away from God by his first transgression, plunged himself into all unrighteousness, and so inwrapped himself in the curse, James 1:24. Now Christ the second Adam, that he may restore the lost man into an estate of blessedness, he becomes that for them which the law is unto them, namely, a curse; beginning where the law ends, and so going backward to satisfy the demands of the law to the uttermost, he becomes first a curse for them, and then their righteousness, and so their blessedness, Romans 10:24.

Christ's becoming a curse for us, stands in this, that whereas we are all accursed by the sentence of the law because of sin, he now comes in our place, and stands under the stroke of that curse which of right belongs to us; so that it no longer lies on the backs of poor sinners—but on him for them and in their stead; therefore he is called a surety, Heb. 7:22. The

surety stands in the room of a debtor, malefactor, or him who is any way liable to the law. Such is Adam and all his posterity. We are by the doom of the law, evil-doers, and transgressors, and upon that score we stand indebted to the justice of God, and lie under the stroke of his wrath. Now the Lord Jesus, seeing us in this condition, he steps in and stands between us and the blow; yes, he takes this wrath and curse off from us—unto himself. Christ Jesus does not expect that we should pay the debt ourselves—but he takes it wholly to himself. As a surety for a murderer or traitor, or some other notorious malefactor, that has escaped prison and has run away—he undergoes whatever the malefactor is chargeable with for satisfying the law; even so, the Lord Jesus Christ stands surety for us renegade malefactors, making himself liable to all that curse which belongs to us, that he might both answer the law fully and bring us back again to God.

As the first Adam stood in the place of all mankind fallen; so Christ the second Adam stands in the room of all mankind which is to be restored; he sustains the person of all those which do spiritually descend from him, and unto whom he bears the relation of a head, Eph. 1:22-23. Christ did actually undergo and suffer the wrath of God, and the fearful effects thereof, in the punishments threatened in the law. As he became a debtor, and was so accounted, even so he became payment thereof; he was made a sacrifice for sin, and bore to the full, all that ever divine justice did or could require, even the uttermost extent of the curse of the law of God. He must thus undergo the curse, because he had taken upon him our sin. The justice of the most high God, revealed in the law, looks upon the Lord Jesus as a sinner, because he has undertaken for us, and seizes upon him accordingly, pouring down on his head the whole curse, and all those dreadful punishments which are threatened in it against sin; for the curse follows sin as the shadow the body, whether it be sin inherent or sin imputed; even as the blessing follows righteousness, whether it be righteousness inherent or righteousness imputed. But,

**8. Eighthly, He who did feel and suffer the very torments of hell—though not after a hellish manner—was God man.** Christ participates of both natures, being God and man, God-man. Such a mediator, sinners needed. No mediator but such a one who has interest in

both parties, could serve their turns or save their souls, and such a one is the Lord Jesus; he has an interest in both parties, and he has an interest in both natures—the Godhead and the manhood. The blessed Scriptures are so express and clear in these points, that they must shut their eyes with a witness against the light, that cannot see Christ to be God-man, to be God and man.

I shall first speak something of **the DIVINITY of Christ**. Now here are fathomless depths and bottomless bottoms, if I may so speak; here are stupendous and amazing mysteries, astonishing and confounding excellencies, such as the holy angels themselves desire to pry into. God is dwelling in inaccessible light: 1 Tim. 6:16. Here are such beauties and perfections that had I, as the poet speaks, a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths, and a voice of steel—yet I could not sufficiently describe them! Nevertheless give me permission to say something concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, who is one eternal God with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit. I might produce a cloud of witnesses in the case—but it is enough that we have the authority of the sacred Scriptures, both in the Old and New Testament, confirming of it; and therefore I shall lay down some **proofs or demonstrations of the eternal godhead of Christ**, which I shall draw out of the blessed Scripture. This is a point of great concern, that Christ is God; so great, as whoever builds not upon this, builds upon the sands. This is the rock of our salvation, "The Word was God," John 1:1. Concerning this important point, consider—

**1. First, That the godhead of Christ is clearly asserted, and manifested both in the Old and New Testament.** Take a taste of some of those many scriptures which may be cited: Isaiah 43:10-12, "That you may know and believe, and understand that I am he, I, even I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no Savior." Isaiah 41:21-25, "There is no God else besides me: a just God and Savior, there is none besides me. Look unto me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else. To me every knee shall bow. . . . In Jehovah have I righteousness. . . . In Jehovah shall the seed of Israel be justified." [Compare these scriptures of the Old Testament with these in the New Testament. Heb. 1:2, 8; 1 John 1:7; Acts 4:12; Eph. 4:8; Romans 9:30;

and also Jer. 33:23; Psalm 6, 68:18-20.] Compare this with Romans 14:10-11. We ought to conclude from these scriptures, that Jesus Christ is not a different God from the Father—but is one and the same God with him. Just so, he is called "The mighty God, the everlasting Father," Isaiah 9:6.

Take a few clear places out of the New Testament, as that in Romans 9:5, "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for evermore." Christ is here himself called God blessed forever. Just so, Titus 2:13, "Looking for that hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." Who is it that shall appear at the last day in the clouds—but Christ? who is called the great God and our Savior? "God blessed forever," says Paul to the Romans. "The great God," says Paul to Titus. 1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Phil. 2:6, "He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God." Col. 2:9, "In him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily." John 20:28, "My Lord, and my God." 1 Tim. 3:16, "God manifested in the flesh." To which of the saints or angels did God say at any time, "You are my Son?" Heb. 1:1. "The heir of all things, the illustrious brightness of my glory, and lively character of my person." "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and all the angels of God shall worship you."

Certainly he who is God's own proper, natural, consubstantial, co-essential, only-begotten Son, he is God; wherever this sonship is, there is the deity or the divine essence. Now Christ is thus God's Son, therefore he is God. What the Father is as to his nature, that the Son must also be. Now the first person, the Father of Christ, is God; whereupon he too who is the Son must be God also. A son always participates of his father's essence, there is between them evermore an identity and oneness of nature. If therefore Christ is God's Son, as is most evident throughout the Scripture he is, then he must needs have that very nature and essence which God the Father has, insomuch that if the second person be not really a God, the first person is but equivocally a Father. These scriptures are so evident and pregnant to prove the godhead of Christ, that they

need no illustration; yes, they speak so fully for the divinity of Christ, that all the Arians and Socinians in the world do but in vain go about to elude them. But,

**2. Secondly, Let us ponder seriously upon these scriptures:**

John 3:13, "And no man has ascended up to heaven—but he who came down from heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven;" verse 31, "He who comes from above is above all: he who comes from heaven is above all." John 8:23, "You are from beneath, I am from above." John 16:28, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; and again I leave the world, and go to the Father." Now from these blessed scriptures we may thus argue: he who was in heaven before he was on the earth, and who was also in heaven while he was on the earth, is certainly the eternal God—but all this does Jesus Christ strongly assert concerning himself, as is evident in the scriptures last cited; therefore he is the eternal God, blessed forever. But,

**3. Thirdly, Christ's eternal deity, co-equality, and consubstantiality with the Father,** may be demonstrated from his divine names and titles. As,

**(1.) First, Jehovah is one of the incommunicable names of God, which signifies his eternal essence.**

The Jews observe that in God's name Jehovah, the Trinity is implied. *Je* signifies the present tense, *ho* the preterperfect tense, *vah* the future. The Jews also observe that in his name *Jehovah*, denotes rest, implying that in God and from God is all our rest. Every gracious soul is like Noah's dove, he can find neither rest nor satisfaction but in God. God alone is the godly man's ark of rest and safety. Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God, and is never attributed to any but God: Psalm 83:19, "You whose name alone is Jehovah." Jehovah is a name so full of divine mysteries, that the Jews hold it unlawful to pronounce it. [Exod. 15:3; Gen. 2:4. The Jews called it *nomen Dei inefabile*. But this name Jehovah is not unspeakable in regard of the name—but in regard of the essence of God, set forth by it, as Zanchius notes. This name was always thrice repeated when the priest blessed the people, Num. 6:24-26.] **Jehovah** signifies three things—

[1.] That God is an eternal, independent being of himself.

[2.] That he gives being to all creatures, Acts 17:28.

[3.] That he does, and will give, being to his promises.

God tells Moses, Exod. 6:3, that he "appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of El Shaddai, God Almighty—but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." The name Jehovah was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but not the *mystery* of the name. [Gen. 20:14, "Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will see, or provide." Besides, the fathers of old are said not to have known God by his name Jehovah—in comparison of that which their posterity knew afterwards; for to them God made himself more clearly and fully known.] This was revealed to Moses from God, and from Moses to the people. It is meant of the performances of his great promises made to Abraham. God did promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's seed for an inheritance, which promise was not performed to him—but to his seed after him; so that this is the meaning, God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *El Shaddai*, God Almighty, in protecting, delivering, and rewarding of them—but by his name *Jehovah*, he was not known to them. God did not perform his promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but unto their seed and posterity after them.

This name Jehovah is the proper and peculiar name of the one, only true God, a name as far significant of his nature and being, as possibly we are enabled to understand; so that this is taken for granted on all hands—that he whose name is Jehovah is the only true God. Whenever that name is used properly, without an image or figure—it is used of God only.

Now this glorious name *Jehovah*, that is so full of mysteries, is frequently ascribed to *Christ*: Isaiah 6:1, he is called Jehovah, for there Isaiah is said to see "Jehovah sitting upon a throne," etc. And, John 12:41, this is expressly by the holy evangelist applied to Christ, of whom he says, that "Isaiah saw his glory, and spoke of him." Exod. 17:1, the people are said to "tempt Jehovah;" and the apostle says, 1 Cor. 10:9, "Let us not tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." It

is said of Jehovah, "Of old have you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands; they shall perish—but you shall endure," etc., Psalm 102:25-26; and the apostle clearly testifies, Heb. 1:10, that these words are spoken of Christ. Just so, Jehovah rained fire and brimstone from Jehovah out of heaven, Gen. 19:24; that is, Jehovah, the Son of God, who stayed with Abraham, Gen. 18, rained fire and brimstone from Jehovah the Father; and Christ is called Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness; and in that Zech. 13:7, Christ is called the Father's fellow. The Lord Christ is that Jehovah, to whom every knee must bow, as appears by comparing Isaiah 45:21-25, compared with Romans 14:9-12 and Phil. 2:6, 9-11.

I might further insist upon this argument, and show that the title of '*Lord*', so often given to Christ in the New Testament, does answer to the title of Jehovah in the Old Testament. And, as some learned men conceive, the apostles did purposely use the title of *Lord*, that they might not offend the Jews with frequent pronouncing of the word Jehovah: "You shall fear *Jehovah* your God." Deut. 6:13 and 10:20 is rendered by the apostle, "You shall worship the *Lord* your God;" and so Deut. 6:5, "You shall love *Jehovah* your God," is rendered, Mat. 22:37, "You shall love the *Lord* your God." Thus you see that in several precious scriptures Jesus Christ is called Jehovah; and therefore we may very safely and confidently conclude that Jesus Christ is very God, God blessed forever. But,

**(2.) The second name or title which denotes the essence of God is Ehieh, "I am that I am," or, *I will be what I will be*, Exod. 3:14.** [The Hebrew Ehieh properly signifies, "I will be that I will be." The Septuagint renders it, I am he who is; and in that Rev. 16:5, God is called, He who is, and that was, and that will be.] It has the same root with Jehovah, and signifies that God is an eternal, unchangeable being. Some make this name to be God's extraordinary name. Damascene says this name contains all things in it, like a vast and infinite ocean without bounds. This glorious name of God, I AM THAT I AM, implies these six things.

[1.] God's incomprehensibility: as we say of anything we would not have others pry into, *it is what it is*, so God says here to Moses, I AM WHAT I AM.

[2.] It implies God's immensity, that his being is without any limits. Angels and men have their beings—but then they are bounded and limited within such a compass—but God is an immense being that cannot be included within any bounds.

[3.] It implies that God is of himself, and has not a being dependent upon any other. "I am," that is, by and from and of myself.

[4.] It implies God's eternal and unchangeable being in himself. It implies God's everlastingness. "I am before anything was, and shall forever be." There never was nor shall be time wherein God could not say of himself, "I am."

[5.] It implies that there is no succession of time with God. And,

[6.] It implies that he is a God who gives being to all things. [Every creature is temporary and mutable. No creature can say, I will be that I will be.] In short, the reason why God names himself, "I AM THAT I AM," or will be that I will be, is because he is the Being of beings, subsisting by himself; as if he should say, "I am my being, I am my essence; my existence differs not from my essence, because I am that I am, and as I am, so will I be to all eternity," "the same yesterday, today, and forever." "There is no shadow of change, no variableness at all in me."

Now this glorious name is given to Jesus Christ: Rev. 1:8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." [In this verse you have a clear and pregnant proof of Christ's deity.] This kind of speaking is taken from the Greek alphabet, in which language John wrote this book. *Alpha*, being their first letter, and *Omega*, the last. The sense is, I was before all creatures, and shall abide forever, though all creatures should perish; or I am he from whom all creatures had their beginning, and to whom they are referred, as their uttermost end. Christ, in calling of himself Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; and that absolutely, does therein assume unto himself absolute perfection, power, dominion, eternity, and divinity, which is, and which was, and which is to come. Christ assumes all those epithets here to himself by which John, verse 4, described God;

and what wonder is it if Christ, who is God, does take to himself whatever is due to God?

The *Almighty*: this is another epithet proper to God, which Christ also takes to himself, showing that he is the true, eternal, and omnipotent God, in all things equal and co-essential with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is the first and the last, who is, was, and is to come, and the Almighty, and therefore he is, without any question—God eternal; for so Jehovah says of himself, "I the Lord, the first and the last, I am he; I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God; I am God Almighty." [Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, and Gen. 17:1.] But Christ does take to himself, all these divine attributes; therefore he is Jehovah—that one, eternal, and omnipotent God with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Oh, the stateliness and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ! What an excellent and stately person is he, there being not a property attributed to God, but is agreeable to Christ! Every word in this Rev. 1:8, is a proper attribute of God. He is infinite in power, sovereign in dominion, and not bounded as creatures are. And that this is clearly spoken of Christ is most evident, not only from the scope, John being to set out Christ, from whom he had this revelation—but also from the 11th and 17th verses following, where he gives him the same titles over again, or rather, if you please, Christ, speaking of himself, takes and repeats the same titles. [See Rev. 21:6, and 22:13.]

Heb. 13:8, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." "Yesterday," that is, the time past, before his coming in the flesh; "today," while in the flesh; and "forever," that is, after time. The same—before time, in time, and after time. "Jesus Christ the same," that is, unchangeable in his essence, promises, and doctrine. Jesus Christ was always the same, and is still the same, and will abide forever the same, as being one selfsame God, and one selfsame Mediator, as well in the Old as in the New Testament.

John 8:58, "Jesus said unto them, Truly, truly, I say unto you, before Abraham was—I am." According to my divine nature, which is from everlasting, before Abraham was—I am. I who, according to my humanity, am not above fifty years old, according to my divine nature am

eternal, and so before Abraham and all the creatures, Micah 5:1-2. I have a being from all eternity, and so before Abraham was born; and therefore, as young as you take me to be in respect of my age here, I may well have seen and known Abraham, though he died over two thousand years since. But,

**(3.) The third name or title which denotes the essence of God is Elohim,** which signifies the persons in the essence. It is a name of the plural number, expressing the trinity of persons in the unity of essence; and, therefore, it is observed by the learned, that the Holy Spirit begins the story of the creation with this plural name of God, joined with a verb of the singular number, as *the mighty Gods*, or all the three persons in the godhead, created, Gen. 1:1-2. Just so, Gen. 3:22, "And Jehovah Elohim said, Behold, the man has become as one of us." It is a holy derision of man's vain affectation of the deity. God upbraids our first parents for their vain attempt of being like unto him in that ironical expression, "Behold, the man has become as one of us—knowing good and evil;" meaning, that by his sin he was become most unlike him.

This name Elohim, by which God expresses his nature, denotes the power and strength of God; to show us that God is strong and powerful, and that he can do great things for his people, and bring great desolations and destructions upon his and his people's enemies. O sirs, God is too strong for his strongest enemies, and too powerful for all the powers of hell! Though Jacob, a worm in his own eyes, and in his enemies' eyes—yet Jacob need never fear; for Elohim, the strong and powerful God, will stand by him, and help him, Isaiah 41:10, 13-14.

Now this name is also attributed unto Christ: Psalm 45:6, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of your kingdom is a righteous scepter." "Your throne, O *God*," Hebrew, *gods*—"Your throne, O *Gods*," Elohim. It signifies the trinity of persons in the unity of essence, as I have before noted. The prophet directs his speech, not to Solomon but to Christ, as is most evident by the clear and unquestionable testimony of the Holy Spirit: Heb. 1:8, "But unto the Son he says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom." Christ is called God, not by an excellency only as the angels are, nor by office and title only as magistrates are called gods, nor

ironically as the heathen gods are called, nor a *diminutive* God, inferior to the Father, as Arius held—but God by nature every way, co-essential, co-eternal, and co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. [Psalm 8:5, compared with Heb. 2:6-8, and Psalm 82:16.] Hold fast all truth—but, above all, hold fast this glorious truth—that Jesus Christ is God blessed forever!

**(4.) The fourth name or title which denotes the essence of God is El Gibbor, the strong and mighty God.** God is not only strong in his own essence—but he is also strong in the defense of his people, and it is he who gives all strength and power to all other creatures, 2 Chron. 16:9. There are no men, no powers, which are a match for the strong God.

Now this title is also attributed to Christ: Isaiah 9:6, "El Gibbor, the strong God, the mighty God." The word signifying *God*, does also signify *strong*. He is so strong that he is almighty, he is one to whom nothing is impossible. Christ's name is God, for he is the same essence with God the Father. This title, "the mighty God," fits well to Christ, who has all the names of the deity given to him in Scripture; and who, by the strength and power of his godhead, did satisfy the justice of God, and pacify the wrath of God, and make peace, and purchase pardon and eternal life for all his elect.

**(5.) The fifth name or title which denotes the essence of God is El Shaddai, God omnipotent or all-sufficient, Gen. 17:1.** He lacks nothing—but is infinitely blessed with the infinite perfection of his glorious being. By this name, God makes himself known to be self-sufficient, all-sufficient, absolutely perfect. Certainly that man can lack nothing who has an all-sufficient God for his God. He who loses his all for God, shall find all in an all-sufficient God, Mat. 19:29. Esau had much—but Jacob had all, because he had the God of all, Gen. 33:9-11. "What are riches, honors, pleasures, profits, lands, friends, yes, millions of worlds, compared to one Shaddai, God Almighty, God All-sufficient?" (Augustine.) [This name Shaddai belongs only to the godhead, and to no creature; no, not to the humanity of Christ.] This glorious name Shaddai, was a noble foundation for Abraham to act his faith upon, though in things above nature or against it, etc. He who is El Shaddai is perfectly able to defend his servants from all evil, and to bless them with all

spiritual and temporal blessings, and to perform all his promises which concern both this life and that which is to come.

Now this name, this title Shaddai, is attributed to Christ, as you may clearly see by comparing Gen. 35:6, 9-11, and 32:24-30, with Hosea 12:3-5. That angel who appeared to Jacob was Christ—the angel of the covenant. Mark, you shall never find either God the Father or the Holy Spirit called an angel in Scripture; nor was this a created angel, for then Jacob would never have made supplication to him—but he was an uncreated angel, even the Lord Almighty, the Almighty God, who spoke with Jacob in Bethel. He who in this divine story is said to be a man, was the Son of God in human shape, as is most evident by the whole narration. The angel in the text is the same angel who conducted the Israelites in the wilderness, and fought their battles for them, Exod. 3:2; Acts 7:30; 1 Cor. 10:4, 5, 9, even Jesus Christ, who is styled once and again the Almighty, Rev. 1:8, and 4:8. In this last scripture is acknowledged Christ's holiness, power, and godhead. Ah Christians! When will you once learn to set one Almighty Christ against all the mighty ones of the world, that you may bear up bravely and stoutly against their rage and wrath, and go on cheerfully and resolutely in the way of your duty.

**(6.) The sixth name or title is Adonai—my Lord.** Though this name Adonai is given sometimes analogically to creatures—yet properly it belongs to God alone. This name is often used in the Old Testament; and, in Mal. 1:6, it is used in the plural number to note the mystery of the holy Trinity, "If I be Adonim, *Lords*, where is my fear?" Some derive the word Adonai from a word in the Hebrew that signifies judicare, to judge, because God is the Judge of the world; others derive it from a word which signifies basis, a foundation, intimating that God is the upholder of all things, as the foundation of a house is the support of the whole building.

Now this name is given to Christ: Dan. 9:17, "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O *Lord*, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary." Daniel pleads here no merits of their own—but the merits and mediation of the Messiah, whom God has made both Lord and Christ. Just so, Psalm 106:1, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." [Acts 2;

Luke 1:43, and 2:11-12; Heb. 1:13.] Christ applies these words to himself, as you may see in that Mat. 22:24, "Jehovah said," that is, God the Father said, *La-adoni*, "unto my Lord," that is, to Christ; "sit at my right hand," sit with me in my throne. It notes the advancement of Christ, as he was both God and man in one person, to the supremest place of power and authority, of honor and heavenly glory, Mat. 28:18; John 3:35. God's right hand notes a place of equal power and authority with God, even that he should be advanced far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, Eph. 1:21; Heb. 1:3; Luke 22:69.

Christ's reign over the whole world is sometimes called "the right hand of the majesty," and sometimes the "right hand of the power of God." "Until I make your enemies your footstool." This implies,

[1.] That Jesus Christ has ever had, and will have enemies, even to the end of the world.

[2.] Victory, a perfect conquest over them. Conquerors used to make their enemies their footstool. Those proud enemies of Christ, who now set up their crests, look up to heaven, and strut it out against him; even those shall be brought under his feet.

[3.] It implies ignominy, the lowest subjection. Sapoors, King of Persia, overcoming the Emperor Valerian in battle, used his back for a stirrup when he got upon his horse. Just so, Tamerlane served Bajazet.

[4.] The footstool is a piece of state, and both raises and easeth him who sits on the throne; so Christ will both raise himself and ease himself by that vengeance that he will take on his enemies, etc.

Now from these **divine names** and **titles** which are given to Jesus Christ, we may thus argue—He to whom the incommunicable titles of the most high God are attributed, he is the most high God. These incommunicable titles of the most high God are attributed unto Christ, consequently, he is the most high God. But,

**4. Fourthly, Christ's eternal deity, co-equality, and consubstantiality with the Father may be demonstrated from his**

**divine properties and attributes.** I shall show you for the opening of this—that the glorious attributes of God are ascribed to the Lord Jesus. I shall begin,

(1.) First, with the **ETERNITY** of God. God is an eternal God. "From everlasting to everlasting you are God," Psalm 90:2. "The eternal God is your refuge," Deut. 33:27. "He inhabits eternity," Isaiah 57:15. He is called "the ancient of days," Dan. 7:9; and he is said to be "everlasting," and to be "king of old," Psalm 74:12. This shows he had no beginning. In respect of his *future* eternity, he is called "the everlasting God," Romans 16:26. "The everlasting king," 1 Tim. 1:17. That there is no change with God—he is from everlasting to everlasting the same, we may see Psalm 102:26-27, "The heavens shall perish—but you shall endure; yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture shall you change them, and they shall be changed. But you are the same, and your years shall have no end." There is no succession or variation in God—but he is eternally the same. Eternity is an interminable existence and duration before any time, and beyond all time; it is a fixed duration, without beginning or ending. [Eternity is taken three ways. [1.] Properly, so it notes to be without beginning and end, so God only is eternal. [2.] Improperly, so it notes to have a beginning but no ending; so angels, so the souls of men are eternal. [3.] Abusive, so some things are said to be eternal which have had a beginning, and shall also have an end. They are called eternal in respect of their long continuance and duration; so circumcision and other Mosaic ceremonies were called eternal or everlasting.]

The eternity of God is beyond all possible conception of measure or time. God ever was, ever is, and ever shall be. Though the manifestations of himself unto the creatures are in time—yet his essence or being never did, nor ever shall be bound up by time. Look backward or forward, God from eternity to eternity, is a most self-sufficient, infinite, perfect, blessed being—the first cause of our being, and without any cause of his own being—an eternal infinite fullness, and possession to himself and of himself. What God *is*, he *was* from eternity; and what God *is*, he *will be* so to eternity. Oh, this glorious attribute drops myrrh and mercy, oil and honey!

Now this attribute of eternity is ascribed to Jesus Christ: John 1:1, "In the beginning *was* the Word;" "was" notes some former duration, and therefore we conclude that he was before the beginning, before any creation or creatures, for it is said he was God in the beginning, and his divine nature whereby he works is eternal, Heb. 9:14. "He is the first and last," Rev. 1:17. Hence it is that he is called "the firstborn of every creature," because he who created all, and upholds all, has power to command and dispose of all, as the firstborn had power to command the family or kingdom, Col. 1:15-17; compare Isaiah 66:6, with Rev. 22:13.

John 17:5, "Father glorify you me with your own self, with the glory I had with you before the world was." Such glory had the Lord Christ with his Father, namely, in the heavens, and that before the world was. This glory he had, in regard of actual possession. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way," says Christ the Son of God, Proverbs 8:22. And as his Father possessed him, so he was possessed of the selfsame glory with his Father before the world was, from eternity. "His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," from the days of eternity, says the prophet Micah, speaking of the Messiah, Micah 5:2. See the eternity of Christ further confirmed by these scriptures. [John 8:58, and 17:24; Rev. 1:8, 17; Heb. 1:10-12, and 7:3; Isaiah 9:6, etc. Christ is without beginning of days—or end of time.] But,

(2.) Secondly, As the attribute of eternity is ascribed to Christ, so the attribute of **OMNISCIENCE** is ascribed to Christ; and this speaks out the godhead of Christ. He knows all things: John 21:17, "Lord, you know all things!" "All things present and future; what I now am, and what I shall be," says Chrysostom on the words: John 2:25, "He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." Shall craftsmen know the nature and properties of their crafts, and shall not Christ know the hearts of men, which are the craft of his own hands? Rev. 2:23, "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the thoughts and hearts." Now of all a man's inwards—the heart and the thoughts are the most inward. Christ is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. The Greek word that is here rendered searches, signifies to search with the greatest seriousness, exactness, and diligence that can be; the word is metaphorically taken from such as use to search in mines for silver and

gold. Christ is also frequently said to know the thoughts of men, and that before they betrayed themselves by any outward expressions. [Mat. 9:24, and 12:26; Luke 5:22, 6:18, 11:17, and 24:38, etc.]

Now this is confessedly God's peculiar, "God—who knows the hearts." He is the wisdom of the Father, 1 Cor. 1:24. He knows the Father, and does, according to his will, reveal the secrets of his Father's bosom. The bosom is the seat of love and secrecy, John 1:18. Men admit those into their bosoms, with whom they impart all their secrets. The bosom is the place of counsels; that is, Christ reveals the secret and mysterious counsels, and the tender and compassionate affections of the Father to the world. Being in the bosom implieth communication of secrets: the bosom is a place for them. It is a speech of Tully to a friend that had betrusted him with a secret, crede mihi, etc., Believe me, says he, what you have committed to me, it is in my bosom still, I am not ungirt to let it slip out. But Scripture adds this hint too, where it speaks of the bosom as the place of secrets: Proverbs 17:23, "A wicked man takes a gift out of the bosom, to pervert the ways of judgment," speaking of a bribe: Proverbs 21:14, "A gift in secret pacifieth anger, and a reward in the bosom expiateth wrath." Here is "secret" and "bosom" all one, as gift and reward are one. Just so, Christ lies in the Father's bosom; this intimates his being conscious to all the Father's secrets. But,

(3.) Thirdly, As the attribute of God's omniscience is ascribed to Christ, so the attribute of God's **OMNIPRESENCE** is ascribed to Christ; Mat. 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name—there am I in the midst of them;" and chapter 28:29, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world." He is not contained in any place—who was before there was any place, and did create all places by his own power. Proverbs 8:22, and John 1:1, 3.

While Christ was on earth in respect of his bodily presence, he was in the bosom of his Father, which must be understood of his divine nature and person. He did come down from heaven, and yet remained in heaven. [John 1:18, 3:13; Psalm 139:7-11.] Christ is universally present, he is present at all times and all places, and among all people; he is universally everywhere, inclusively nowhere. Diana's temple was burnt down when she was busy at Alexander's birth, and could not be at two places together

—but Christ is present both in paradise and in the wilderness at the same time. Where he is not by his *gracious influence*, there he is by his *vindictive power*. Empedocles could say that God is a circle, whose center is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere. The poor blind heathens could say that God is the soul of the world; and thus, as the soul is, so is he, that his eye is in every corner, etc. To which purpose they so portrayed their goddess Minerva, that whichever way one cast his eye, she always beheld him. But,

(4.) Fourthly, As the attribute of God's omnipresence is ascribed to Christ, so the attribute of God's **OMNIPOTENCY** is ascribed to Christ, and this speaks out the Godhead of Christ, "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth," Mat, 28:18; John 5:19. "Whatever things the Father does, these also does the Son," Phil. 3:21. He is called by a metonymy "the power of God," 1 Cor. 1:24. "He is the Almighty," Rev. 1:8. "He *made* all things," John 1:3. "He *upholds* all things," Heb. 1:3. "He shall change our vile body," says the apostle, "that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself," Phil. 3:21.

Now from what has been said we may thus argue, He to whom the incommunicable properties of the most high God are attributed, he is the most high God. The incommunicable properties of the most high God are attributed to Christ, consequently, Christ is the most high God. [See Col. 1:16-17, Psalm 102:26, compared with Heb. 8, 10, John 1:10.] But,

5. Fifthly, Christ's eternal deity, co-equality, and con-substantiality with the Father, may be demonstrated from his **DIVINE WORKS**. The same works which are peculiar to God, are ascribed to Christ. Such proper and peculiar, such divine and supernatural works as none but God can perform—Christ did perform. As,

**[1.] Election.** The elect are called his elect, Mat. 24:31; John 13:18. "I know whom I have *chosen*," John 15:16. "I have *chosen* you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain;" verse 19, "But I have *chosen* you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

**[2.] Redemption.** O sirs, none but the great God could save us from wrath to come, none but God blessed forever could deliver us from the curse of the law, the dominion of sin, the damnatory power of sin, the rule of Satan, and the flames of hell. [1 Thes. 1:10; Gal. 3:13; Romans 6:14, and 8:1; Luke 1:68-80.] Ah, friends, these enemies were too potent, strong, and mighty for any mere creature, yes, for all mere creatures, to conquer and overcome. None but the most high God could everlastingly secure us against such high enemies.

**[3.] Remission of sins.** Mat. 9:6, "The Son of man has power to forgive sins." Christ here positively proves that he had power on earth to forgive sins, because miraculously, by a word of his mouth, he causes the palsy man to walk, so that he arose and departed to his house immediately. Christ forgives sin *authoritatively*. Preachers forgive only *declaratively*, John. 20:23, as Nathan to David, "The Lord has put away your iniquity," 2 Sam. 12:7. I have read of a man who could move mountains—but none but the man Christ Jesus could ever remit sin. All the persons in the Trinity forgive sins—yet not in the same manner. The Father *bestows* forgiveness, the Son *merits* forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit *seals* up forgiveness, and *applies* forgiveness.

**[4.] The bestowing of eternal life.** John 10:28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I give unto them eternal life." Christ is the prince and principle of life, and therefore all out of him are dead while they live, Col. 3:3, 4. Eternal life is too great a gift for any to give, but a God.

**[5.] Creation.** John 1:3, "All things are made by him;" and verse 10, "The world was made by him." Col. 1:16, "By him were all things created which are in heaven, and which are in the earth, visible and invisible." Now the apostle tells you "he who built all things is God;" Christ built all things, consequently, Christ is God. The argument lies fair and undeniable. The all things that were created by Christ, Paul reduces to two heads—visible and invisible; but Zanchius adds a third branch to this distinction, and makes it more plain by saying that all things that were made are either *visible* or *invisible*, or *mixed*. Visible, as the stars and fowls and clouds of heaven, the fish in the sea, and beasts upon the earth; invisible things, as the angels, they also were made; then there is a third sort of creatures which are of a mixed nature, partly visible in regard of

their bodies, and partly invisible in regard of their souls, and those are men.

Eph. 2:9, "Who created all things by Jesus Christ." Heb. 1:2, "He has, in these last days, spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds." This may seem somewhat difficult, because he speaks of worlds, whereas we acknowledge but one—but this seeming difficulty you may easily get over if you please but to consider the people to whom he writes, which were Hebrews, whose custom it was to style God *Rabboni*, the *Lord of the worlds*. They were accustomed to speak of three worlds—the lower world, the higher world, and the middle world. The *lower* world contains the elements, earth and water and air and fire; the *higher* world that contains the heaven of the blessed; and the *middle* world that contains the starry heaven. They now being acquainted with this language, and the apostle writing to them, he says that God by Christ made the worlds—those worlds which they were accustomed to speak so frequently of. And whereas one scruple might arise from that expression in the Ephesians, "God created all things 'by' Jesus Christ," and this to the Hebrews, "by whom he made the worlds," as if Christ were only an instrument in the creation and not the principal efficient; therefore another place in this chapter will clear it, which speaks of Christ as the principal efficient Creator of all things. Heb. 1, compare the 8th and 10th verses together, "To the Son he says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;" then Christ is God. Then, "You, Lord," verse 10, "have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of *your* hands." Namely "your," that is, the Son, which he spoke of before. Christ is the principal efficient of the creation; and in this sense it is said, "By him were all things made," not as by an instrument—but as by the chief efficient.

**[6.] The preservation and sustentation of all things.** Col. 1:17, "By him all things are held together." They would soon fall asunder, had not Christ undertaken to uphold the shattered condition thereof by the word of his power. All creatures which are made, are *preserved* by him in being, life, and motion. Heb. 1:3, "He upholds all things by the word of his power." Both in respect of being, excellencies, and operations, sin had hurled confusion over the world, which would have fallen about Adam's

ears—had not Christ undertaken to uphold the shattered earth. "He keeps the world together," says one, "as the hoops do the barrel." Christ bears up all things, continuing to the several creatures their being, ordering and governing them, and this he does by the word of his power. By this word he made the world. "He spoke, and it was done." And by this word he governs the world—by his own mighty word, the word of his power. Both these are divine actions, and being ascribed unto Christ, evidence him to be no less than God.

Now from what has been said we may thus argue, he to whom those actions are ascribed, which are proper to the most high God—he is the most high God—but such actions or works are ascribed to Christ, consequently, he is the most high God. But,

6. Sixthly, Christ's eternal deity may be demonstrated from that **divine HONOR and WORSHIP** that is due to him; and by angels and saints given unto him. The apostle shows, Gal. 4:8, that pious worship ought to be performed to none but to him who is God by nature; and that they are ignorant of the true God who worship those who are no gods by nature; and therefore, if Christ were not God by nature, and consubstantial with the Father, we ought not to perform worship to him. [This is a clear and full evidence that Jesus Christ is, and must be more than mere man, or yet a divine man.] Divine worship is due to the second person of this co-essential Trinity—to Jesus Christ our Lord and God. There is but one immediate, formal, proper, adequate, and fundamental reason of divine worship or adorability, as the schools speak, and that is the sovereign, supreme, singular majesty, independent and infinite excellency of the eternal Godhead; for by divine worship we do acknowledge and declare the infinite majesty, truth, wisdom, goodness, and glory of our blessed God. We do not esteem anything worthy of divine honor and worship which has but a finite and created glory, because divine honor is proper and peculiar to the only true God, who will not give his glory to any other who is not God. God alone is the adequate object of divine faith, hope, love, and worship, because these graces are all exercised, and this worship performed, in acknowledgment of his infinite perfection and independent excellency; and therefore no such worship can be due to any creature or thing below God.

There is not one kind of divine honor due to the Father and another to the Son, nor one degree of honor due to the Father and another to the Son; for there can be no degrees imaginable in one and the same excellency, which is single because infinite; and what is infinite does excel and transcend all degrees and bounds. And if there are no degrees in the ground and adequate reason of divine worship, there can be no reason or ground of a difference of degrees in the worship itself. The Father and the Son are one, John 10:30—one in power, excellency, nature—one God, and therefore to be honored with the same worship, "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father," John 5:23.

Every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ, who is man, is God also, and therefore equal to his Father, Phil. 2:6, 11-12; and it can be no robbery, no derogation to the Father's honor, for us to give equal honor to him and his co-equal Son, who subsists in the form of God, in the nature of God. Thus you see the divine nature, the infinite excellency of Jesus Christ, is an undeniable ground of this co-equal honor; and therefore the worship due to Christ as God, the same God with his Father, is the very same worship, both for kind and degree, which is due to the Father. But, for the further and clearer opening of this, consider,

(1.) First, that all **INWARD worship** is due to Christ. As,

[1.] **Believing** on him. Faith is a worship which belongs only to God, enjoined in the first commandment, and against trusting in man there is a curse denounced, Jer. 17:5-6. But Christ commands us to believe in him, John 14:1, "You believe in God, believe also in me." John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish—but have everlasting life." Verse 36, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life, and he who believes not the Son, shall not see life—but the wrath of God abides on him." John 6:47, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who believes on me has everlasting life." The same respect that Christians give unto God the Father, they must also give unto the Son, believing on him; which is an honor due only to God. Other creatures, men and angels, may be believed—but not believed on, rested on. This were to make them gods; this were no less than idolatry.

[2.] Secondly, **Loving** of Jesus Christ with all the heart, commanded above the love, nay, even to the hatred, of father, mother, wife, children, yes, and our own lives! Luke 14:26. He who is not disposed, where these loves are incompatible, to hate father and all other relations, for the love of Christ, cannot belong to Christ. I ought dearly and tenderly to love father and mother—the law of God and nature requiring it of me—but to prefer dear Jesus, who is God blessed forever, before all, and above all, as Paul and the primitive Christians and martyrs have done before me. "Your house, home, and goods, your life, and all that ever you have," says that martyr, "God has given you as love-tokens, to admonish you of his love, to win your love to him again." Now will he try your love, whether you set more by him or by his tokens, etc. When relations or life stand in competition with Christ and his gospel—they are to be abandoned, hated, etc. But,

(2.) Secondly, All **OUTWARD worship** is due to Christ. As,

[1.] First, Dedication in **baptism** is in his name. Mat. 28:19, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:" into the name, by that rite initiating them, and receiving of them into the profession of the service of one God in three persons, and of depending on Christ alone for salvation. Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is the consecrating of them unto the sincere service of the sacred Trinity.

[2.] Secondly, Divine **invocation** is given to Jesus Christ. In Acts 7:59, Stephen calls upon the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit. 1 Cor. 1:2, "All who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Thes. 3:11, "Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you." Eph. 1:2, "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the saints' character that they are such as call on the Lord Jesus, Acts 2:21; Acts 9:14. [Ponder upon these scriptures: 2 Cor. 12:8, 9; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:2.] But,

[3.] Thirdly, **Praises** are offered to our Lord Jesus Christ: Rev. 5:9, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and

language and people and nation." Verse 11-12, "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" [This is taken out of Daniel, chapter 7:10, whereby the glory and power of God and Christ is held forth, they being attended with innumerable millions of angels, which stood before the fiery throne of God, etc.] Verses 13-14, "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!' The four living creatures said, 'Amen!' and the elders fell down and worshiped." Here you have a universal confession of Christ's divine nature and power. All the creatures, both reasonable and unreasonable, do in some sort set forth the praises of Christ, because in some sort they serve to illustrate and set forth his glory. Here you see that Christ is adored with pious worship by all creatures, which does evidently prove that he is God. Since all the creatures worship him with pious worship, we may safely and boldly conclude upon his deity. Here are three parties that bear a part in this new song: 1. The redeemed of the Lord; and they sing in the last part of the 8th verse, and in the 9th and 10th verses. Then, 2, the angels follow, verses 11th and 12th. In the third place, all creatures are brought in, joining in this new song, verse 13. That noble company of the church triumphant and church militant, sounding out the praises of the Lamb, may sufficiently satisfy us concerning the divinity of the Lamb. But,

[4.] Fourthly, Divine **adoration** is also given to him: Mat. 8:2, "A leper worshiped him." Mark says he kneeled down, and Luke says he fell upon his face, Mark 1:40; Luke 5:12. He showed reverence in his gesture. "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." [So that he touched Christ's feet, as the word signifies; not kneeled, as the word is translated, Mark 1:40. This leper came to know Christ was God, 1. By inspiration; 2. By the miracles which Christ did.] He acknowledged a divine power in Christ, in that he says he could make him clean if he would. This poor leper lay at Christ's feet, imploring and beseeching him, as a dog at his master's feet, as Zanchy renders the word, which shows that this leper looked upon

Christ as more than a prophet or a holy man; and that believing he was God, and so able to heal him if he would, he gave him pious worship. He does not say to Christ, "Lord, if you will pray to God, or to your Father for me, I shall be whole." He says, "Lord, if *you* will, I shall be whole." He acknowledges the leprosy curable by Christ, which he and all men knew was incurable by others, which was a plain argument of his faith; for leprosy, physicians acknowledge incurable.

As Avicenna observes on Mat. 2:11, "Though the wise men of the east, who saw Herod in all his royalty and glory, worshiped him not—yet they fell down before Christ." No doubt but that by divine instinct they knew the divinity of Christ, hence they worshiped him, not only with civil worship, as one born king of the Jews—but with divine worship; which was, it is like, the outward gesture of reverence, and kneeling, and falling down, for so the Greek words signify. Is it probable that they would worship a young babe, that by reason of his infancy understands nothing, except they did believe some divine thing to be in him? and therefore not the childhood—but the divinity in the child, was worshiped by them, (Chrysostom.) Certainly if Christ had been no more than a natural child, they would never have undertaken so long, so tedious, and so perilous a journey to have found him out; principally, considering, as some conceive, they themselves were little inferior to the kings of the Jews. It is uncertain what these wise men, who were Gentiles, knew particularly concerning the mystery of the Messiah—but certainly they knew that he was something more than a man, by the internal revelation of the Spirit of God, who by faith taught them to believe that he was a king though in a cottage, and a God though in a cradle; and therefore as unto a God they fell down and worshiped him, etc. But,

[5.] Fifthly, When Jesus Christ was declared to the world, God commanded even the most glorious angels to worship him, as his natural and co-essential Son, who was begotten from the days of eternity, in the unity of the Godhead; for, when he brought in his first-begotten and only-begotten Son into the world, he said, "And let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. 1:6—the glorious angels who refuse divine honor to be given to themselves: "No, don't worship me!" says the angel to John, when John fell at his feet to worship him, "I am your fellow-servant," etc.,

Rev. 19:10, and 22:9—yet they give, and must give, divine honor unto Christ, Phil. 2:9. The manhood of itself could not be thus adored, because it is a creature—but as it is received into unity of person with the Deity, and has a partner agency therewith, according to its measure in the work of redemption and mediation. All the honor due to Christ, according to his divine nature, was due from all eternity; and there is no divine honor due to him from and by reason of his human nature, or any perfection which does truly and properly belong to Christ as man. He who was born of Mary, is to be adored with divine worship—but not because he was born of Mary—but because he is God, the co-essential and eternal Son of God. From what has been said we may thus argue—He to whom pious worship is truly exhibited, is the most high God. But pious worship is truly exhibited unto Christ, consequently, Christ is the most high God. But,

7. Seventhly, Christ's eternal deity may be demonstrated from Christ's oneness with the Father, and from that claim that Jesus Christ does lay to all that belongs to the Father, as God. [Never did any mere creature challenge to himself the honor due to God—but miscarried and were confounded. Witness the angels that God cast out of heaven, 2 Pet. 2:4; and Adam whom he cast out of paradise, Gen. 3:22-24; and Herod, whom the angel smote with a fatal blow, Acts 12:23; and those several Popes that we read of in ecclesiastical histories; and therefore had Jesus Christ been but a mere creature, divine justice would have confounded him for making himself a God.] Now, certainly, if Jesus Christ were not very God, he would never have laid claim to all that is the Father's, as God.

John 16:15, "All things that the Father has," as God, are mine. "The Father has an eternal godhead, and that is mine. The Father has infinite power and wisdom, and that is mine. The Father has infinite majesty and glory, and that is mine. The Father has infinite happiness and blessedness in himself, and that is mine," says Christ. The words are very emphatic, having in them a double universality. [1.] "All things:" there is one note of universality; [2.] "Whatever:" there is another note of universality. Well, says Christ, there is nothing in the Father, as God—but is mine. "All that the Father has is mine;" the Father is God, and I am God; the Father is life, and I am life; for whatever the Father has is mine.

John 10:30, "I and my Father are one;" we are one eternal God, we are one in consent, will, essence, nature, power, dominion, glory, etc. "I and my Father are one;" two persons—but one God. He speaks this as he is God, one in substance, being, and deity, etc. As God, he says, "I and my Father are one;" but, in respect of the form of a servant, his assumed humanity, he says, John 14:28, "My Father is greater than I." John 10:37, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." Verse 38, "But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works," etc. The argument of itself is plain. No man can of himself, and by his own power, do divine works, unless he is truly God. I do divine works by my own power, yes, "I do the works of my Father;" not only the like and equal—but the same with the Father. Therefore I am truly God; neither deserve I to be called a blasphemer, because I said I was one with the Father.

1 John 5:7, "And these three are one," one in nature and essence, one in power and will, and one in the act of producing all such actions, as without themselves any of them is said to perform. Look, as three lamps are lighted in one room, albeit the lamps be different—yet the lights cannot be severed; so in the godhead, as there is a distinction of persons, so a simplicity of nature. From the scriptures last cited we may safely and confidently conclude that Christ has the same divine nature and godhead with the Father, that they both have the same divine and essential titles and attributes, and perform the same inward operations in reference to all creatures whatever.

To make it yet more plain, compare John 17:10 with John 16:15. "All things that the Father has are mine," John 16:15; "Father, all mine are yours, and yours are mine," John 17:10. That is, whatever belongs to the Father, as God, belongs to Christ; for we speak not of personal but essential properties. Christ does lay claim to all that is natural, to all that belongs to the Father, as God, not to anything which belongs to him as the Father, as the first person of the blessed Trinity. "All things that the Father has are mine." This he speaks in the person of the mediator, "Because of his fullness we all receive grace for grace," John 1:16; and herein shows the unity of essence in the holy Trinity, and community of power, wisdom, sanctity, truth, eternity, glory, majesty. Such is the strict union of the persons of the blessed Trinity, that there is among them a

perfect communion in all things, for "all things that the Father has are mine." And let thus much suffice for the proof of the godhead of Christ.

Concerning **the MANHOOD of Christ**, let me say, that as he is very God, so he is very man. 1 Tim. 2:5, "the man Christ Jesus." Christ is true man—but not mere man. The word is not to be taken exclusively, as denying the divine nature. Christ is *both* God and man; sometimes denominated from the one nature, and sometimes from the other; sometimes called God, and sometimes man—yet so as he is truly both, and in that respect fitly said to be a mediator between God and men, having an interest in and participating of both natures. This title, "the Son of man," is given to Christ in the New Testament eighty-eight times, the design being not only to express Christ's humanity, who was truly man, in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; nor only to intimate his humility, by calling himself so often by this humble name—but also to tell us to what a high honor God has raised our nature in him, and to confute their imaginations who denied him to be very man, flesh, blood, and bones, as we truly are; and who held, that whatever he was, and whatever he did, and whatever he suffered, was only *seeming* and *in appearance*, and not real; and to lead us to that original promise, the first that was made to mankind, "The seed of the *woman* shall bruise the serpent's head," Gen. 3:15, so that he might intimate, that he himself was the party meant, intended, and foretold of by all the prophets, who was to come into the world, to all nations in the world.

Jews and Gentiles originally alike descended of the woman, who both had a like interest in the woman and her seed, though the Jews did and might challenge greater propriety in the seed of Abraham than the Gentiles could, Romans 3:1-2. But they having been a long time, as it were, God's favorites, a selected people, a chosen nation, did wholly appropriate the Messiah to themselves, and would endure no co-partners, Exod. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; nor that any should have any right, title, or interest in him but themselves; and therefore they would never talk otherwise than of the Messiah, the King of Israel, the son of David, never naming him once, as the light of the Gentiles, the expectation of the Gentiles, the hope and desire of the eternal hills, the hope of all the ends of the earth, the seed of

the woman, the Son of man, as descending from Eve, extracted from Adam, and allied unto all mankind. [Isaiah 42:6; Hab. 3:6; Psalm 65:5; Gen. 3:15; Luke 3:23, to the end.]

And it is observable that the evangelist Luke, at the story of Christ's baptism, when he was to be installed into his ministry, and had that glorious testimony from heaven, derives his pedigree up to the first Adam, the better to draw all men's eyes to that first promise concerning the seed of the woman, and to cause them to own him for that seed there promised, and for that effect that is there mentioned of dissolving the works of Satan. And as that evangelist gives that hint when he is now entering this quarrel with Satan, even in the entrance of his ministry, so does he very frequently and commonly by this very phrase give the same intimation for the same purpose. No sooner had Nathanael proclaimed him the Son of God in John 1:49, "Nathanael answered, and said unto him, Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel," but he instantly titles himself the Son of man, verse 51; not only to show his humanity, for that Nathanael was assured of by the words of Philip, who calls him Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, verse 45—but also to draw the thoughts of the hearers to the first promise, and to work them to look for a full recovery of all that by the second Adam which was lost in the first. Though the gates of heaven were shut against the first Adam by reason of his fall—yet were they open to the second Adam: verse 51, "And he said unto him, Truly, truly, I say unto you"—this double asseveration, "Truly, truly," puts the matter beyond all doubt and controversy—"hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man,"—the Jacob's ladder, the bridge that joins heaven and earth together—as Gregory has it. This 51st verse does greatly illustrate Christ's glory, and further confirm believers' faith, that Christ is Lord of angels even in his state of humiliation, and has them ready at his call, as he or his people shall need their service, to move from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth. This title, "the Son of man," shows that the Son of God was also the Son of man; and that he delighted to be so, and therefore does so often take this title to himself, "the Son of man."

Now concerning the manhood of Christ, the prophet plainly speaks:

Isaiah 9:6, "Unto us a *child* is born, and unto us a *son* was given." Parvulus, a child, that notes his humanity; Filius, a Son, that notes his deity. Parvulus, a child, even man of the substance of his mother, born in the world, Mat. 1:25; Filius, a Son, even God of the substance of his Father, begotten before the world, Proverbs 8:22 to the end. Parvulus, a child: behold his humility, "she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger," Luke 2:7; Filius, a Son: behold his dignity; when he brings his first-begotten Son into the world, he says, "And let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. 1:6.

To prove that he was man, it is enough to say, that he was *born*, he *lived*, he *died*. God became man by a wonderful, unspeakable, and inconceivable union. Behold God is *offended* by man's affecting and coveting his wisdom and his glory—for that was the devil's temptation to our first parents, "You shall be as gods," Gen. 3:5. And man is *redeemed* by God's assuming and taking his frailty and his infirmity. Man would be as God, and so offended him; and therefore God becomes man, and so redeems him. Christ, as man, came of the race of kings. As man he shall judge the world, Acts 17:31. As man, he was wonderfully born of a virgin, Mat. 1:23; Isaiah 7:14; called therefore by a peculiar name, *Shiloh*, intimating that Christ is he who has brought us peace and tranquility; and that he might be our peacemaker, it was necessary that he should be *Shiloh*, born of the sanctified seed of a woman without the seed of man.

The apostle expounds the name where he says of Christ, that he was "made of a woman," not of a man and woman both—but of a woman alone without a man, Gal. 4:4. Christ as man was foretold of by the prophets, and by sundry types. Christ as man was attended upon at his birth by holy angels, and a peculiar star was created for him, Luke 2:13-14; Mat. 2:1-2. Christ as man was our sacrifice and expiation; he was the redemption price, such as we could never have paid—but must have remained, and even rotted in the prison of hell forever. Christ as man was conceived of the Holy Spirit, Mat. 1:18. Christ as man is ascended into heaven, Acts 1:9-10. Christ as man sits at the right hand of God, Col. 3:1.

Now what do all these things import—but that Jesus Christ is a very precious and most excellent person, and that even according to his

manhood? Christ had the true properties, affections, and actions of man. He was conceived, born, circumcised; he did hunger, thirst; he was clothed; he did eat, drink, sleep, hear, see, touch, speak, sigh, groan, weep, and grow in wisdom and stature, etc., as all the four evangelists do abundantly testify. But because this is a point of grand importance, especially in these days, wherein there are risen up so many deceivers in the midst of us, it may not be amiss to consider of these following particulars—

**(1.) First, Of these special scriptures that speak out the certainty and verity of Christ's body.** John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh;" 1 Tim. 3:16, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh." Christ is one and the same, begotten of the Father before time, the Son of God without mother; and born of the Virgin in time, the Son of man without father; the natural and consubstantial son of both; and, oh! what a great mystery is this! Heb. 2:14, 16, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. For truly he took not on him the nature of angels—but he took on him the seed of Abraham." According to the Greek, He assumed, caught, laid hold on, as the angels did on Lot, Gen. 19:16; or as Christ did on Peter, Mat 14:31; or as men use to do upon a thing they are glad they have got, and are loath to let go again.

O sirs! this is a main pillar of our comfort—that Christ took our flesh, for if he had not taken our flesh, we could never have been saved by him!

Romans 1:3, "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." Rom, 9:5, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." This is a greater honor to all mankind, than if the greatest king in the world should marry into some poor family of his subjects. Christ's flesh was flesh indeed; as true, real, proper, very flesh as that which any of us carry about with us.

Col. 1:22, "In the body of his flesh through death;" Heb. 10:5, "Therefore when he comes into the world he says, Sacrifice and offering you would

not—but a body have you prepared me." It is a metaphor taken from mechanics, who skillfully fit one part of their work to another, and so finish the whole. God fitted his Son's body to be joined with the deity, and to be an expiatory sacrifice for sin. 1 Pet. 2:24, "Who *his own self* bore our sins in his own body on the tree," etc. The word himself, has a great emphasis, and therefore that evangelical prophet Isaiah mentions it no less than five times in Isaiah 53:4-5, 7, 11-12. Christ had none to help or uphold him under the heavy burden of our sins and his Father's wrath, Isaiah 63:3. It is most certain, that Christ accomplished the work of man's redemption alone. He who did bear our sins, that is, the punishments that were due to our sins, in his own body on the tree; he did assume flesh, cast into the very mold and form of our bodies, having the same different parts, members, lineaments, the same proportion which they have. Christ's body was no specter or ghost, as if it had no being but what was in appearance and from imagination—as the Marcionites, Manichees, and other heretics of old affirmed, and as some men of corrupt minds do assert in our days. His body was as real, as solid a body as ever any was.

And therefore the apostle calls it a body of flesh, Col. 1:22—a body, to show the organization of it; and a body of flesh, to show the reality of it, in opposition to all aerial and imaginary bodies. Christ's body had all the essential properties of a true body—as all the evangelists do abundantly witness. Take a few instances for all: Luke 24:39, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have." Christ here admits of the testimony of their own senses to assure those who it was no vision or ghost—but a true and real body risen from the dead, which they now saw. Certainly whatever is essential to a true glorified body, that is yet in Christ's body.

Those stamps of dishonor which the Jews had set upon Christ by wicked hands—those scars he retained after his resurrection, partly for the confirmation of his apostles, and partly to work us to a willingness and resoluteness to suffer for him when we are called to it.

1 John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life." He alludes to the sermons which he and the other apostles heard from Christ's own mouth, and also to the

glorious testimony which the Father gave once and again from heaven to Christ. He alludes also to the miracles that were wrought by Christ, and to that sight that they had of his glory in the mount, and to his resurrection and visible ascension into the highest heaven, Mat. 17, Acts 1. He alludes to the familiar conversation which the apostles had with Christ for about three years, and also to that touching, when after the resurrection Christ offered himself to the apostles who believed not in him, to touch him, Luke 24. The truth of these things were confirmed to them by three senses—hearing, seeing, handling; the latter still surer than the former; and this proves Christ to be a true man, as his being from the beginning sets out his deity.

Christ had also those natural affections, passions, infirmities, which are proper to a body—such as **hunger**. Mat. 4:2, "When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterwards became hungry." **All Christ's actions are for our instruction, not all for our imitation.** Matthew expressly makes mention of *nights*, lest it should be thought to be such a fast as that of the Jews, who fasted in the day, and did eat at the evening and in the night, (Chemnitius.) He would not extend his fast above the term of Moses and Elijah, lest he should have seemed to have appeared only, and not to have been, a true man. He was hungry, not because his fasting wrought upon him—but because God left man to his own nature, (Hilary.) It seems Christ felt no hunger until the forty days and forty nights were expired—but was kept by the power of the Deity, as the three Hebrew children, or rather champions, from feeling the heat of the fire, Dan. 3:27. Christ fasted forty days and forty nights, and not longer, lest he might be thought not to have a true human body; for Moses and Elijah had fasted thus long before—but never did any man fast longer. When Christ began to be hungry the tempter came to him, not when he was fasting. The devil is cunning, and will take all the advantage he can upon us. During the forty days and forty nights the devil stood doubtful, and dared not assault the Lord Jesus, partly because of that voice he heard from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Mat. 3:17, and partly because his forty days and forty nights' fast did portend some great thing—but now, seeing Christ to be hungry, he impudently assaults him. Christ was not hungry all the forty days—but after, he was hungry, to show he was man.

Some think that Christ by his hunger did objectively allure Satan to tempt him, so that he might overcome him, as soldiers sometimes feign a running away, that they may the better allure their enemies closely to pursue them, so that they may cut them off, either by an ambush or by a facing about: so the devil tempted Christ as man, not knowing him to be God; or if he did know him to be God, Christ did as it were encourage his cowardly enemy, who dared not set upon him as God, showing himself to be man.

And as Christ was hungry, so Christ was **thirsty**. John 4:7, "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said unto her, Give me drink." Here you see that he who is rich and Lord of all—became poor for us, that he might make us rich, 2 Cor. 8:9; and he who gives to all the creatures their food in due season, Pa. 104:27, he begs water of a poor woman to refresh himself in his weariness and thirst. John 19:28, "Jesus said, I thirst." Bleeding breeds thirsting.

**Sleeping.** Mat. 8:24, he was asleep, to show the truth of the human nature, and the weakness of his disciples' faith. Christ was in a *fast and dead sleep*, for so much the Greek word signifies: his senses were well and fast bound, as if he had no operation of life, and therefore the disciples are said to raise him, as it were from the dead. The same Greek word is used in many places where mention is made of the resurrection, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [John 2:19; Mat. 27:52; 1 Cor. 15:12.]

He was asleep, [1.] By reason of his labor in preaching and journey he slept; [2.] To show forth the truth of his human nature. Some think the devil stirred up the storm, hoping thereby to drown Christ and his disciples, as he had destroyed Job's children in a tempest before, Job 1:18-19. But though Satan had the malice and will enough to do it—yet he had not the power; yes, though Christ slept in his human nature—yet was he awake in his deity, that the disciples being in danger might cry unto him more fervently, and be saved more remarkably.

And as Jesus slept, so he was also **weary**. John 4:6, "Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime." In the heat of the day Christ was weary. Christ took on

him not only our nature—but the common infirmities thereof, and he is to be as seriously eyed in his humanity, as in the glory of his Godhood. Therefore it is recorded that he was weary with his journey before half the day was spent.

But, in a word—he was conceived, retained so long in the virgin's womb, born, circumcised, lived about thirty years on earth, conversed all that time with men, suffered, died, and was crucified, buried, rose again, ascended, and sat down with his body at the right hand of God, and with it will come again to judge the world. Now what do all these things speak out—but that Christ has a true body? and who in their wits will assert that all this could be done in, and upon, and by, an imaginary body? But,

**(2.) Secondly, The several names which are given to Jesus Christ in Scripture, do clearly evidence the verity and reality of his human nature.** He is called:

- (1.) The son of the virgin, Isaiah 7:14.
- (2.) Her first-born son, Luke 2:7.
- (3.) The branch, Zech. 3:8 and 6:12.
- (4.) The branch of righteousness, Jer. 33:15, and 23:5.
- (5.) A rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots, Isaiah 11:1.
- (6.) The seed of the woman, Gen. 3:15.
- (7.) The seed of Abraham, Gen. 22:18.
- (8.) The fruit of David's loins, Psalm 80:36, and 132:11; Acts 2:30.
- (9.) Of the seed of David according to the flesh, Romans 1:3; 2 Sam. 7:2.
- (10.) The lion of the tribe of Judah, Rev. 5:5.
- (11.) The seed of Jacob, Gen. 28:14.

(12.) The seed of Isaac, Gen. 26:4.

(13.) A son born to us, a child given to us, Isaiah 9:6.

(14.) The son of man, Mat. 8:20, and 17:13; Rev. 1:13; Dan. 7:13; John 3:13.

(15.) He is called the man Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 15:21, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." God's justice would be satisfied in the same nature that had sinned.

(16.) God's Son made of a woman, Gal. 4:4.

(17.) Man, 1 Tim. 2:5; the man Christ Jesus.

(18.) The son of David, Mat. 1:1; Mark 12:35. "How say the scribes, that Christ is the son of David?" In that the scribes and Pharisees knew and acknowledged, according to the Scripture, that Christ should be the son of David—that is, should be born and descend of the stock and posterity of David according to the flesh—hence we may easily gather the truth of Christ's human nature, that he was ordained of God to be true man as well as God, in one and the same person; for else he could not be the son of David. Now, that he must be the son of David, even the scribes and the Pharisees knew and acknowledged, as we see here; and this was a truth which they had learned out of the Scriptures; and not only they—but even the common sort of Jews in our Savior's time.

John 7:42, "some of the common people spoke thus, Has not the Scripture said that Christ comes of the seed of David?" And the Messiah was then commonly called the son of David, Romans 1:3. Just so, then, Christ being of the seed of David after the flesh, he must needs be true man as well as God; for which cause he was incarnate in the due time appointed of God; that is to say, he being the Son of God from everlasting, did in time become man, taking our nature upon him, together with the infirmities of our nature, sin only excepted, John 1:14.

Now thus you see that the eighteen names which are given to Christ in the blessed Scriptures, do abundantly demonstrate the certainty of Christ's

human nature. But,

**(3.) Thirdly, Christ took the whole human nature.** He was truly and completely man, consisting of flesh and spirit, body and soul; yes, that he assumed the entire human nature, with whatever is proper to it. Christ took to himself the whole human nature, in both the essential parts of man, soul and body. The two essential and constitutive parts of man are soul and body; where these two are, there is the true man. Now Christ had both, and therefore he was true man.

**[1.] First, Christ had a true human and reasonable SOUL.** The reasonable soul is the highest and noblest part of man. This is that which principally makes the man, and has the greatest influence into his being and essence. If, therefore, Jesus Christ had only a human body without a human soul, he had lacked that part which is most essential to man, and so he could not have been looked upon as true and perfect man. O sirs! Christ redeemed and saved nothing but what he assumed. The redemption and salvation reach no further than the assumption. Our soul then would have been never the better for Christ, had he not taken that as well as our body. Hence said Augustine, "Therefore he took the whole man, without sin, that he might heal the whole of which man consists, of the plague of sin." And Fulgentius, to the same purpose: "As the devil smote by deceiving the whole man, so God saves by assuming the whole man." "If he will save the whole man from sin, he will assume the whole man without sin," says Nazianzen.

The Scriptures do clearly evidence that Christ had a real human soul: Mat. 26:38, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Every word is emphatical: "My soul;" his sorrows pierced his soul, and "sorrowful round about," even to death,—that is, "heavy round about," Psalm 22:16. Look, as the soul was the first agent in transgression, so it is here the first patient in affliction. "To death;" that is, this sorrow will never be finished or intermitted but by death. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." Then Christ had a true human soul; neither was his deity to him for a soul, as, of old, men of corrupt minds have fancied; for then our bodies only had been redeemed by him, and not our souls, if he had not suffered in soul as well as in body. The sufferings of his body were but the body of his sufferings; the soul of his sufferings were the sufferings of his

soul, which was now beset with sorrows, and heavy as heart could hold.

John 12:27, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" The Greek word signifies a vehement commotion and perturbation; as Herod's mind was troubled when he heard that a new king was born, Mat. 2:3; or as the disciples were troubled when they thought they saw a ghost walking on the sea, and cried out for fear, Mat. 14:26; or as Zacharias, Luke 1:12, was troubled at the sudden sight of the angel. The rise and cause of Christ's soul-trouble was this: the Godhead hiding itself from the humanity's sense; and the Father letting out, not only an apprehension of his sufferings to come—but a present taste of the horror of his wrath, due to man for sin. He is amazed, overwhelmed, and perplexed with it in his humanity; and no wonder, since he had the sins of all the elect, laid upon him by imputation, to suffer for. And so this wrath is not let out against his person—but against their sins which were laid on him.

Now though Christ was here *troubled*, or *jumbled* and *puzzled*, as the word imports—yet we are not to conceive that there was any sin in this exercise of his, for he was like clean water in a clean vessel, which, being ever so often stirred and shaken—yet still keeps clean and clear. Neither are we to think it strange that the Son of God should be put to such perplexities in this trouble as not to know what to say; for considering him as man, encompassed with our sinless infirmities, and that this heavy weight of wrath did light upon him suddenly, it is no wonder that it did confound all his thoughts as man. O sirs! look, that as sin has infected both the souls and bodies of the elect, and chiefly their souls, where it has its chief seat, so Christ, to expiate this sin, did suffer unspeakable sorrows and trouble in his soul, as well as torture in his body; "for my soul is troubled," says he. Though some sufferings of the body are very exquisite and painful, and Christ's in particular were such—yet sad trouble of mind is far more grievous than any bodily distress, as Christ also found, who silently bore all his outward troubles—but yet could not but cry out of his inward trouble, "Now is my soul troubled."

Isaiah 53:10, "You shall make his soul an offering for sin," Isaiah 53:7; 1 Pet. 2:24. When Christ suffered for us, our sins were laid upon him, verse 5-6, as by the law of sacrificing of old, the sinner was to lay his hands upon the head of the animal, confessing his sins, and then the animal was

slain, and offered for expiation, Lev. 8:14, 18, 22; thus having the man's sins as it were taken and put upon it, and hereby the sinner is made righteous. The sinner could never be pardoned, nor the guilt of sin removed—but by Christ's making his soul an offering for sin. What did Christ in special recommend to God, when he was breathing out his last gasp—but his soul? Luke 23:46, "When Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, he said, Father, into your hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the Spirit;" that is, "To your safe custody and blessed wisdom I commend my soul, as a special treasure or jewel, most carefully and tenderly to be preserved and kept.

Luke 2:52, "He increased in wisdom and stature;" here is stature for his body, and wisdom for his soul. His growth in that speaks the truth of the former, and his growth in this the truth of the latter: his body properly could not grow in wisdom, nor his soul in stature, therefore he must have both.

There are two essential parts which make up one of his natures, his manhood, namely, soul and body—but both of these two of old have been denied. Marcion divests Christ of a body, and Apollinaris of a soul; and the Arians held that Christ had no soul—but that the deity was to him instead of a soul, and supplied the office thereof, that what the soul is to us, and does in our bodies, all that the divine nature was to Christ, and did in his body. And are there not some among us, that make a great noise about a light in them, that dash upon the same rock? But the choice scriptures last cited may serve sufficiently to confute all such brain-sick men. But,

**[2.] Secondly,** As Christ had a true human and reasonable soul, so **Christ had a perfect, entire, complete BODY**, and everything which is proper to a body; for instance,

(1.) He had **blood** Heb. 2:14, "He also took part of the same flesh and blood." Christ had in him the blood of a man. Shedding of blood there must be, for without it there is no remission of sin, Heb. 9:22. The blood of brute creatures could not wash away the blots of reasonable creatures, Heb. 10:4-5, 10; wherefore Christ took our nature, that he might have our blood to shed for our sins. There is an emphasis put upon Christ as man,

in the great business of man's salvation, "The man Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. 2:5; the remedy carrying in it a suitableness to the malady, the sufferings of a man to expiate the sin of man.

(2.) He had **bones** as well as **flesh**: Luke 24:39, "A spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have."

(3.) Christ had in him the **affections** of a man, Phil. 2:8, which affections he fully expressed when he was on earth, Mat. 12:18-20; nay, he retains those affections now he is in heaven; in glory he has a fellow-feeling of his people's miseries: Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why persecute you me?" See Mat 25:35, to the end of that chapter. Though Christ in his glorified state be freed from that state of frailty, mutability, mortality—yet he still retains his sympathy and pity.

(4.) He had in him the **familiarity** of a man; how familiarly did Christ converse with all sorts of people in this world, all the evangelists do sufficiently testify. Man is a sociable and familiar creature; Christ became man who he might be a merciful high priest, Heb. 2:17; not that his becoming man made him more merciful, as though the mercies of a man were more than the mercies of God—but because by this means mercy is conveyed more suitably and familiarly to man. But,

(4.) Fourthly and lastly, Our Lord Jesus Christ took our **infirmities** upon him. When Christ was in this world he submitted to the common accidents, adjuncts, infirmities, miseries, calamities, which are incident to human nature. For the opening of this, remember there are three sorts of infirmities:

(1.) There are **sinful** infirmities: James 5:7; Psalm 77:10. The best of men are but men at the best. Witness Abraham's unbelief, David's security, Job's cursing, Jonah's passion, Thomas's unbelief, Peter's lying, etc. Now these infirmities Jesus Christ took not upon him; for though he was made like unto us in all things—yet without sin, Heb. 4:15.

(2.) There are **personal** infirmities, which from some particular causes befall this or that person; as leprosy, blindness, dumbness, palsy, dropsy, epilepsy, stone, gout, sickness. Christ was never sick. Sickness arises from

the unfit or unequal temperature of the humours, or from intemperance of labor, study, etc.—but none of these were in Christ. He had no sin, and therefore no sickness. Christ took not the passions or infirmities which were proper to this or that man.

(3.) There are **natural** infirmities which belong to all mankind since the fall; as hunger, thirst, wearisomeness, sorrowfulness, sweating, bleeding, wounds, death, burial. Now these natural infirmities which are common to the whole nature, these Jesus Christ took upon him, as all the evangelists do abundantly testify. Our dear Lord Jesus lay so many weeks and months in the Virgin's womb; he received nourishment and growth in the ordinary way; he was brought forth and bred up just as common infants are; he had his life sustained by common food, as ours is; he was poor, afflicted, reproached, persecuted, tempted, deserted, falsely accused, etc.; he lived an afflicted life, and died an accursed death; his whole life, from the cradle to the cross, was made up of nothing but sorrows and sufferings; and thus you see that Jesus Christ did put himself under those infirmities which properly belong to the common nature of man, though he did not take upon him the particular infirmities of individuals. Now what do all these things speak out—but the certainty and reality of Christ's manhood?

**QUESTION.** But why must Christ partake of both natures? was it absolutely necessary that he should so do?

**ANSWER.** Yes, it was absolutely necessary that Christ should partake of both natures; and that both in respect of God, and in respect of us:

(1.) First, in respect of US; and that,

[1.] First, Because man had sinned, and therefore man must be punished. By man came death, therefore by man must come the resurrection of the dead, 1 Cor. 15:21. Man was the offender, therefore man must be the satisfier; man had been the sinner, and therefore man must be the sufferer. It is but justice to punish sin in that nature, in which it had been committed. By man we fell from God, and by man we must be brought back to God. By the first Adam we were ruined, by the second Adam we must be repaired, Romans 5:12. The human nature was to be redeemed,

therefore it was necessary that the human nature should be assumed. The law was given to man, and the law was broken by man, and therefore it was necessary that the law should be fulfilled by man. But,

[2.] Secondly, That by this means the justice of God might be satisfied in the same nature which had sinned, which was the nature of man. Angels could not satisfy divine justice, because they had no bodies to suffer. The brutish sensible creatures could not satisfy the justice of God, because they had no souls to suffer. Therefore man, having body, soul, and sense, must do it; for he had sinned in all, and he could suffer in all.

(2.) Secondly, There are reasons both in respect of GOD and in respect of ourselves, why Jesus Christ should be God, and God-man also; and they are these five—

[1.] First, That he might be a meet mediator between God and man. Christ's office, as mediator, was to deal with God for man, and to deal for God with man. Now that he might be fit for both these transactions, for both parts of this office, he must partake of both natures. That he might effectually deal with God for man, he must be God, "If a man sins against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" says Eli to his sons, 1 Sam. 2:25. And that he might deal for God with man, he must be man. He must be God, that he may be fit to transact, treat, and negotiate with God; and he must be man, that he may be fit to transact, treat, and negotiate with man. When God spoke unto Israel at Mount Sinai at the giving of the law, the people were not able to abide that voice or presence, and therefore they desired a mediator, a man like themselves, who might be as a mediator to go between God and them, Exod. 20:18-19.

Now upon this very ground, besides many others that might be mentioned, it was very requisite that Jesus Christ should be both God and man, that he might be a meet mediator to deal between God and man, Heb. 12:18. Jesus Christ was the fittest person, either in that upper or in this lower world, to mediate between God and us. There was none fit to umpire the business between God and man—but he who was God-man. Job hit the nail on the head, when he said, "If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both," Job 9:33. There was a double use of the arbitrator, and his laying his hand upon them: (1.) To

keep the dissenting parties asunder, lest they should fall out and strike one another; (2.) To keep them together, and compose all differences, that they might not depart from each other. The application is easy.

Man is not fit to mediate, because man is the person offending; angels are not fit to mediate, for they cannot satisfy divine justice, nor pacify divine wrath, nor procure our pardon, nor make our peace, nor bring in an everlasting righteousness upon us. God, the Father, was not fit for this work, for he was the person offended; and he was as much too high to deal with man, as man was too low to deal with God. The Holy Spirit was not fit for this work, for it is his work to apply this mediation, and to clear up the believer's interest in this mediation. Just so, then there is no other person fit for this office but Jesus Christ, who was a middle person, between both, that he might deal with both. Christ could never have been fit to be the mediator in respect of his office, if he had not first been a middle person in respect of his natures; for, says the apostle, Gal. 20, "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one—but God is one." "A mediator is not a mediator of one," that is, of one party—but is always of two differing parties to unite them; "not of one;" that is,

(1.) Not of one person, because mediation implies more persons than one; it necessarily supposes different parties between whom he does mediate. Christ, to speak after the manner of men, lays his hand upon God, the Father, and says, "O blessed Father, will you be at peace with these poor sinners? will you pardon them? and will you lift up the light of your countenance upon them? If you will, then I will undertake to satisfy your justice, and to pacify your wrath, and to fulfill your royal law, and to make good all the wrong they have done against you." And then he lays his hand upon the poor sinner, and says, "Sinner, are you willing to be changed and renewed? are you willing to come under the bond of the covenant? are you willing to give up your heart and life to the guidance and government of the Spirit? Then be not discouraged, for you shall certainly be justified and saved."

(2.) Not of one nature—the mediator must necessarily have more natures than one—he must have the divine and human nature united in his single person, or else he could never suffer what he was to suffer, nor never satisfy what he was to satisfy, nor never bring poor sinners into a state of

reconciliation with God. It is further observable that the text last cited says, "God is one," 1 Tim. 2:5; namely, as he is essentially considered, and therefore as so he cannot be the mediator—but Christ, as personally considered, he is not of one, that is, not of one nature, for he is God and man too, and therefore he is the only person that is fitted and qualified to be the mediator; and it is observable that, when Christ is spoken of as mediator, his manhood is brought in, that nature being so necessary to that office.

1 Tim. 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Jesus Christ was God and man; as man he ought to satisfy—but could not; as God he could satisfy—but ought not. But consider him as God and man, and so he both could satisfy and ought to satisfy, and accordingly he did satisfy, according to what was prophesied of him.

Dan. 9:24, "He did make reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness." He did not begin to do something and then faint and leave his work imperfect—but he finished it, and that to the glory of his Father.

John 17:4, "I have glorified you on the earth, I have finished the work which you gave me to do." And it is good to observe the singularity and oneness of the person mediating; not many, not a few, not two—but one mediator between God and man. There was none with him in his difficult work of mediatorship—but he carried it on alone. Though there are many mediators among men—yet there is but only one mediator between God and men: and it is as high folly and madness to make more mediators than one, as it is to make more Gods than one, Isaiah 63:3. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men." For look, as one *husband* satisfies the wife, as one *father* satisfies the child, as one *master* satisfies the servant, and one *sun* satisfies the world—so one *mediator* is enough to satisfy all who desire a mediator, or who have an interest in a mediator. [I confess the word Mesites is given to Moses, in that Gal. 3:19—but Moses was but a typical mediator, and you never find that Moses is called a mediator in a way of redemption, or satisfaction, or paying a ransom; for so dear Jesus is the *only* mediator: so the word is used in that 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6-8, 9:14-15, and 12:22-24.]

The true sense and import of this word a mediator, is a middle person, or one who interposes between two parties at variance, to make peace between them. Though a mediator is rendered variously, sometimes an umpire or arbitrator, sometimes a messenger between two people, sometimes an interpreter imparting the mind of one to another, sometimes a reconciler or peace-maker—yet this word does most properly signify a mediator or a middler, because Jesus Christ is both a middle person and a middle officer between God and man, to reconcile and reunite God and man. This of all others is the most proper and genuine signification of this name. Jesus Christ is the middle, that is, the second person in the Trinity, between the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is the only middle person between God and man, being in one person God-man; and his being a middle person fits and capacitates him to stand in the midst between God and us.

And as he is the middle person, so he is the middle officer, intervening or interposing or coming between God and man by office, satisfying God's justice to the full for man's sins by his sufferings and death, and maintaining our constant peace in heaven by his meritorious intercession. Hence, as Gerhard observes, "Jesus Christ is a true mediator, is still found in the middle. He was born, as some think, about the middle of the night; he suffered, Heb. 13:12, in the middle of the world, that is, at Jerusalem, seated in the middle of the earth: he was crucified in the midst, between the two thieves, John 19:18: he died in the air on the cross, in the midst between heaven and earth: he stood after his resurrection in the midst of his disciples, John 20:19; and he has promised, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them, Mat. 18:20: and he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, Rev. 2:1, that is, the churches: and he as the heart in the midst of the body, distributes graces and virtue to all the parts of his mystical body, Eph. 4:15-16." Thus Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man; middle in person and middle in office. And thus you have seen at large what a fit mediator Jesus Christ is, considered in both his natures, considered as God-man. But,

[2.] Secondly, If Jesus Christ is not God, then there is no spiritual nor eternal good to be expected or enjoyed. If Christ is not God, our

preaching is in vain, and your hearing is in vain, and your praying is in vain, and your believing is in vain, and your hope of pardon and forgiveness by Jesus Christ is in vain; for none can forgive sins but a God. Christ has promised that "believers shall never perish;" he has promised them "eternal life," and that he will "raise them up at the last day," he has promised "a crown of righteousness," he has promised "a crown of life," he has promised "a crown of glory," he has promised that conquering Christians shall "sit down with him in his throne, as he is set down with his Father in his throne." He has promised that they shall not be hurt of "the second death." [Mark 2:7; John 3:16; John 10:28; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 3:21, and 2:11.] And a thousand other good things Jesus Christ has promised—but if Jesus Christ be not God, how shall these promises be made good? If a man who has never a foot of land in England, nor yet worth one groat in all the world, shall make his will, and bequeath to you such and such mansions and lands, in such a county or such a county; and shall by will, give you so much in gold, and so much in jewels, and so much in money; whereas he is not, upon any account, worth one penny in all the world; certainly such legacies will never make a man the richer nor the happier.

None of those great and precious promises, which are hinted at above, will signify anything—if Christ is not God. For they can neither refresh us, nor cheer us in this world, nor make us happy in the eternal world. If Christ is not God, how can he purchase our pardon, procure our peace, pacify divine wrath, and satisfy infinite justice? A man may satisfy the justice of man—but who but a *God* can satisfy the justice of God? "Will God accept of thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, or the firstborn of your body for the sin of your soul?" Micah 6:7. Oh, no! he will not, he cannot! That scripture is worthy to be written in letters of gold!

Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers; to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." This must needs relate to Christ, and Christ is here called God, and Christ's blood is called the blood of God; and without all question, Christ could never have gone through with the purchase of the church, if the blood he shed had not been the blood of God. This blood is called God's own blood, because the

Son of God, being and remaining true God, assumed human flesh and blood in unity of person. By this phrase, that which appertains to the humanity of Christ is attributed to his divinity, because of the union of the two natures in one person, and communion of properties. The church is to Christ a bloody spouse, an Aeldama or field of blood: for she could not be redeemed with silver and gold—but with the blood of God, 1 Pet. 1:18-19: so it is called by a communication of properties, to set forth the incomparable value and virtue thereof. But,

[3.] Thirdly, If Christ be not God, yes, God-man, then we shall never be able to answer all the challenges that either divine justice or Satan can make upon us. Whatever the justice of God can exact—that the blood of God can discharge. Now the blood of Christ is the blood of God, as I have evidenced in the second reason. By reason of the hypostatic union, the human nature being united to the divine, the human nature did suffer, the divine did satisfy. Christ's godhead gave both majesty and efficacy to his sufferings. Christ was *sacrifice, priest, and altar*. He was sacrifice as he was man, priest as he was God and man, and altar as he was God. It is the property of the altar, to sanctify the thing offered on it, Mat. 18:19; so the altar of Christ's divine nature sanctified the sacrifice of his death, and made it meritorious. Man sinned, and therefore man must satisfy. Therefore the human nature must be assumed by a surety, for man cannot do it. If an angel should have assumed human nature, it would have polluted him. Human nature was so defiled by sin that it could not be assumed by any but God. Now Christ being God, the divine nature purified the human nature which he took, and so it was a sufficient sacrifice, the person offered in sacrifice being God as well as man.

This is a most noble ground upon which a believer may challenge Satan to say his worst and to do his worst. Let Satan present God as dreadful, yes, as a consuming fire, Heb. 12:29; let him present me as odious and abominable in the sight of God, as once he did Joshua, Zech. 3:2-3; let him present me before the Lord as vile and mercenary, as once he did Job, chapter 1:9-11; let him aggravate the height of God's displeasure, and the height and depth and length and breadth of my sins—I shall readily grant all. But against all this, I will set the infinite satisfaction of dear Jesus. This I know, that though the justice of God cannot be *avoided* nor

*bribed*—yet it may be *satisfied*. Here is a proportionable satisfaction, here is God answering God. It is a very noble plea of the apostle, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died," Romans 8:34. Let Satan urge the justice of God as much as he can, I am sure that the justice of God makes me sure of salvation; and the reason is evident, because his justice obliges him to accept of an adequate satisfaction of his own appointing, 1 John 1:7-9.

The justice of God makes me sure of my own happiness, because if God is just—when that satisfaction is made, justice requires that the person for whom it is made shall be received into favor. I confess that unless God had obliged himself by promise, there were no pressing his justice thus far. There was *mercy* in the promise of sending Christ, out of mercy to undertake for us; otherwise we cannot say that God was bound in justice to accept of satisfaction, unless he had first in mercy been pleased to appoint the way of a surety, Gen. 2:15. [Had not Christ stepped in between man's sin and God's wrath, the world had fallen about Adam's ears.] Justice indeed required satisfaction—but it required it of the person who sins: Gen. 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day you eat thereof you shall surely die"—or dying you shall die; or, as others read the words, "you shall surely and shortly or suddenly die!" And without controversy, every man would die the same day he is born. "The wages of sin is death," Romans 6:23; and this wages should be presently paid, did not Christ, as a blessing, beg poor sinners' lives for a season. For which cause he is called the Savior of all men, 1 Tim. 4:10—not of eternal preservation—but of temporal reservation. It was free and noble mercy to all mankind, that dear Jesus was promised and provided, sealed and sent into the world, John 6:27, that some might be eternally saved, and the rest preserved from wrath, for a time. Here comes in mercy, that a surety shall be accepted; and what he does is as if the person that offended should have done it himself. Here is mercy and salvation surely founded upon both. Ah, what sweet and transcendent comfort flows from this very consideration, that Christ is God But,

[4.] Fourthly, The great and glorious majesty of God required it, that Christ should be God. God the Father being a God of infinite holiness,

purity, justice, and righteousness; none but he who was truly God, who was essentially one with the Father, could or dared interpose between God and fallen man, John 10:30, and 14:9-11, etc. The *angels*, though they are glorious creatures—yet they are but creatures; and could these satisfy divine justice, and bear infinite wrath, and purchase divine favor, and reconcile us to God, and procure our pardon, and change our hearts, and renew our natures, and adorn our souls with grace? And yet all these things must be done—or we undone, and that forever! Now if this were a work too high for angels, then we may safely conclude that it was a work too hard for *fallen man*. Man was once the mirror of all understanding, the epitome of wisdom—but now there is a great alteration; for poor sorry man is now sent to school to learn wisdom and instruction of the beasts, birds, and creeping things. He is sent to the ant to learn providence, Proverbs 6:6, to the stork and to the swallow to learn to make a right use of time, Jer. 8:7, to the ox and the donkey to learn knowledge, Isaiah 1:3, and to the fowls of the air to learn confidence, Mat. 6. Man who was once a master of knowledge, a wonder of understanding, perfect in the science of all things, is now grown blockish, sottish, and senseless, and therefore altogether unfit and unable to make his peace with God, to reconcile himself to God, etc. But,

[5.] Fifthly and lastly, That Christ's sufferings and merits might be sufficient, it was absolutely necessary that he should be God. The sin of man was infinite, I mean infinitely punishable; if not infinite in number—yet infinite in nature, every offence being infinite, it being committed against an infinite God. No creature could therefore satisfy for it—but the sufferer must be God, so that his infiniteness might be answerable to the infiniteness of men's offences. There was an absolute necessity of Christ's sufferings, partly because he was pleased to substitute himself in the sinner's stead, and partly because his sufferings alone, could be satisfactory. Now, unless he had been man, how could he suffer? and unless he had been God, how could he satisfy offended justice? Look, as he must be more than man, that he may be able to suffer, that his sufferings may be meritorious; so he must also be man, that he may be in a capacity to suffer, die, and obey; for these are no work for one who is only God. A God alone, cannot suffer; a man alone, cannot merit; God cannot obey, man is bound to obey. Therefore Christ, that he might obey

and suffer, he was man; and that he might merit by his obedience and suffering, he was God-man; just such a person did the work of redemption call for. That Christ's merits might be sufficient, he must be God; for sufficient merit for mankind could not be in the person of any mere man, no, not in Christ himself, considered only as man; for so all the grace he had he did receive it, and all the good he did he was bound to do it; for "he was made of a woman, and made under the law," Gal. 4:4—not only under the ceremonial law as he was a Jew—but under the moral as a man, for it is under that law under which we were, and from which we are redeemed, Gal. 3:13, therefore in fulfilling it he did no more than that which was his duty to do; he could not merit by it, no, not for himself, much less for others, considered only as man; therefore he must also be God, that the dignity of his person might add dignity, and virtue, and value to his works.

In a word, God could make satisfaction—but he was not bound to do so. Man was bound to make satisfaction—but he could not do it. Therefore he who would do it must be both God and man. As the prophet speaks, "Is not this a firebrand taken out of the fire?" Zech. 3:2. You know that in a firebrand taken out of the fire, there is fire and wood inseparably mixed, and in Christ there is God and man wonderfully united. He was God, else neither his sufferings nor his merits could have been sufficient; and if his suffering could not atone, much less any other man's. For all other men are both conceived and born in original sin, and also much and often defiled with actual sin, and therefore we ought forever to abhor all such Popish doctrines, prayers, and masses for the dead, which exalt man's merits, man's satisfaction: "For no man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceases forever," Psalm 49:7-8. And therefore all the money that has been given for masses, dirges, etc., has been thrown away; for Jesus Christ, who is God-man, is the only Redeemer, and in the eternal world, money bears no mastery. Let me make a few **applications** and **INFERENCES** from what has been said.

Let me make a few **applications** and **inferences** from what has been said about the Divinity and Humanity of Christ.

1. First, Is it so, that Christ is God-man, that he is God and man? **Then let this raise our faith, and strengthen our faith, in our Lord Jesus Christ.** Faith is built on God, 1 Pet. 1:21. Now, Jesus Christ is truly God, and therefore the fittest foundation in the world for us to build our faith upon. "God manifest in the flesh" is a firm basis for faith and comfort. "He is able to save to the uttermost," Heb. 7:25. Christ is a thorough Savior, he saves perfectly, and he saves perpetually; he never carries on redemption work by halves. Christ being God as well as man, is able, by the power of his godhead, to vanquish death, devils, hell—and all the enemies of our salvation! And by the power of his godhead is able to merit pardon of sin, the favor of God, the heavenly inheritance, and all the glory of the heavenly world; for this dignity of his person adds virtue and efficacy to his death and sufferings, in that he who suffered and died was fully God; therefore God is said to have "purchased the church with his own blood," Acts 20:28. Christ having suffered in our nature, which he took upon him, that is, in his human soul and body the wrath of God, the curse, and all the punishments which were due to our sins, has—paid the price of our redemption, pacified divine wrath, and satisfied divine justice, in the very same nature in which we have sinned and provoked the Holy One of Israel; so that now all believers may triumphingly say, "There is no condemnation to us who are in Christ Jesus!" Romans 8:1.

Christ having, in our nature, suffered the whole curse and punishment due to our sins, God cannot in justice, but accept of his sufferings as a full and complete satisfaction for all our sins, 1 John 1:7, 9; so that now there remains no more curse or punishment for us to suffer, either in our souls or bodies, either in this life or in the life to come—but we are certainly and fully delivered from all; not only from the eternal curse, and all the punishments and torments of hell—but also from the curse and sting of bodily death, and from all afflictions as they are curses and *punishments* of sin, 1 Cor. 15:55-56. That Jesus, who is God-man, has changed the nature of them to us, so that of bitter curses and heavy punishments have become fatherly chastisements, the fruits of divine love, and the promoters of the internal and eternal good of our souls, Heb. 12:5-7, and

Rev. 3:19.

Oh, how should these things strengthen our faith in dear Jesus, and work us to lean and stay our weary souls wholly and only upon him who is God-man, "and who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. 1:30. Among the evangelists we find that Christ had a threefold entertainment among men: some received him into house, not into heart, as Simon the Pharisee, who gave him no kiss nor water to his feet, Luke 7:44. Some received him neither into heart nor house, as the graceless, swinish Gergesites, Mat. 8:34, who had neither civility nor honesty. Some received him both into house and heart, as Lazarus, Mary, Martha, etc., John 11:16. Certainly that Jesus who is God-man deserves the best room in all our souls, and the uppermost seat in all our hearts. But,

2. Secondly, If Jesus Christ be God-man, very God and very man, then **what high cause have we to observe, admire, wonder, and even stand amazed at the transcendent love of Christ in becoming man!** Oh! the firstness, the freeness, the unchangeableness, the greatness, the matchlessness of Christ's love to fallen man—in becoming man! Men many times show their love to one another, by hanging up one another's pictures in their homes—but, ah, what love did Christ show when he took our nature upon him Heb. 2:16, "For truly he took not on him the nature of angels—but he took on him the seed of Abraham;" he assumed, apprehended, caught, laid hold on the seed of Abraham, as the angel did on Lot, Gen. 19:16, as Christ did on Peter, Mat. 14:31, or as men do upon a thing they are glad they have gotten, and are loath to let go again. O sirs! it is a main ground and pillar of our comfort and confidence, that Jesus Christ took our flesh; for if he had not took our flesh upon him, we could never have been saved by him.

Christ took not a part—but the whole nature of man, that is, a true human soul and body, together with all the essential properties and faculties of both; that in man's nature he might die, and suffer the wrath of God, and whole curse due to our sins, which otherwise, being God only, he could never have done; and that he might satisfy divine justice for sin, in the same nature that had sinned, and indeed it was most fit, that the mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should partake in the

natures of both parties to be reconciled, Heb. 2:14.

Oh, what matchless love was this, that made our dear Lord Jesus to lay by for a time all that "glory that he had with the Father before the world was," John 17:5, and to assume our nature, and to be "found in fashion as a man," Phil. 2:8. To see the great God in the form of a servant, or hanging upon the cross, how amazing and astonishing was it to all that believed him to be God-man! "God manifested in our flesh" is an amazing mystery, 1 Tim. 3:16, a mystery fit for the speculation of angels, 1 Pet. 1:11, that the eternal God—should become the man Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. 2:5; that a most glorious creator—should become a poor creature; that the ancient of days, Dan. 7:9, 13, 22—should become an infant of days, Mat. 2:11; that the most high should stoop so low as to dwell in a body of flesh—is a glorious mystery, which transcends all human understanding. It would have seemed a high blasphemy for us to have *thought* of such a thing, or to have *desired* such a thing, or to have *spoken* of such a thing, if God, in his everlasting gospel, had not revealed such a thing to us! Oh, what a demonstration of Christ's love is it! and what a mighty honor has Jesus Christ put upon mankind, in that he took our nature upon him, in that he lived in our nature and died in our nature, and rose in our nature, and ascended in our nature, and now sits at his Father's right hand in our nature! Acts 1:10-11.

Though Jacob's love to Rachel, and Jonathan's love to David, and David's love to Absalom, and the primitive Christians' love to one another was strong, very strong—yet Christ's love in taking our human nature upon him does infinitely transcend all their loves. "I think," says one speaking of Christ, "he cannot despise me, who is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; for if he neglects me as a brother—yet he will love me as a husband; that is my comfort." "O my Savior," says Jerome, "did you die for love for me? a love more dolorous than death—but to me a death more lovely than love itself; I cannot live, love, and be longer from you!" I read in Josephus, that when Herod Antipater was accused to Julius Caesar as no good friend of his, he made no other apology—but stripping himself stark naked, showed Caesar his wounds and said, let me hold my tongue, these wounds will speak for me how I have loved Caesar.

Ah, my friends, Christ's wounds in our nature speak out the admirable

love of Jesus Christ to us; and oh, how should this love of his draw out our love to Christ, and inflame our love to that Jesus who is God-man blessed forever! Mr. Welch, a Suffolkshire minister, weeping at table, being asked the reason, said, "it was because he could love Christ no more!" Ah, what reason have we to weep, and weep again and again, that we can love that Jesus no more, who has showed such unparalleled love to us in assuming of the human nature! "I must hate my very soul, if it should not love my Jesus!" says Bernard. Ah, what cause have we even to hate ourselves, because we love that dear Jesus no more, who is very God and very man. But,

3. Thirdly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? Then **we may very safely and roundly assert that the work of redemption was a very great work.** [Consult these scriptures, Isaiah 61:1; Dan. 9:24; 1 John 3:8; Luke 1:74-75; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:4.] The redemption of souls is a mighty work, a costly work. To redeem poor souls from sin, from wrath, from the power of Satan, from the curse, from hell, from the condemnation, was a mighty work. Why was Christ born? Why did he live, sweat, groan, bleed, die, rise, ascend? Was it not to bring "deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound"? Was it not to "make an end of sin, to finish transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness," and "to destroy the works of the devil," and to "abolish death," and to "bring life and immortality to light," and to "redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself, and to make us a peculiar people, zealous of good works"?

Certainly the work of redemption was no ordinary or common thing; God-man must engage in it, or poor fallen man is undone forever. The greater the person is, who is engaged in any work, the greater is that work. The great monarchs of the world do not engage their sons in poor, low, mean, and petty services—but in such services as are high and honorable, noble and weighty; and will you imagine that ever the great and glorious God would have sent his Son, his own Son, his only-begotten Son, his bosom Son, his Son in whom his soul delighted before the foundations of the earth was laid—to redeem poor sinners' souls, if this had not been a great work, a high work, and a most glorious work in his eye? John 1:18, and Proverbs 8:22-33.

The *creation* of the world did but cost God a word of his mouth, "Let there be light, and there was light," Gen. 1:3—but the *redemption* of souls cost him his dearest Son. There is a divine greatness stamped upon the works of providence—but what are the works of providence, compared to the work of redemption? What are all providential works, compared to Christ's coming from heaven, to his being incarnate, to his doings, sufferings, and dying; and all this to ransom poor souls from the curse, hell, wrath, and eternal death? Souls are dear and costly things, and of great price in the sight of God. Among the Romans, those goods and estates which men had gotten in the wars with hazard of their lives, were

called *Peculium Castrense*—a special purchase. Oh, how much more may the precious and immortal souls of men be called Christ's *Peculium Castrense*—his special purchase, gotten, not only by the jeopardy of his life—but with the loss of his life and blood! "You know," says the apostle, "that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God!" 1 Pet. 1:18-19.

Christ, who alone paid the price of souls, has told us that one soul is more worth than all the world, Mat. 16:26. Christ left his Father's bosom, and all the glory of heaven—for the good of souls; he assumed the nature of man—for the happiness of the soul of man; he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath for souls; he wept for souls, he sweat for souls, he prayed for souls, he paid for souls, and he bled out his heart blood for the redemption of souls!

The soul is the breath of God, the beauty of man, the wonder of angels, and the envy of devils. It is of an angelical nature, it is a heavenly spark, a celestial plant, and of a divine offspring. It is capable of the knowledge of God, of union with God, of communion with God, and of an eternal fruition of God, John 14:8, and Psalm 17:15. There is nothing that can suit the soul below God, there is nothing that can satisfy the soul without God. The soul is so high and so noble a piece, that it scorns all the world. What are all the riches of the East or West Indies, what are heaps of diamonds, or mountains of gold, compared to the price that Christ laid down for souls? It is only the blood of him who is God-man, which is an equivalent price for the redemption of souls. Silver and gold has redeemed many thousands out of Turkish bondage—but all the silver and gold in the world could never redeem one poor soul from hellish bondage, from hellish torments.

Souls are a dear commodity. He who bought them found them so—and yet at how cheap a rate do some sinners sell their immortal souls! Callenuceus tells us of a nobleman of Naples who was accustomed profanely to say that he had two souls in his body, one for God, and another for whoever would buy it—but if he has one soul in hell, I believe he will never find another for heaven. A person of quality, who is still

alive, told me a few years since, that in discourse with one of his servants he asked him what he thought would become of his soul if he lived and died in his ignorance and enmity against God, etc. He most profanely and atheistically answered that when he died, he would hang his soul on a hedge, and say, Run God, run devil, and he who can run fastest let him take my soul. I have read of a most blasphemous wretch that, on a time being with his companions in an inn, carousing and making merry, asked them if they thought a man had a soul or no; whereunto when they replied that the souls of men are immortal, and that some of them after death lived in hell and others in heaven—for so the writings of the prophets and apostles instructed them—he answered and swore that he thought it nothing so—but rather that there was no soul in man to survive the body—but that heaven and hell were mere fables and inventions of priests to get gain; and for himself, he was ready to sell his soul to any who would buy it. Then one of his companions took up a cup of wine, and said, sell me your soul for this cup of wine; which he receiving, bade him take his soul, and drank up the wine. Now Satan himself being there in man's shape, bought it again of the other at the same price, and by and by bade him give him his soul, the whole company affirming it was fit he should have it, since he had bought it, not perceiving the devil. But presently, he laying hold of this soul-seller, carried him into the air before them all, to the great astonishment and amazement of the beholders; and from that day to this he was never heard of—but has now found by experience that men have souls, and that hell is no fable! "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26 [We laugh at little children to see them part with rich jewels for silly trifles, and yet daily experience tells us that multitudes are so childish as to part with such rich and precious jewels as their immortal souls for a lust, or for base and unworthy trifles; of whom it may be truly said, that they are like a man who fishes with a golden hook; the gain can never recompense the loss that may be sustained.]

**Ah, for what a trifle do many thousands sell their souls to Satan every day!** How many thousands are there who swear, curse, lie, cheat, deceive, etc. for a little gain every day! I have read that there was a time when the Romans did wear jewels on their shoes. Oh, that in these

days men did not worse! Oh, that they did not trample under feet that matchless jewel, their precious and immortal souls! O sirs, there is nothing below heaven so precious and noble as your souls, and therefore do not play the courtiers with your poor souls. Now the courtier does all things late. He rises late, and dines late, and sups late, and goes to bed late, and repents late. Christ made himself an offering for sin, that souls might not be undone by sin; the Lord died that slaves might live; the Son dies that servants might live; the natural Son dies that adopted sons may live; the only-begotten Son dies that bastards might live; yes, the judge dies that malefactors may live. Ah, friends, as there was never sorrow like Christ's, so there was never love like Christ's love; and of all his love, none to that of soul love. Christ, who is God-man, did take upon him your nature, and bare your sins, and suffered death, and encountered the cross, and was made a sacrifice and a curse, and all to bring about your redemption; and therefore you may safely conclude that the work of redemption is a great work. But,

4. Fourthly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? Then let this **encourage poor sinners to come to Christ, to close with Christ, to accept of Christ, to match with Christ, and to enter into a marriage union and communion with Christ.** The great work of gospel ministers is like that of Eliezer, Abraham's servant, to seek a match for our Master's Son. Now our way to win you to him, is not only to tell you what he *has*—but what he *is*. Now he is "God-man in one person." He is man, that you may not be afraid of him; and he is God, that he may be able to save you to the uttermost; he is "the Prince of the kings of the earth;" he is "Lord of lords and King of kings;" he is the "Heir of all things;" he is "fairer than the children of men;" he is "the chief of ten thousand;" he is "altogether lovely." [Heb. 7:25; Rev. 1:5, and 17:14; Heb. 1:3; Psalm 45:1; Cant. 5:10, 16.]

There is everything in Jesus, who is God-man, to encourage you to come to him. If you look upon his *names*, if you look upon his *natures*, if you look upon his *offices*, if you look upon his *dignities*, if you look upon his personal *excellencies*, if you look upon his mighty *conquests*, if you look upon his royal *attendance*—all these things call aloud upon you to come to Christ, to close with Christ. If you look upon the great things that he

has done for sinners, and the hard things that he has suffered for sinners, and the glorious things that he has prepared and laid up for sinners, how can you but readily accept of him, and sweetly embrace him? Though you have no loveliness, nor beauty, nor glory, Ezek. 16:4-5, and Isaiah 55:1-2; though you have not one penny in your purse, nor a rag to hang on your back—yet if you are but really and heartily willing to be divorced from all your sinful lovers, and accept of Christ for your sovereign Lord, he is willing that the match should be made up between you and him, Hos. 3:3, and Rev. 22:17.

Now shall Christ himself woo you, shall he declare his willingness to take you who have nothing, shall he engage himself to protect you, to maintain you, and at last, as a dowry, to bestow heaven upon you—and will you refuse him, will you turn your backs upon him? O sirs! what could Christ have done, that he has not done, to do you good, and to make you happy forever? Lo! he has laid aside his glorious robes, and he has put on your rags; he has clothed himself with your flesh; he came off from his royal throne, he humbled himself to the death of the cross, and has brought life, immortality, and glory to your very doors; and will you yet stand out against him? Oh, "how shall such escape, who neglect so great salvation," Heb. 2:3; who say, "This man shall not rule over us," Luke 19:14; who "tread under foot the Son of God"? Heb. 10:28. Oh, what wrath, what great wrath, what pure wrath, what infinite wrath, what everlasting wrath—is reserved for such people! John 3:36. Doubtless, Turks, Jews, and Pagans will have a cooler and a lighter hell than the despisers and rejecters of Christ, John 5:40, and Mat. 23:13-14. The great damnation is for those who might have Christ—but would not. And no wonder! for the sin of rejecting Christ is not chargeable upon the devils.

Ah sinners, sinners! that you would labor to understand more, and dwell more upon, the preeminent excellencies of Christ! for until the soul can discern a better, a greater excellency in Christ than in any other thing—it will never yield to match with Christ. Oh, labor every day more and more to understand the height and depth and breadth of the excellency of Christ. He is the chief and the choicest of all, both in that upper and in this lower world. The godhead dwells bodily in him; he is full of grace; he is the heir of glory; the holy one of God; the brightness of his Father's

image; the fountain of life, the well of salvation, and the wonder of heaven. Oh, when will you so understand the superlative excellency of Christ as to fall in love with him, as to cry out with the martyr, "Oh, none but Christ! Oh, none to Christ!" It is your wisdom, it is your duty, it is your safety, it is your glory, it is your salvation, it is your all—to accept of Christ, to close with Christ, and to bestow yourselves, your souls, your all on Christ. If you embrace him, you are made forever—but if you reject him, you perish forever. Bernard calls Christ, the Bridegroom of Bloods, because he espoused his church to himself upon the bed of his cross, his head begirt with a pillow of thorns, his body drenched in a bath of his own blood. To turn your backs upon this bridegroom of bloods will certainly cost you the blood of your souls; and therefore look to it. But,

5. Fifthly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? **Oh, then, honor him above all.** Oh, let him have the preeminence, exalt him as high as God the Father has exalted him. It is the absolute will of the Father that "all should honor his Son, even as they honor himself," for he having the same nature and essence with the Father, the Father will have him have the same honor which he himself has; which whoever denies to him reflects dishonor upon the Father, who will not bear anything derogatory to the glory of his Son. [Col. 1:18; Phil. 2:6-10; John 5:23. This text looks sourly on Jews, Turks, Papists, Socinians, and others.] Certainly there is due to Christ, as he is God-man, the highest respect, reverence, and veneration, which angels and men can possibly give unto him. Oh, look upon the Lord Jesus as God; and according to that honor that is due to him as God, so must you honor him.

The apostle speaks of some who, "when they knew God, they did not glorify him as God," Romans 1:21; so several pretend to give some glory to Christ—but they do not glorify him as God. O sirs, this is that which you must come up to, namely, to honor Christ in such a manner as may be suitable to his natures; and as he is the infinite, blessed, and eternal God; and ah! what honor can be high enough for such a person? Christ's honor was very dear to Bernard, who said, "Lord, use me for your shield to keep off those wounds of dishonor, which else would fall on you." Luther, in an letter to Spalatinus, says, "They call me a devil—but be it so, so long as Christ is magnified, I am well a-payd."

The inanimate creatures are so compliant with his pleasure, that they will thwart their own nature to serve his honor; fire will descend, as on Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 19; and water, though a fluid body, stand up like a solid wall, as in the Red Sea, Exod. 14:22; if he does but speak the word. Oh, let not the inanimate creatures one day rise in judgment against us, for not giving Christ his due honor. If we honor Christ we shall have honor, that is a bargain of Christ's own making—but if we dishonor him, he will put dishonor upon us, as Scripture and history in all ages do sufficiently evidence, 1 Sam. 2:30.

In history we read of an impostor who said that he was that star which Balaam prophesied of, which was a prophecy of Christ, Num. 24:17; this fellow called himself Ben-chomar, the son of a star. This man professed himself to be Christ—but he was slain with thunder and lightning from heaven, and then the Jews called him Ben-cosmar, which signifies the son of a lie. Buxtorf tells us that the Jews call Christ *Bar-chozabb*, the son of a lie, a bastard; and his gospel *Aven-gelaion*, the volume of lies, or the volume of iniquity; and has not God been a-revenging this upon them for above this sixteen hundred years? Rabbi Samuel, who long since has written a tract, wherein he does excellently discuss the cause of their long captivity and extreme misery, and after that he had proved it was inflicted for some grievous sin, he shows that sin to be the same which Amos speaks of. "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes," Amos 2:6. The selling of Joseph he makes the first sin, the worshiping the calf in Horeb the second sin, the abusing and killing God's prophets the third sin, and the selling of Jesus Christ the fourth sin. For the first they served four hundred years in Egypt, for the second they wandered forty years in the wilderness, for the third they were captives seventy years in Babylon, and for the fourth they are held in pitiful captivity, even to this very day. Oh, how severely has God revenged the wrongs and indignities done to Christ the Lord, by this miserable people, to this very hour and yet, oh, the several ways, wherein this poor people do every day express their malice and hatred against the Lord Jesus! Oh, pray, pray hard, that the veil may be taken away, which has been so long before their eyes.

Herod imprisons Peter, and kills James with the sword, Acts 12:1-4; this God puts up with—but when he comes to usurp the honor due to Christ, he must die for it, verse 23. Herod might more safely take away the liberty of one, and the life of another, than the glory due to Christ. Thus you see how dearly they have paid for it, who have not given Christ his due glory; and let these instances of his wrath alarm all your hearts so, that we may make more conscience than ever, of setting the crown of honor only upon Christ's head, "for he alone is worthy of all honor, glory, and praise," Rev. 14:10-11. But,

6. Sixthly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? Then from hence as in a mirror, **you may see the true reasons why the death and sufferings of Christ**, though short, very short—yet have a sufficient power and virtue in them to satisfy God's justice, to pacify his wrath, to procure our pardon, and to save our immortal souls—namely, because of the dignity of his person who died and suffered for us, the Son of God, yes, God himself. There was an infinite virtue and value in all his sufferings; hence his blood is called "precious blood," yes, "the blood of God." [Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; Acts 9:28; Gal. 4:4-6.] Did man transgress the royal law of God? behold God himself is become a man to make up that breach, and to satisfy divine justice to the uttermost farthing, Romans 8:2-4. For the man Christ Jesus to stand before the bar of the law, and to make full and complete reparation to it, was the highest honor that ever was done to the law of God. This is infinitely more pleasing and delightful to divine justice than if all the curses of the law had been poured out upon fallen man; and than if the law had built up its honor upon the destruction of the whole creation. To see one sun clouded is much more than to see the moon and all the stars in heaven overcast. Christ considered as God-man was great, very great; and the greater his person was—the greater were his sorrows, his sufferings, his humiliation, his compassion, his satisfaction to divine justice. Had not Christ been God-man, he could never have been an able surety, Heb. 7:25—he could never have paid our debts, he could never have satisfied divine justice, he could never have brought in an everlasting righteousness, Dan. 9:24, he could never have "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on the cross," Col. 2:15—a plain allusion to the Roman triumphs, where the victor ascending up to the

capitol in a chariot of state, all the prisoners following him on foot with their hands bound behind them, and the victor commonly threw coins abroad to be picked up by the common people. Just so, Christ, in the day of his solemn inauguration into his heavenly kingdom, triumphed over sin, death, devils, and hell, "and gave gifts to men." And had he not been God-man, he could never have merited for us a glorious reward.

If we consider Christ himself as a mere man, setting aside his godhead, Eph. 4:8, he could not merit by his sufferings; for, 1. Christ as he was man only, was a creature. Now a mere creature can merit nothing from the Creator. 2. Christ's sufferings, as he was man only, were finite, and therefore could not merit infinite glory. Indeed, as he was God, his sufferings were meritorious—but, consider him purely as man, they were not. This is wisely to be observed against the papists, who make so great a noise of men's merits; for if Christ's sufferings, as he was mere man, could not merit the least favor from God, then what mortal man is able to merit, at the hand of God, the least of mercies by his greatest sufferings? But,

7. Seventhly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? Then from hence **we may see the greatest pattern of humility and self-denial that ever was or will be in this world.** That he who was the Lord of glory, that he who was equal with God, that he should leave the bosom of his Father, Phil. 2:6; John 1:18, which was a bosom of the sweetest loves and the most ineffable delights, that he should put off all that glory that he had with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid, John 17:5, that he should so far abase himself as to become man, by taking on him our base, vile nature, so that in this our nature he might die, suffer, satisfy, and bring many sons to glory, Heb. 10,—oh, here is the greatest humility and abasement that ever was! And oh, that all sincere Christians would endeavor to imitate this matchless example of humility and self-denial! Oh the admirable condescensions of dear Jesus, that he should take our nature, and make us partakers of his divine nature! 2 Pet. 1:4, that he should put on our rags—and put upon us his royal robes! Rev. 19:7-8, that he should make himself poor—that we might be rich! 2 Cor. 8:9, that he should make himself low—that we might be high! accursed that we might be blessed! Gal. 3:10, 13. Oh

wonderful love! oh grace unsearchable!

Ah, Christians, did Christ stoop low—and will you be stout, proud, and high? Was he content to be accounted a worm, a drunkard, an enemy to Caesar, a friend of publicans and sinners, a devil—and must you be all in a flame when vain men make little account of you? Was he willing to be a curse, a reproach for you—and will you shrug, and shrink, and faint, and fret when you are reproached for his name? Did Jesus Christ stoop so low as to wash his disciples' feet, John 13:14, and are you so stout and proud that you cannot hear together, nor pray together, nor sit at the table of the Lord together, though you all hope at last to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven? Mat. 8:11. Shall one heaven hold you at last; and shall not one table, one church, hold you here? Oh, that ever worms should swell with such intolerable pride and stoutness! He who was God-man, was lowly, meek, self-denying, and of a most condescending spirit; and oh, that all you, who hope for salvation by him, would labor to write after so fair a copy.

Bernard calls humility a self-annihilation. "You will save the humble," says Job, chapter 22:29; in the Hebrew it is, "him who is of low eyes." A humble Christian has lower thoughts of himself than others can have of him. *Abraham* is "dust and ashes" in his own eyes, Gen. 18, *Jacob* is "less than the least of all mercies," Gen. 32:10. *David*, though a great king—yet looks upon himself as a worm; "I am a worm, and no man," Psalm 22:6. The word in the original signifies a very little worm—a worm that is so little, that a man can hardly see it or perceive it. Oh, how little, how very little was *David* in his own eyes. *Paul*, who was the greatest among the apostles—yet, in his own eyes, he was "less than the least of all saints." Says *Ignatius*, "I am not worthy to be called the least." "Lord! I am hell—but you are heaven," said blessed *Cooper*. "I am a most hypocritical wretch, not worthy that the earth should bear me," said holy *Bradford*. *Luther*, in humility, speaks thus of himself; "I have no other name than *sinner*; sinner is my name, sinner is my surname; this is the name by which I shall be always known. I have sinned, I do sin, I shall sin, in infinitum." Ah, how can proud, stout spirits read these instances and not blush! Certainly the sincere humble Christian is like the violet, which grows low, hangs the head down, and hides itself with its own leaves; and

were it not that the frequent smell of his many virtues manifests him to the world, he would choose to live and die in his self-contenting secrecy. But,

8. Eighthly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? Then hence **we may see how to have access to God**; namely, by means of Christ's human nature, which he has taken upon him, to that very end, that he might in it die and suffer for our sins, and so reconcile us to God, and give us access to him, Romans 5:1-2; Eph. 3:12, and 2:18. "By him we have access to the Father." The word signifies "a leading by the hand," an introduction. "It is an allusion," says Estius, "to the customs of princes, to whom there is no passage, unless we are brought in by one of their favorites." Esther 1. Though the Persian kings held it a piece of their silly glory to hold off their best friends, who might not come near them—but upon special license. Yet the great King of heaven and earth counts it his glory to give us free access at all times, in all places, and upon all occasions, by the man Christ Jesus.

1 Tim. 2:5, "There is one mediator between God and us, even the man Christ Jesus." Christ was made true man, that in our nature he might reconcile us to God, and give us access to God, which he could never have done, had he not been true God and true man. Without the human nature of Christ, we could never have had access to God, or fellowship with God; being by nature enemies to God, and estranged from God, and dead in trespasses and sins, Romans 5:10, it is only by the mediation of Christ incarnate, that we come to be reconciled to God, Eph. 2:1, 12-14, to have access to him, and acceptance with him. In Christ's human nature God and we meet together, and have fellowship together, 1 John 1:1-3. It could never stand with the unspotted holiness and justice of God, who is "a consuming fire," Heb. 12:29, to honor us with one cast of his countenance, or one hour's communion with himself, were it not upon the account of the man Christ Jesus. The least serious thought of God out of Christ, will breed nothing in the soul but horror and amazement; which made Luther say, "Let me have nothing to do with an absolute God."

Believers have free and blessed access to God—but still it is upon the credit of the man Christ Jesus, Heb. 4:15-16. "Let us come boldly to the

throne of grace," says the apostle, speaking of Christ, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The apostle's phrase signifies liberty of speech, and boldness of face; as when a man with a bold and undaunted spirit, utters his mind before the great ones of the world without blushing, without weakness of heart, without shaking of his voice, without imperfection and faltering in speech, when neither majesty nor authority can take off his courage, so as to stop his mouth, and make him afraid to speak. With such heroic and undaunted spirits would the apostle have us to come to the throne of grace; and all upon the credit of Christ our high priest, who is God-man. But,

9. Ninthly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? **Then you may be very confident of his sympathizing with you in all your afflictions**, Ezek. 35:10-13; Isaiah 37:23, 24; then this may serve as a foundation to support you under all your troubles, and as a cordial to comfort you under all your afflictions, in that Christ partaking of the same nature, and having had experience of the infirmities of it, he is the more able and willing to help and support us.

"For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Hebrews 2:16-18. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:15

If one comes to visit a man who is sick of a grievous disease, who has himself been formerly troubled with the same disease, he will sympathize more, and show more compassion than twenty others, who have not felt the same disease. So here, from Christ's sufferings in his human nature, we may safely gather that he will show himself a merciful high priest to us in our sufferings, and one who will be ready to help and support us in all our afflictions and miseries, which we suffer in this life, inasmuch as he himself had experience of suffering the like in our nature; "for in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to support those who are

tempted." And this should be a staff to support us, and a cordial to comfort us in all our sorrows and miseries. It is between Christ and his church as it is between two lute strings which are tuned one to another; no sooner is one struck but the other trembles.

Isaiah 63:9, "In all their afflictions, he was afflicted." These words may be read thus: was he in all their afflictions afflicted? Christ took to heart the afflictions of his church, he was himself grieved for them and with them. The Lord, the better to allure and draw his people to himself, speaks after the manner of men, attributing to himself affection, love, and compassion to men in misery. Christ did so sympathize with his people in all their afflictions and sufferings, as if he himself had felt the weight, the smart, the pain of them all. "He was in all things made like unto his brethren," not only in nature—but also in infirmities and sufferings, and by all manner of temptations, "that thereby he might be able," experimentally, "to support those who are tempted." He who touches them touches not only his eye, but the pupil of his eye—which is the tenderest piece of the tenderest part—to express the inexpressible tenderness of Christ's compassion towards them. Let persecutors take heed how they meddle with God's eyes, for he will retaliate eye for eye, Exod. 21:24. He is wise in heart and mighty in strength, and sinners shall one day pay dear for touching the apple of his eye.

Christ counts himself persecuted, when his church is persecuted; "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?" *Acts* 9:4. And he looks upon himself as hungry, thirsty, naked, and in prison, when his members are so, *Mat.* 25:35-36; so greatly does he sympathize with them. Hence the afflictions of Christians are called "the remainders of the afflictions of Christ," *Col.* 1:24: such as Christ, by his fellow-feeling, suffers in his members, and as they by correspondency are to fill up, as exercises and trials of their faith and patience.

Christ gave many evidences of his sympathy and compassion to our infirmities when he was on earth, as he groaned in his spirit, and was troubled, *John* 11:33; when he saw those who wept for Lazarus, he wept also, verse 35; as he did over Jerusalem also, *Luke* 19:41. It is often observed in the Gospel that Christ was *moved with compassion*; and that he frequently put forth acts of pity, mercy, and support to those who were

in any distress, either in body or soul. Christ retains this sympathy and fellow-feeling with us, now that he is in heaven; and does so far commiserate our distresses, as may stand with his glorified condition. Jesus Christ grieves for the afflictions of his people; "the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Almighty, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem," Zech. 1:12. The angel here is that Jesus, who is our advocate with the Father, 1 John 2:1-2. He speaks as one intimately affected with the state and condition of poor Jerusalem. Christ plays the advocate for his suffering people, and feelingly pleads for them; he being afflicted in all their afflictions, it moved him to observe that God's enemies were in a better case than his people; and this put him upon that passionate expostulation, "O Lord Almighty, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem!"

Oh, what an honor is it to such poor worms as we are, that Jesus Christ, who is God-man, who is the Prince of the kings of the earth, that he should have a fellow-feeling of all our miseries, and sympathize with us in all our troubles Rev. 1:5. But,

10. Tenthly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? **Then from hence you may see the excellency of Christ above man, above all other men**, yes, above Adam in innocency. Christ, as man, was perfect in all graces: Isaiah 11:1-2, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord." God gave the Spirit of wisdom to him not by measure; and therefore, at twelve years of age, you find him in the Sanhedrim disputing with the doctors, and asking them questions, John 3:34; Luke 2:46-47; John 1:16, "And of his fullness have all we received grace for grace;" Col. 1:19, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;" 2:3, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The state of innocency was an excellent state, it was a state of perfect holiness and righteousness, Gen. 1:27. By his holiness, Adam was carried out to know the Lord, to love the Lord, to delight in the Lord, to fear the Lord, and to take him as his chief good, Eph. 4:22-24. A legal holiness

consists in an exact, perfect, and complete conformity in heart and life to the whole revealed will of God; and this was the holiness that Adam had in his innocency, and this holiness was immediately derived from God, and was perfect. Adam's holiness was as co-natural to him as unholiness is now to us. Adam's holiness was as natural, and as pleasing, and as delightful to him as any way of unholiness can be natural, pleasing, and delightful to us. The state of innocency was a state of perfect *wisdom*, *knowledge*, and *understanding*. Witness the names that Adam gave to all the creatures, suitable and apposite to their natures, Gen. 2:20. The state of innocency was a state of great *honor* and *dignity*. David brings in Adam in his innocent estate with a crown upon his head, and that crown was a crown of glory and honor: "You have crowned him with glory and honor," his place was "a little lower than the angels," but far above all other creatures, Psalm 8:5. The state of innocency was a state of great *dominion* and *authority*, man being made the sovereign Lord of the whole creation, Psalm 8:6-8. We need not stand to enlarge upon that one parcel of his domain, namely, that which they call paradise, since the whole both of sea and land, and all the creatures in both, were his possession, his paradise.

Certainly man's first state was a state of perfect and complete happiness, there being nothing within him but what was desirable, nothing without him but what was amiable, and nothing around him but what was serviceable and comfortable—and yet Jesus Christ, who is God-man, is infinitely more glorious and excellent than ever Adam was; for Adam was set in a mutable condition—but Christ is the Rock of ages. He is steadfast and abiding forever; he is "yesterday, and today, and forever the same," Heb. 13:8. He is the same *before* time, *in* time, and *after* time; he is the same, that is unchangeable, in his *essence*, *promises*, and *doctrine*. Christ is the same in respect of *virtue*, and even his manhood, before it was in being, was clothed with perfection of grace, and so continues forever.

And again, Adam was a mere man, and alone by himself—but in Christ the human nature was hypostatically united unto the divine; and hence it comes to pass that Christ, even as man, had a greater measure of knowledge and revelation of grace and heavenly gifts than ever Adam had. The apostle tells us that in "Christ dwells all the fullness of the

Godhead," bodily, that is, essentially; that is, not by a naked and bare communicating of virtue, as God is said to dwell in his saints—but by a substantial union of the two natures, divine and human, the eternal Word and the man, consisting of soul and body, whereby they become one—one person, one subsistence. Now from this admirable and wonderful union of the two natures in Christ, there flows to the manhood of Christ a plenitude and fullness of all spiritual wisdom and grace, such as was never found in any mere man, no, not in Adam while he stood in his integrity and uprightness. But,

11. Eleventhly, Is Jesus Christ God-man? is he very God and very man? **Then this truth looks very sourly and frowningly upon all such as deny the godhead of Christ;** as Arians, Turks, Jews. How many are there in this city, in this nation, who stiffly deny the divinity of Christ, and dispute against it, and write against it, and blaspheme that great truth, without which, I think, a man may safely say, there is no possibility of salvation. In ancient times, near unto the period of the apostles, this doctrine of Christ's godhead, and eternal generation from the Father, was greatly opposed by sundry wicked and blasphemous heretics, as Ebion, Cerinthus, Arius, etc., who stirred up great troubles, and bloody persecutions against the church, for maintaining this great truth of Christ's godhead. They asserted that Christ had no true flesh; it was only the likeness of flesh which he appeared in, and that his body was only an imaginary body. But had the body of Christ been only such a body, then his conception, nativity, death, resurrection, are all too but imaginary things; and then his sufferings and crucifixion are but mere fancies too; and if so, then what would become of us, what would become of our salvation? then our faith would be in vain, and our hope would be in vain, and our hearing, preaching, praying, and receiving, would all be in vain; yes, then all our religion would vanish into a mere fancy also!

When a man's conscience is awakened to see his sin and misery, and he shall find guilt to lay like a load upon his soul, and when he shall see that divine justice is to be satisfied, and divine wrath to be pacified, and the curse to be borne, and the law to be fulfilled, and his nature to be renewed, his heart to be changed, and his sins to be pardoned—or else his soul can never be saved; how can such a person venture his soul, his all,

upon one who is but a mere creature? Certainly, a mere man is no rock, no city of refuge, and no sure foundation for a man to build his faith and hope upon. Woe to that man, that ever he was born, that has no Jesus—but a Socinian's Jesus to rest upon! Oh, it is sad trusting to one, who is man—but not God; flesh—but not spirit. As you love the eternal safety of your precious souls, and would be happy forever; as you would escape hell, and get to heaven, lean on none, rest on none—but that Jesus who is God-man, who is very God and very man.

Apollinaris held that Christ took not the whole nature of man—but a human body only, without a soul, and that the Godhead was instead of a soul to the manhood. Also Eutyches, who confounded the two natures of Christ, and their properties, etc. Also Apelles and the Manichees, who denied the true human body, and held him to have an aerial or imaginary body. Just so, may it be said of Jesus Christ our Savior, though myriads of angels and saints acclaim he is a God, consequently, immortal; and a crew of heretics disclaim him to be a true man, as the Marcionites averred that he had an imaginary body, and Apelles who conceived that he had an ethereal substance—yet the streams of blood which flowed from him, makes it sure that he was perfect man; consisting of a reasonable soul and human flesh.

And as this truth looks sourly upon the above-mentioned people, so it looks sourly upon the papists, who, by their doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body in the sacrament, do overthrow one of the properties of his human nature, which is to be but in one place present at once. This truth also looks sourly upon the Lutherans or Ubiquitaries, who teach that Christ's human nature is in all places by virtue of their personal union, etc. I wonder that of all the old errors, swept down into this latter age, as into a sink of time, this of the Socinians and Arians should be held forth among the rest. O sirs, beware of their doctrines, shun their meetings and those who come to you with the denial of the divinity of Christ in their mouths.

This was John's doctrine and practice. Irenaeus says, that after he was returned from his banishment, and came to Ephesus, he came to bathe himself, and in the bath he found Cerinthus, who taught that Christ had no being until he received it from the Virgin Mary; upon the sight of

whom, John skipped out of the bath, and called his companions from thence; saying, let us go from this place, lest the bath should fall down upon us, because Cerinthus is in it, who is so great an enemy to God. You see his reaction, see his doctrine too: "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work." 2 John 1:9-11

What that doctrine was, if you cast your eye upon the scripture, you shall find it to be the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Show no love where you owe nothing but hatred: "I hate every false way," says David, Psalm 119:118. "I shall look upon Auxentius as upon a devil, so long as he is an Arian," said Hilarius. We must show no countenance, nor give no encouragement to such as deny either the divinity or humanity of Christ.

I have been the longer upon the **divinity** and **humanity** of Christ,

1. Because the times we live in require it.
2. That poor, weak, staggering Christians may be strengthened, established, and settled in the truth, as it is in Jesus.
3. That I may give in my testimony and witness against all those who are poisoned and corrupted with Socinian and Arian principles, which destroy the souls of men.
4. That those in whose hands this book may fall may be the better furnished to make head against men of corrupt minds; who, "by sleight-of-hand and cunning craftiness, lie in wait to deceive," Eph. 4:14.

**[6.] Sixthly,** As he who did feel and suffer the very torments of hell, though not after a hellish manner, was God-man; so the punishments that Christ did sustain for us, must be referred only to the substance, and not unto the circumstances of punishment. The punishment which Christ endured, if it is considered in its substance, kind, or nature—so it was the same with what the sinner himself should have undergone. Now the

punishment due to the sinner was death, the curse of the law, etc. Now this Christ underwent, for "he was made a curse for us," Gal. 3:13. But if you consider the punishment which Christ endured, with respect to certain circumstances, adjuncts, and accidents—as the eternity of it, desperation going along with it, etc., then, I say, it was not the same—but *equivalent*. And the reason is, because, though the enduring of the punishments, as to the substance of them, could, and did agree with him as a surety—yet the circumstances of those punishments could not have befallen him unless he had been a sinner; and therefore every inordination in suffering was far from Christ, and a perpetual duration of suffering could not befall him, for the first of these had been contrary to the holiness and dignity of his person, and the other had made void the end of his suretyship and mediatorship, which was so to suffer, as yet to conquer and to deliver, and therefore, though he did suffer death for us in the substance of it. Yet he neither did nor could suffer death in the circumstances of it, so as forever to be held by death; for then, in suffering death, he would not have conquered death, nor delivered us from death. Neither was it necessary to Christ's substitution that he should undergo in every respect the same punishment which the offender himself was liable unto—but if he underwent so much punishment as did satisfy the law, and vindicate the lawgiver in his holiness, truth, justice, and righteousness, that was enough. Now that was unquestionably done by Christ, as the Scriptures do abundantly testify. [Whether the work of man's redemption could have been wrought without the sufferings and humiliation of Christ is not determinable by men—but that it was the most admirable way which wisdom, justice, and mercy could require, cannot be denied.]

It must be readily granted that Christ was to suffer the whole punishment due unto sin, so far as it became the dignity of his person and the necessity of the work—but if he had suffered eternally, the work of redemption could never have been accomplished; and besides, he should have suffered that which would not befit him. And therefore the apostle says, Heb. 2:10, "It became him to be consecrated through sufferings." Christ was only to pass through such sufferings as became him, who was ordained to be the prince and captain of our salvation. It became him to be man, and it became him in our human nature to suffer death, and it

became him to sustain for us the substance of those punishments, which we should have undergone; and accordingly he did. What our sins deserved, and what justice might lay upon us for those sins—all that did Christ certainly suffered. Jesus Christ did so suffer for our sins, as that his sufferings were fully answerable to the demerit of our sins. And I think I may safely say that God, in justice, could not require any more, or lay on any one more punishment than Jesus Christ did suffer for our sins; and my reason is this, because Christ bore all our sins, and all our sorrows, and was obedient unto the death, and made a curse for us, Isaiah 53, and Gal. 3:13; and more than this the law of God could not require. And if Christ did suffer all that the law of God required, then certainly he suffered so much as did satisfy the justice of God, namely, as much punishment as was commensurate with sin. But,

**[7.] Seventhly** and lastly, The meritorious cause, the main end, and the special occasion of all the sufferings of Christ—were the sins of his people. Isaiah 53:4, 5. There were other subordinate ends of his sufferings; as,

(1.) To sanctify sufferings to us.

(2.) To sweeten sufferings to us.

(3.) To support us experimentally under all our sufferings, Heb. 2:17-18.

(4.) That he might be prepared to enter into his glory, Luke 24:26.

(5.) That he might be a conqueror over sufferings, which was one piece of his greatest glory, etc.

Christ was our surety, and he could not satisfy for our sins, nor reconcile us to God without suffering: Isaiah 53:5, "But he was *wounded* for our transgressions." The Hebrew word for wounded has a double emphasis: either it may signify that he was pierced through as with a dart, or that he was tormented or pained, as women are accustomed to do, who have pain at the time of their travail; for the word in the text last cited comes regularly from a root that signifies to *be in pain*, as women are when they bring forth. It was our transgressions which gave Christ his deadly

wounds; it was our sins which smote him, and bruised him!

Look, as Zipporah said to Moses, Exod. 4:25, "Surely a bloody husband are you to me," so may Christ say to his church, Surely a bloody spouse have you been to me. Christ's spouse may look upon him and say, "I was that Judas who betrayed you! I was that soldier who murdered you! It was my sins which brought all sorrows and sufferings, all mischiefs and evils upon you! I have sinned—and you have suffered! I have sinned—and you have died! I have wounded you—and you have healed me! It is the wisdom, and oh, that it might be more and more the work of every believer to look upon a humble Christ with a humble heart, a broken Christ with a broken heart, a bleeding Christ with a bleeding heart, a wounded Christ with a wounded heart; according to that, Zech. 12:10, Christ was wounded, bruised, and cut off for sinners' sins.

When Christ was taken by the soldiers, he said, "If you seek me, let these go their way," Christ was willing that the hurt which sinners had done to God, and the debt which they owed to him, should be set upon his score, and put upon his account; and the apostle mentions it as a remarkable thing, that "Christ died for the ungodly," Romans 5:8; "the just for the unjust," 1 Pet. 3:18. Our sins were the meritorious cause of Christ's sufferings, Heb. 4:15, and 7:26. Christ did not suffer for himself, "for he was without sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth." The grand design, errand, and business about which Christ came into the world, was to save sinners, 1 Tim. 1:15. He had his name *Jesus*, because he was to save his people from their sins, Mat. 1:21. He died for our sins; not only for our good, as the final cause—but for our sins, as the procuring cause of his death. "He was delivered for our offences," "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," Romans 4:25, and 1 Cor. 15:3; that is, according to what was typified, prophesied, and promised in the blessed Scriptures.

Gal. 1:4, "He gave himself for our sins." "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree; by His wounds you have been healed." 1 Pet. 2:24. Here you see that the physician's blood became the sick man's salve! Here is the gospel mystery--that the wounding of one, should be the cure of another!

Oh, what an odious thing is sin to God, that He will pardon none without blood, yes, without the precious blood of His dearest Son! Oh, what a hell of wickedness must there be in sin--that nothing can expiate it but the best, the purest, the noblest blood that ever ran in veins! Oh, what a transcendent evil must sin be--that nothing can purge it away but death--the accursed death of the cross! Oh, what a leprosy is sin, that it must have blood, yes, the blood of God, to take it away!

Now thus you have seen:

(1.) That the sufferings of Christ have been free and voluntary, and not constrained or forced.

(2.) That they have been very great and heinous.

(3.) That the punishments which Christ suffered for our sin, were, in their parts, and kinds, and degrees, and proportion—all those punishments which were due unto us by reason of our sins; and which we ourselves would otherwise have suffered.

(4.) That Jesus Christ did feel and suffer the very torments of hell, though not after a hellish manner.

(5.) That he who did feel and suffer the torments of hell, though not after a hellish manner, was God-man.

(6.) That the punishments that Christ did sustain for us, must be referred only to the substance, and not to the circumstances of punishment.

(7.) That the meritorious cause of all the sufferings of Christ, were the sins of his people.

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**IV.** Now to that great question of giving up your account at last, according to the import of these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:12, 14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:3; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:7.] you may, in the fourth place, make this safe, noble, and happy plea. "O blessed God, Jesus Christ has suffered all those things that were due unto me for my sin; he has suffered even to the worst and uttermost; for all that the law threatened was a curse, and Christ was made a curse for me, Gal. 3:13; he knew no sin—but was made sin for me, 2 Cor. 5:21; and what Christ suffered he suffered as my surety, and in my stead; therefore, what he suffered for me, is as if I had suffered all that myself; and his sufferings has appeased your wrath, and satisfied your justice, and reconciled you to myself!"

2 Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "And he has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God, in one body, on the cross; having slain enmity thereby." Jesus Christ took upon him all my sins—all of them were laid

upon him, and he bore or suffered all the wrath and punishment due for them, and he suffered all as my surety, in my stead, and for my good; and you designed him for all this, and accepted of it as sufficient and effectual on my behalf. **Oh, with what comfort, courage, and confidence, may a believer, upon these considerations, hold up his head in the great day of his account.**

Let me now make a few **INFERENCES** from the consideration of all the great and grievous sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ—

**1. First, Let us stand still, and admire and wonder at the love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners; that he should rather die for us, than the fallen angels.** "For surely it is not **angels** he helps, but Abraham's descendants." Hebrews 2:16. They were creatures of a more noble extract, and in all probability might have brought greater revenues of glory to God. Yet that Christ should pass by those *golden vessels*, and make *us* vessels of glory—oh, what amazing and astonishing love is this! [This is the envy of devils, and the astonishment of angels and saints.] The fallen angels were more honorable and excellent creatures than we. They were celestial spirits; we earthly bodies, dust and ashes. They were immediate attendants upon God, they were, as I may say, of his privy chamber; we servants of his in the lower house of this world, farther remote from his glorious presence. Their office was to sing hallelujahs, songs of praise to God in the heavenly paradise; ours to dress the garden of Eden, which was but an earthly paradise. They sinned but once, and but in thought, (as is commonly thought)—but Adam sinned in thought by lusting, in deed by tasting, and in word by excusing. Why did not Christ suffer for their sins—as well as for ours? Why, if he suffered for any sins—why not for theirs, rather than ours? "Even so, O Father, for so it pleased you," Mat. 11:26.

"We move this question, not as being curious to search your secret counsels, O Lord—but that we may be the more swallowed up in the admiration of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge." The apostle, being in a holy admiration of Christ's love, affirms it to pass knowledge, Eph. 3:18-19; that God, who is the eternal Being, should love man when he had scarcely a being, Proverbs 8:30-31, that he should be enamored with deformity,

that he should love us when in our blood, Ezek. 16, that he should pity us when no eye pitied us, no, not even our own. Oh, such was Christ's transcendent love, that man's extreme misery could not abate it. The deploredness of man's condition did but heighten the holy flame of Christ's love. It is as high as heaven, who can reach it? It is as low as hell, who can understand it? Heaven, with all its glory, could not contain Him. Neither could all hell's torments make Him refrain! Such was His perfect matchless love to fallen and miserable man. That Christ's love should extend to the *ungodly*, to *sinners*, to *enemies* who were in rebellion against him, Romans 5:6, 8, 10; yes, not only so—but that he should hug them in his arms, lodge them in his bosom, dandle them upon his knees, and lay them to his breasts, that they may suck and be satisfied—is the highest degree of love, Isaiah 66:11-13.

It is astonishing that Christ should come from the eternal bosom of his Father, to a region of sorrow and death, John 1:18; that God should be manifested in the flesh, the Creator made a creature, Isaiah 53:4; that he who was clothed with glory, should be wrapped with rags of flesh, 1 Tim. 3:16; that he who filled heaven, should be cradled in a manger, John 17:5; that the God of Israel should fly into Egypt, Mat. 2:14; that the God of strength should be weary; that the judge of all flesh should be condemned; that the God of life should be put to death, John 19:41; that he who is one with his Father, should cry out of misery, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" Mat. 26:39; that he who had the keys of hell and death, Rev. 1:18, should lie imprisoned in the sepulcher of another, having, in his lifetime, nowhere to lay his head; nor after death, to lay his body, John 19:41-42. That He would do all this for man, for fallen man, for miserable man, for worthless man--is beyond all conception!

The sharp, the universal and continual sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, from the cradle to the cross, does above all other things speak out the transcendent love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners. That wrath, that great wrath, that fierce wrath, that pure wrath, that infinite wrath, that matchless wrath of an angry God, that was so terribly impressed upon the soul of Christ, quickly spent his natural strength, and turned his moisture into the drought of summer, Psalm 32:4—and yet all this wrath he

patiently underwent, that sinners might be saved, and that "he might bring many sons unto glory," Heb. 2:10. Oh wonder of love!

The Curtii laid down their lives for the Romans, because they loved them. Just so, it was the greatness of his love, which made our dear Lord Jesus lay down his life, to save us from hell and to bring us to heaven. As the pelican, out of her love to her young ones, when they are bitten with serpents, feeds them with her own blood to recover them again. Just so, when we were bitten by the old serpent, and our wound incurable, and we in danger of eternal death—then did our dear Lord Jesus, that he might recover us and heal us, feed us with his own blood, Gen. 3:15; John 6:53-56. Oh unspeakable love! This made one cry out, "Lord, you have loved me more than yourself; for you have laid down your life for me." It was **the golden link of love**, which alone fastened Christ to the cross, John 10:17, and which made him die freely for us, and which made him willing "to be numbered among transgressors," Isaiah 53:12, that we might be numbered among the "general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven," Heb. 12:23.

If Jonathan's love to David was wonderful, 2 Sam. 1:26, how wonderful must the love of Christ be to us, which led him by the hand to make himself an offering for us, Heb. 10:10, which Jonathan never did for David. For though Jonathan loved David's life and safety well—yet he loved his own better; for when his father cast a javelin at him to smite him, he flies from it, and would not abide his father's fury, notwithstanding his wonderful love to David, 1 Sam. 20:33-35; making good the philosopher's notion—that *man is a life-lover*.

Christ's love is like his name, and that is Wonderful, Isaiah 9:6. Yes, it is so wonderful, that it is above all creatures, beyond all measure, and contrary to all nature. Christ's love is above all **creatures**, for it is above the angels, and therefore above all others. Christ's love is beyond all **measure**, for time did not begin it, and time shall never end it; place does not bound it; sin does not exceed it; no estate, no age, no gender is denied it; tongues cannot express it; minds cannot conceive it. Christ's love is contrary to all nature; for what nature can love where it is hated? what nature can forgive where it is provoked? what nature can offer reconciliation where it receives wrong? what nature can heap up

kindness upon contempt, favor upon ingratitude, mercy upon sin? And yet, Christ's love has led him to all this; so that well may we spend all our days in admiring and adoring of this wonderful love, and be always ravished with the thoughts of it. But,

**2. Secondly, See that you love the Lord Jesus Christ with a superlative love, with an overtopping love.** There are none who have suffered so much for you as Christ; there are none who can suffer so much for you as Christ. The least measure of that wrath that Christ has sustained for you, would have broken the hearts, necks, and backs of all created beings. O my friends! there is no love but a superlative love, which is any way suitable to the transcendent sufferings of dear Jesus. Oh, love him above your *lusts*, love him above your *relations*, love him above the *world*, love him above all your outward *contentments* and *enjoyments*; yes, love him above your very *lives*; for thus the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, saints, primitive Christians, and the martyrs of old, have loved our Lord Jesus Christ with an overtopping love: Rev. 12:11, "They loved not their lives unto the death;" that is, they slighted, scorned, yes, despised their lives, exposing them to hazard and loss, out of love to the Lamb, "who had washed them in his blood." [Acts 20:24, and 21:12-13; 2 Cor. 1:8-10, 4:11, and 11:23; Heb. 11:36-39.]

I have read of Kilian, a Dutch schoolmaster, who being asked whether he did not love his wife and children, answered, "Were all the world a lump of gold, and in my hands to dispose of—I would leave it at my enemies' feet to live with them in a prison. But my soul and my Savior are dearer to me than all." "If my *father*," says Jerome, "should stand before me, and my *mother* hang upon, and my *brethren* should press about me—I would break through my brethren, I would throw down my father, I would tread my mother underfoot—to cleave to Jesus Christ!" "Had I ten heads," said Henry Voes, "I would allow them all to be chopped off in martyrdom for Christ." "If every hair of my head," said John Ardley, martyr, "were a man, they should all suffer for the faith of Christ." "Let fire, racks, pulleys," said Ignatius, "and all the torments of hell come upon me—just so that I may win Christ."

Love made Jerome to say, "O my Savior, did you die for love of me? —a love more dolorous than death—but to me a death more lovely than love

itself. I cannot live, love you, and be longer away from you." ["They do not love Christ, who love anything more than Christ," Augustine. The more Christ has suffered for us, the dearer Christ should be unto us. The greater and the bitterer Christ's sufferings have been for us, the greater and the sweeter should our love be to him.]

George Carpenter, being asked whether he did not love his wife and children, which stood weeping before him, answered, "My wife and children!—my wife and children! are dearer to me than all Bavaria—yet, for the love of Christ, I know them not." That blessed virgin in Basil, being condemned for Christ to the fire, and having her estate and life offered her if she would worship idols, cried out, "Let money perish, and life vanish—Christ is better than all." Sufferings for Christ are the saints' greatest glory; they are those things wherein they have most gloried: "Your cruelty is our glory," says Tertullian. It is reported of Babylas, that when he was to die for Christ, he desired this favor, that his chains might be buried with him, as the ensigns of his honor.

Thus you see with what a superlative love, with what an overtopping love, former saints have loved our Lord Jesus; and can you, Christians, who are cold and low in your love to Christ, read over these instances, and not blush? Certainly the more Christ has suffered for us, the more dear Christ should be unto us; the more bitter his sufferings have been for us, the more sweet his love should be to us, and the more eminent should be our love to him. Oh, let a suffering Christ lie nearest your hearts; let him be your manna, your tree of life, your morning star. It is better to part with all, than with this pearl of price. Christ is that golden pipe through which the golden oil of salvation runs; and oh, how should this inflame our love to Christ! Oh, that our hearts were more affected with the sufferings of Christ! Who can tread upon these hot coals, and his heart not burn in love to Christ, and cry out with Ignatius, "Christ my love is crucified!" Cant. 8:7-8.

If a friend should die for us, how would our hearts be affected with his kindness! and shall the God of glory lay down his life for us, and shall we not be affected with his goodness? John 10:17-18. Shall Saul be affected with David's kindness in sparing his life, 1 Sam. 24:16, and shall not we be affected with Christ's kindness, who, to save our life, lost his own? Oh,

the infinite love of Christ, that he should leave his Father's bosom, John 1:18, and come down from heaven, that he might carry you up to heaven, John 14:1-4; that he who was a Son should take upon him the form of a servant, Phil. 2:5-8; that you slaves should be made sons, that you enemies should be made friends, that you heirs of wrath should be made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, Romans 8:17; that to save us from everlasting ruin, Christ should stick at nothing—but be willing to be made flesh, to lie in a manger, to be tempted, deserted, persecuted, and to die upon a cross! Oh what flames of love to Christ, should these things kindle in all our hearts!

Ah! what sad metal are we made of, that Christ's fiery love to us—cannot inflame our love to him! Moses wondered why the bush was not consumed, when he saw it all on fire, Exod. 3:3—but if you but look into your own hearts, you shall see a greater wonder; for you shall see that, though you walk like those three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, Dan. 3, even in the midst of Christ's fiery love flaming round about you—yet there is but little, very little, true smell of that sweet fire of love to be felt or found upon you or in you.

Oh, when shall the sufferings of a dear and tender-hearted Savior kindle such a flame of love in all our hearts, as shall still be a-breaking forth in our lips and lives, in our words and ways—to the praise and glory of free grace? Oh, that the sufferings of a loving Jesus might at last make us all sick with love! Cant. 2:5. Oh let him forever lie between our breasts, Cant. 1:13, who has left his Father's bosom for a time, that he might be embosomed by us forever. But,

**3. Thirdly, Then in the sufferings of Christ, as in a gospel-mirror, you may see the odious nature of sin—and accordingly learn to hate it, arm against it, turn from it, and subdue it.** Sin never appears so odious as when we behold it in the red glass of Christ's sufferings, Psalm 119, 104, 113, 128, and Romans 7:15, and 12:9. Can we look upon sin as the occasion of all Christ's sufferings, can we look upon sin as that which made Christ a curse, and which made him forsaken of his Father, and which made him live such a miserable life, and which brought him to die such a shameful, painful, and cruel death—and our hearts not rise against it? Shall our sins be grievous unto Christ—and

shall they not be odious unto us? Shall he die *for* our sins—and shall not we die *to* our sins? Did not he suffer for sin—that we might cease from sin? Did not he "bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live to righteousness"? 1 Pet. 4:1, and 2:24. If one would kill our father, would we hug and embrace him? Surely not! We would be revenged on him. Sin has killed our Savior, and shall we not be revenged on it. Can a man look upon that snake that has stung his dearly-beloved spouse to death, and preserve it alive, warm it at the fire, and hug it in his bosom? Would he not stab it with a thousand wounds? It is sin which has stung our dear Jesus to death, which has crucified our Lord, clouded his glory, and shed his precious blood! Oh, how should this stir up our indignation against sin!

Ah, how can a Christian make much of those sins, which have killed his dearest Lord! how can he cherish those sins which betrayed Christ, and apprehended Christ, and bound Christ, and condemned Christ, and scourged Christ, and which violently nailed him to the cross, and there murdered him! It was neither Judas, nor Pilate, nor the Jews, nor the soldiers—which could have done our Lord Jesus the least hurt, had not our sins, like so many butchers and hangmen, come in to their assistance!

After Julius Caesar was treacherously murdered, Antonius brought forth his coat, all bloody, cut and mangled, and laying it open to the view of the people, said, "Look, here is your emperor's coat!" Whereupon the people were all in an uproar, and nothing would satisfy them but *the death of the murderers*, and they ran to the houses of the conspirators and burnt them down to the ground. But what was Caesar's coat, compared to the body of our dear Lord Jesus, which was all bloody, rent, and torn for our sins? Ah, how should this provoke us to be revenged on our sins! how should we forever loathe and abhor them! how should our fury be whetted against them! how should we labor with all our might to be the death of those sins that have been the death of so great a Lord, and will, if not prevented, be the death of our souls to all eternity!

To see God thrust the sword of his pure, infinite, and incensed wrath through the very heart of his dearest Son, notwithstanding all his supplications, prayers, tears, and strong cries, Heb. 5:7, is the highest manifestation of the Lord's hatred and indignation of sin that ever was, or

ever will be! It is true God revealed his great hatred against sin, by turning Adam out of paradise, and by casting the angels down to hell, by drowning the old world, and by raining hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and by the various and dreadful judgments that he has been a-pouring forth upon the world in all ages. But all this hatred is but *an emblem* of hatred, compared to that hatred which God manifested against sin in causing the whole curse to meet upon our crucified Lord, as all streams meet in the sea. It is true God reveals his hatred of sin by those endless, easeless, and remediless torments that he inflicts upon devils and damned spirits—but this is *no hatred*, compared to that hatred against sin, which God revealed when he opened all the floodgates of his envenomed wrath upon his Son, his own Son, his only Son, his Son who always pleased him, his Son who never offended him, Isaiah 53:5-6, and Proverbs 8:30-31, and Mat. 3:17.

Should you see a father who had but one son, and he such a son in whom he always delighted, and by whom he had never been provoked; a son who always made it his business, his work, his heaven to promote the honor and glory of his father, John 8:49-50, and 9:4; a son who was always most at ease when most engaged in his father's service; a son who counted it his food and drink to do his father's will, John 4:34: now should you see the father of such a son inflicting the most intensified pains and punishments, tortures and torments, calamities and miseries upon this, his dearest son—would you not wonder at the cause of the father's exercising such amazing, such matchless severity, fury and cruelty upon his only son? [Jer. 44:4, and Zech. 8:17.] Now cast your eye upon the actings of God the Father towards Jesus Christ, and you will find that he has inflicted more torments and greater torments upon the Son of his dearest love, than all mortals ever have or could inflict upon others. Isaiah 53:6, "The Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all." God made all the penalties and sufferings that were due to us—to fall upon Jesus Christ. God himself inflicted upon dear Jesus whatever was requisite to the satisfying of his justice, to the obtaining of pardon, and to the saving of all his elect: verse 10, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he has put him to grief." Neither all the devils in hell, nor all the men upon earth, could never have bruised or put to grief our Lord Jesus. If it had not pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief, he had never

been bruised or put to grief. Oh, how should this work us to look upon sin with indignation!

Suppose a man should come to his dinner table, and there should be a knife laid down, and it should be told him, "This is the very knife that cut the throat of your child!" If this man would use this knife as a common knife, would not everyone say, "Surely this man had but very little love to his child, who can use this bloody knife as a common knife!" Just so, when you meet with any temptation to sin, oh, then say, "This is the very knife which cut the throat of Jesus Christ, and pierced his sides! This very knife was the cause of his sufferings, and made Christ to be a curse!" Accordingly let your hearts rise against sin!

Ah, how well does it befit Christians to look upon sin as that accursed thing, which made Christ a curse—and accordingly to abhor it! Oh, with what detestation should a man fling away such a knife! and with the like detestation should every Christian fling away his sins, as Ephraim did his idols: "Get away from me! What have I any more to do with you?" Hosea 14:8. "Sin, you have slain my Lord; you have been the only cause of the death of my Savior!" Isaiah 2:20, and 30:22. Let us say as David, "Is not this the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" 2 Sam. 23:17. Just so, is not this the sin which poured out Christ's blood? Oh, how should this enrage our hearts against sin, because it cost the Captain of our salvation, Heb. 2:10, not the hazard—but the very loss of his life!

God showed Moses a tree with which he might make the bitter waters sweet, Exod. 15:25. But, lo! here is a tree with which you may make the sweet waters of sin, to become bitter. Look upon the tree on which Christ was crucified, remember his cross, and the pains he suffered thereon, and the seeming sweetness that is in sin will quickly vanish. When you are solicited to sin, cast your eye upon Christ's cross, remember his astonishing sufferings for sin, and sin will soon grow distasteful to your souls. How can sin not be hateful to us--if we seriously consider how hurtful it was to Jesus Christ? Who can look upon the cross of Christ—and excuse his sin, as Adam did, saying, "The *woman* which you gave me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"? Gen. 3:12. Who can look upon the cross of Christ and emblazon his sin, as Judas did, saying, "Hail, Master"? Mat. 26:49. Who can look upon the cross of Christ and deny his sin, as

Gehazi did, saying, "Your servant went no where"? 2 Kings 5:25. Who can look upon the cross of Christ and defend his sin, as Jonah did, saying, "I do well to be angry"? Jonah 4:9.

O sirs! where is that hatred of sin that used to be in the saints of old? David could say, "I hate vain thoughts and I hate every false way," Pa. 119:104, 113, 128. And Paul could say, "I do the very thing I hate," Romans 7:15. "It is better," says one, "to be in hell with Christ, than to be in heaven with sin." Oh, how odious was sin in the saints' eye! The primitive Christians chose rather to be cast to lions without—than to be left to lusts within—so great was their hatred of sin. "I had rather," says Anselm, "go to hell pure from sin, than to heaven polluted with that guilt." "I will rather," says another, "leap into a bonfire—than willfully to sin against God." Under the law, if an ox gored a man so that he died—the ox was to be killed, Exod. 21:28. Sin has gored and pierced our dear Lord Jesus—oh, let it die for it! oh, avenge yourselves upon it, as Samson did avenge himself upon the Philistines for his two eyes! Judg. 16:28.

Plutarch reports of Marcus Cato, that he never declared his opinion in any matter in the senate—but he would close it with this passage, "I still think that Carthage should be destroyed." Just so, a Christian should never cast his eye upon the cross of Christ, the sufferings of Christ, nor upon his sins—but his heart should say, "I think pride should be destroyed, and unbelief should be destroyed, and hypocrisy should be destroyed, and earthly-mindedness should be destroyed, and self-love should be destroyed, and vain-glory should be destroyed, etc." The Jews would not have the pieces of silver which Judas cast down in the temple put in the treasury, because they were the price of blood, Mat. 27:5-6. Oh, lodge not any one sin in the treasury of your hearts, for they are all the price of blood! But,

**4. Fourthly, Let the sufferings of our Lord Jesus raise in all our hearts a high estimation of Christ.** Oh, let us prize a suffering Christ—above all our duties, and above all our graces, and above all our privileges, and above all our outward contentments, and above all our spiritual enjoyments! Mat. 10:37; Luke 14:26. A suffering Christ is a commodity of greater value than all the riches of the Indies, yes, than all the wealth of the whole world. "He is better than rubies," says Solomon,

"and all the things you can desire are not to be compared to him," Proverbs 8:11. He is that pearl of great price, which the wise merchant purchased with all that ever he had, Mat 13:46; no man can buy such gold too dear. Joseph, (who was a type of the Lord Jesus,) —then a precious jewel of the world, was far more precious, had the Ishmaelitic merchants known so much, than all the balms and myrrhs that they transported, Gen. 37:25. And just so, is a suffering Christ, as all will grant, who really know him, and who have experienced the sweet of union and communion with him.

Christ went through heaven and hell, life and death, sorrow and suffering, misery and cruelty—and all to bring us to glory—and shall we not prize him? When in a storm, the nobles of Xerxes were to lighten the ship to preserve their king's life—they leaped into the sea! But **our Lord Jesus Christ, to preserve our lives, our souls—he leaps into a sea of wrath!** Oh, how should this work us to set up Christ above all!

What a deal of stir has been made about Alexander the Great, and Constantine the Great, and Pompey the Great—because of their great power and authority. But what was all their greatness and grandeur, compared to that greatness and grandeur which God the Father put upon our Lord Jesus Christ when he gave all power in heaven and in earth unto him, and set him down at his own right hand? Mat 28:13; Heb. 1:13; Eph. 1:20. O sirs! will you value men according to their titles, and will you not highly value our Lord Jesus Christ, who has the most magnificent titles given him? He is called King of kings and Lord of lords, Rev. 17:14, and 19:16. It is observed by learned Drusius, that those titles were usually given to the great kings of Persia. Yet the Holy Spirit attributes these great titles to Christ, to let us know that, as God has exalted Christ above all earthly powers, so we should magnify and exalt him accordingly.

Paul, casting his eye upon a suffering Christ, tells us that he esteems of "all things," Phil. 3:8, as rubbish in comparison of Christ. "All things" is the greatest account that can be cast up, for it includes all prizes, all sums; it takes in heaven, it takes in the vast and huge globe and circle of the capacious world, and all excellencies, within its bosom. "All things" includes all nations, all angels, all gold, all jewels, all honors, all delights, and everything else besides—and yet the apostle looks upon all these

things but as "dung," dogs' dung, as some interpret the word, or dogs' meat, coarse and contemptible, in comparison of dear Jesus. [The original word notes the filth that comes out of the entrails of beasts, or offal cast to dogs.]

Carraciolus, that noble Italian marquis, was of the same mind and metal with Paul, for when he was strongly tempted, and solicited with great sums of money and preferments, to return to the Romish church, he gave this heroic answer, "Cursed be he who prefers all the wealth of the world to one day's communion with Christ!" What if a man had large domains, stately buildings, and ten thousand rivers of oil! What if all the mountains of the world were pearl, the mighty rocks rubies, and the whole globe a shining diamond! yet all this were not to be named in the same breath, wherein there is mention made of a suffering Christ. Look, as one ocean has more waters than all the rivers in the world, and as one sun has more light than all the luminaries in heaven, so one suffering Christ is more "all" to a poor soul, than if it had the all of the whole world a thousand times over and over.

O sirs! if you cast but your eye upon a suffering Christ, a crucified Jesus! There you shall find *righteousness* in him to cover all your sins, and *plenty* enough in him to supply all your needs, and *grace* enough in him to subdue all your lusts, and *wisdom* enough in him to resolve all your doubts, and *power* enough in him to vanquish all your enemies, and *virtue* enough in him to heal all your diseases, and *fullness* enough in him both to satisfy you and save you—and that to the utmost, Heb. 7:25. [I have read of a Roman servant, who knowing his master was sought for by officers to be put to death, he put himself into his master's clothes, that he might be captured in his place; and so he was, and was put to death for him; whereupon his master, in memory of his thankfulness to him and honor of him, erected a brazen statue. But what a statue of gold should we set up in our hearts to the eternal honor and exaltation of Jesus, who not in our clothes, but in our very nature, has laid down his life for us!]

All the good things that can be reckoned up here below have only a finite and limited benignity. Some can clothe but cannot feed, others can nourish but they cannot heal, others can enrich but they cannot secure, others can adorn but cannot advance. All serve some good purpose—but

none can fully satisfy. They are like a beggar's coat, made up of many pieces, not all of which, are enough either to beautify, defend, or satisfy. But there is enough in a suffering Christ to fill us and satisfy us to the full.

Christ has the greatest worth and wealth in him. Look, as the worth and value of many pieces of silver is to be found in one piece of gold; just so, all the petty excellencies which are scattered abroad in the creatures, are to be found in a bleeding, dying Christ! Yes, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth, is epitomized in him who suffered on the cross! A man cannot hyperbolise in speaking of Christ and heaven—but must entreat his hearers, that they would conceive much more than he was able to express. Certainly it is as easy to compass the heavens with a span, and contain the sea in a sea-shell—as to relate fully a suffering Christ's excellencies, or heaven's happiness. O sirs! there is in a crucified Jesus something proportionable to all the straits, needs, necessities, and desires of his poor people. [John 6:5-6, 37; Rev. 13:14; Mat. 9:12; Isaiah 9:6; Heb. 2:10; Acts 5:31, and 7:37-38; Heb. 2:17-18, and 4:15-16; 2 Cor. 11:2; Isaiah 9:6-7; John 20:17; 28:16; Rev. 22:16; Eph. 1:22-23.] He is bread to nourish them, and a garment to cover and adorn them, a physician to heal them, a Counselor to advise them, a captain to defend them, a prince to rule them, a prophet to teach them, and a priest to make atonement for them; a husband to protect them, a father to provide for them, a brother to relieve them, a foundation to support them, a root to quicken them, a head to guide them, a treasure to enrich them, a sun to enlighten them, and a fountain to cleanse them. Now what more can any Christian desire—to satisfy him and save him; and to make him holy and happy, in time and eternity?

Shall the Romans and other nations highly value those who have but ventured to lay down their lives for their country—and shall not we highly value the Lord Jesus Christ, who has actually laid down his life for his sheep? John 10:11, 15, 17. I have read of one who, walking in the fields by himself, suddenly fell into loud cries and weeping, and being asked by one who passed by and overheard him the cause of his lamentation, replied, "I weep to think that the Lord Jesus Christ should do so much for us men, and yet not one man of a thousand so much as minds him or thinks of him." Oh what a bitter lamentation have we cause to take up,

that the Lord Jesus Christ has suffered so many great and grievous things for poor sinners, and that there are so few who sincerely love him, or who highly value him; most men preferring their lusts, or else the toys and trifles of this world, above him. But,

**5. Fifthly, Let the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ work us into a gracious willingness to embrace sufferings for his sake, and cheerfully and resolutely to take up his cross and follow him.** "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24. Did Christ suffer—who knew no sin; and shall we think it strange to suffer—who know nothing but sin? Shall he lie sweltering under his Father's wrath, and shall we cry out under men's anger? Was he crowned with thorns—and must we be crowned with rose-buds? [Godfrey, king of Jerusalem, refused to be crowned with a crown of gold, saying that it was not fitting for a Christian to wear a crown of gold, where Christ, for our salvation, had worn a crown of thorns.] Was his whole life, from the cradle to the cross, made up of nothing but sorrows and sufferings—and must our lives, from the cradle to the grave, be filled up with nothing but pleasures and delights? Was he despised—and must we be admired? Was he debased—and must we be exalted? Was he poor—and must we be rich? Was he low—and must we be high? Did he drink of a bitter cup, a bloody cup—and must we have only cups of consolation? Let us not think anything too much to do for Christ, nor anything too great to suffer for Christ, nor anything too dear to part with for such a Christ, such a Savior—who thought nothing too much to do, or too grievous to suffer—so that he might accomplish the work of our redemption. He left heaven for us—and shall not we let go this world for him? He left his Father's bosom for us—and shall not we leave the bosoms of our dearest relations for him? Psalm 45:10-11; Mat. 10:37. He underwent all sorts of sufferings for us—let us as readily encounter with all sorts of sufferings for him.

Paul was so accustomed to sufferings for Christ, that he could rejoice in his sufferings, he gloried most in his chains, and he looked upon his scars, buffetings, scourgings, stonings for Christ—as his greatest triumphs, 2 Cor. 12:10, and 11:23-28. And how ambitious were the primitive Christians of martyrdom in the cause of Christ? And of late, in

the times of the Marian persecution, how many hundreds cheerfully and willingly laid down their lives—mounting Elijah-like to heaven in fiery chariots! And oh, how will Christ own and honor such Christians at last, who have exposed themselves to hazards, losses, and sufferings for his sake! Rev. 3:21, as those brave souls, who loved not their lives unto the death, Rev. 12:11; that is, they despised their lives in comparison of Christ; they exposed their bodies to horrible and painful deaths, their temporal estates to confiscation, and their persons to all manner of shame and contempt, for the cause of Christ, Heb. 11:33-39, and 10:34. In the days of that bloody persecutor Dioclesian, the Christians showed a glorious faith in the face of martyrdom, and the savageness of the persecutors. This bred wonder and astonishment in beholders. In all ages and generations, those who have been born after the flesh have persecuted those who have been born after the Spirit, Gal. 4:29; and the seed of the serpent have been still a-multiplying of troubles upon the seed of the woman.

"Would any man take the church's picture," says Luther, "then let him paint a poor silly maid, sitting in a wilderness, compassed about with hungry lions, wolves, boars, and bears, and with all manner of other cruel hurtful beasts; and in the midst of a great many furious men, assaulting her every moment and minute." And why should we wonder at this, when we consider that the whole life of Christ was filled up with all sorts and kinds of sufferings? Oh, where is that brave spirit, which was upon the saints of old? Blessed Bradford looked upon his sufferings for Christ as an evidence to him who he was in the right way. "It is better for me to be a martyr than a monarch," said Ignatius when he was to suffer. ["If one man did suffer all the sorrows of all the saints in the world—yet they are not worth one hour's glory in heaven!" Chrysostom.] "Happy is that soul, and to be equaled with angels, who is willing to suffer, if it were possible, as great things for Christ, as Christ has suffered for him," says Jerome. "Sufferings are the ensigns of heavenly nobility," says Calvin. Modestus, lieutenant to Julian the emperor, said to Julian, "While those Christians suffer they deride us," says he, "and the torments are more fearful to those who look on—than to the tormented themselves!"

Vincentius laughed at those who slew him, saying, "that to Christians,

tortures and death were but sports." And he gloried when he went upon hot burning coals, as if he trod upon a bed of roses. It was a notable saying of a French martyr, when the rope was about his fellow martyr's neck, "Give me that *golden chain*, and dub me a knight of that noble order." "Paul rattled his chain, which he bore for the gospel, and was as proud of it as a woman of her ornaments," says Chrysostom. "Do your worst, do your worst," said Justin Martyr to his persecutors; "but this I will tell you, that you may put all that you are likely to gain by the bargain—into your eye and weep it out again." Basil will tell you, that "the most cruel martyrdom is but a trick to escape death, to pass from life to life; for it can be at most, a day's journey between the cross and paradise. "Their names which are written in red letters of blood in the church's calendar, are written in golden letters in Christ's register, in the book of life," says Prudentius.

Though the cross be bitter—yet it is but short. "A little storm," as one said of Julian's persecution, "and an eternal calm follows!" "Methinks," said one, "I tread upon pearls, (when he trod upon hot burning coals,) and I feel no more pain than if I lay in a bed of down, (and yet he lay in flames of fire.) "I am heartily angry," says Luther, "with those who speak of my sufferings, which, if compared to that which Christ suffered for me, are not once to be mentioned in the same breath." Paul greatly rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ; and therefore oftentimes sings it out: "I Paul a prisoner," as you may see by these scriptures, [See Acts 28:17; Eph. 3:1, and 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:8; Phil. 1, 9; 2 Cor. 11:23; Romans 16:7; Col. 4:10; Phil. 23.] It is not, "I Paul an apostle," nor "I Paul enrapt up in the third heaven." Christ showed his love to him, in rapping him up in the third heaven; and he shows his love to Christ in suffering for him.

During the cruel persecutions of the heathen emperors, the Christian faith was spread through all places of the empire, "because the oftener they were mowed down," says Tertullian, "the more they grew." "I am the the most unfit man for this high office of suffering for Christ, that ever was appointed to it," said blessed Sanders. Austin observed, that "though there were many thousand Christians put to death for professing Christ—yet they were never the fewer for being slain." Cyprian, speaking of the Christians and martyrs in his time, said, "They may kill them—but they

cannot overcome them." "The more we are cut down by the sword of persecution, the more we increase," says Tertullian. Eusebius tells us of one who wrote to his friend from a stinking dungeon, and dates his letter from, "My lovely orchard." "Burn my foot if you will," said that noble martyr, "that it may dance everlastingly with the blessed angels in heaven." The young child, who, when his flesh was pulled in pieces with pincers, by the command of Antiochus, said with a smiling countenance, "Tyrant, where are those smarting pains with which you threatened me? Make me to flinch and cry out if you can!" Bainam, an English martyr, when the fire was flaming about him, said, "You Papists talk of miracles, behold here a miracle, I feel no more pain than if I were in a bed of down; it is as sweet to me as a bed of roses!"

Lawrence, when his body was roasted upon a burning gridiron, cried out, "This side is roasted enough, turn the other side." Marcus of Arethusa, when his body was cut and mangled, and anointed with honey, and hung up aloft in a basket, to be stung to death by wasps and bees, looked down, saying, "I am going to glory, despising you who are below." Henry Voes kissed the stake. Hawks clapped his hands in the flames when they were half consumed. John Noys blessed God that ever he was born to see that day. Ridley called his execution day, his *wedding* day.

Thus you see a "cloud of witnesses" to raise and inflame your hearts into a free, ready, willing, cheerful, and resolute suffering for that Jesus who has suffered so much for you. O sirs, when we see all sorts of Christians, divinely defy and scorn their torments and tormentors, when we see them conquering in the midst of hideous sufferings, when we hear them expressing their greatest joy in the midst of their greatest sufferings, we cannot but conclude that there was something more than ordinary that did thus raise, cheer, and encourage their spirits in their sufferings. And doubtless this was it, "the recompense of reward" on the one hand, and the matchless sufferings of Jesus Christ for them on the other hand, Heb. 11:24-26, and 12:2. The cordial wherewith Peter is said, by Clemens, to comfort his wife when he saw her led to martyrdom, was this, "Remember the Lord, whose disciples if we are; we must not think to speed better than our master."

It is said of Antiochus that, being to fight with Judas, captain of the army

of the Jews, he showed unto his elephants the blood of the grapes and mulberries, to provoke them the better to fight, 1 Mac. 6:3-4. Just so, the Holy Spirit has set before us the wounds, the blood, the sufferings, the dying of our dear Lord Jesus—to encourage us to suffer, with all readiness and resoluteness, whatever calamities or miseries may attend us for Christ's sake, or the gospel's sake. Ah, what a shame would it be if we should not be always ready to suffer anything for his sake, who has suffered so much for our sins as is beyond all conception, beyond all expression! Never was Jacob more gracious and acceptable to his father Isaac, than when he stood before him clothed in the garments of his rough brother Esau. Then the father, smelling the savor of the elder brother's garments, said, "Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed," Gen. 27:27. And never are we more gracious and acceptable to our heavenly Father, than when we stand before him clothed in the rough garments of Christ's afflictions and sufferings. O Christians, all your sufferings for Christ, they are but inlets to your glorious reigning with Christ.

Justin Martyr says that when the Romans did immortalize their emperors, as they called it, they brought one to swear that he saw him go to heaven out of the fire. But we may see, by an eye of faith, the blessed souls of martyrs fly to heaven, like Elijah in his fiery chariot, or like the angel who appeared to Manoah, in the flames. By the consent of the schoolmen, all martyrs shall appear in the church triumphant, bearing the signs of their Christian wounds about them, as so many speaking testimonies of their holy courage, that what here they endured in the behalf of their Savior may be there an addition to their glory. But,

**6. Sixthly, Has Jesus Christ suffered such great and grievous things for you? Oh then, in all your fears, doubts, and conflicts with enemies, within or without—fly to the sufferings of Christ as your city of refuge!** Did Christ endure a most ignominious death for you? Did he take on him your sinful person, and bear your sin and death and cross, and was made a sacrifice and curse for you? Oh then, in all your inward and outward distresses, shelter yourself under the wings of a suffering Christ, Psalm 90:1, and 91:1, 4, 9. I have read of Nero, that he had a shirt made of a salamander's skin, so that if he went through the

fire in it, it would keep him from burning. O sirs, a suffering Christ is this salamander's skin—which will keep the saints from burning in the midst of burning, from suffering in the midst of sufferings, from drowning in the midst of drowning, Dan. 3:24, 29, and Isaiah 43:2. In all the storms that beat upon your inward or your outward man, eye the sufferings of Christ, lean upon the sufferings of Christ, plead the sufferings of Christ, and triumph in the sufferings of Christ, Zech. 12:10; Cant. 8:5; 2 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 6:14.

It is storied of a martyr, that, writing to his wife, where she might find him when he was fled from home, "Oh, my dear," said he, "if you desire to see me, seek me in the side of Christ, in the cleft of the rock, in the hollow of his wounds; for there I have made my nest, there will I dwell, there shall you find me, and nowhere else but there." In every temptation let us look up to a crucified Christ, who is fitted and qualified to support tempted souls, Heb. 2:17-18, and 4:15-16. Oh my soul, whenever you are assaulted, let the wounds of Christ be your city of refuge where you may fly and live! Let us learn, in every trouble which presses us—whether it be sin, or death, temptation, or any other evil—to translate it from ourselves to Christ! And all the good in Christ—let us learn to translate it from Christ to ourselves!

Look, as the burgher of a town, sitting in the Parliament-house, bears the persons of that whole town, and what he says the whole town says, and what is done to him is done to the whole town. Just so, Christ upon the cross stood in our place, and bore our sins, Isaiah 53:4-6; and whatever he suffered we suffered; and when he died all the faithful died with him and in him.

I have read of a gracious woman who, being strongly tempted by Satan, replied, "Satan, if you have anything to say to me, say it to my Christ, say it to my surety, who has undertaken all for me, who has paid all my debts, and satisfied divine justice, and set all reckonings even between God and my soul." Do your sins terrify you? Oh then, look up to a crucified Savior, who bore your sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. 2:24. When sin stares you in the face, oh then turn your face to a dying Jesus, and behold him with a spear in his side, with thorns in his head, with nails in his feet, and a pardon in his hands. ["The strongest antidote against sin is to look

upon sin in the red glass of Christ's blood!" Austin.] Have you wounded your conscience by any great fall or falls? Oh, remember that there is nothing in heaven or earth more efficacious to cure the wounds of conscience than a frequent and serious meditation on the wounds of Christ. Does death, which rides upon the pale horse, Rev. 6:8, look ghastly and deadly upon you? Oh then, remember that Christ died for you, Romans 5:6, 8, and that by his death he has swallowed up death in victory, 1 Cor. 15:55-57. Oh, remember that a crucified Christ has stripped death of his sting, and disarmed it of all its destroying power. Death may buzz about our ears—but it can never sting our souls.

Look, as a crucified Christ has taken away the *guilt* of sin—though he has not taken away sin itself, so he has taken away the *sting* of death—though he has not taken away death itself. He spoke excellently, who said, "That is not death—but life, which joins the dying man to Christ! And that is not life—but death, which separates the living man from Christ!" [Death will blow the *bud of grace* into the *flower of glory!*] Austin longed to die, that he might see that head which was crowned with thorns. "Did Christ die for me," says one, "that I might live with him? I will not, therefore, desire to live long away from him." All men go willingly to see him whom they love—and shall I be unwilling to die that I may see him whom my soul loves? Bernard would have us never to let go out of our minds the thoughts of a crucified Christ. "Let these," says he, "be food and drink unto you; let them be your sweetness and consolation, your honey and your desire, your reading and your meditation, your contemplation, your life, death, and resurrection!" Certainly he who shall live up to this counsel, will look upon the *king of terrors* as the *king of desires!*

Are you apt to tremble when you eye the curse threatened in the law? Oh then, look up to a crucified Christ, and remember that "he has redeemed you from the curse of the law, being made a curse for you," Gal. 3:13. Does the wrath of God bewilder you? Oh then, look up to a crucified Christ, and remember that Christ has trod the winepress of his Father's wrath alone, Isaiah 63:3, that he might deliver you from wrath to come! 1 Thes. 1:10. Is the face of God clouded? Does he who should comfort you stand afar off? Oh then, look up to a crucified Christ, and remember that he was forsaken for a time—that you might not be forsaken forever!

Are you sometimes afraid of condemnation? Oh then, look upon a crucified Christ, who was condemned that you might be justified. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died." Romans 8:33-34.

Ah, Christians, under all your temptations, afflictions, fears, doubts, conflicts, and trials—be persuaded to keep a fixed eye upon crucified Jesus; and remember that all he did he did for you, and that all he suffered he suffered for you! This will be a strong cordial to keep you from fainting under all your inward and outward distresses, according to that saying of one of the ancients, "I may be troubled—but I shall not be overwhelmed, because I remember the print of the nails and of the spear in the hands and side of Jesus Christ!" Oh, that Christians would labor, under all their soul-troubles, to keep a fixed eye upon a bleeding Christ; for there is nothing which will ease them, quiet them, settle them, and satisfy them like this. Many, may I not say most, Christians are more apt to eye their sins, their sorrows, their prayers, their tears, their resolves, their complaints, than they are to eye a suffering Christ; and from hence springs their greatest woes, wounds, miseries, and dejection of spirit. Oh, that a crucified Christ might be forever in your eye, and always upon your hearts! But,

**7. Seventhly and lastly, Has Jesus Christ suffered such great and grievous things? Then this truth looks sadly and sourly upon the papists.** In this red glass of Christ's blood, you may see how vain and wicked, how ridiculous and superstitious, the devices of the papists are—who for pacifying of God's wrath, and for the allaying of his anger, and for satisfying his justice, and for the obtaining of pardon, etc., have appointed penances and pilgrimages, and self-scourgings and soul-masses, and purgatory, and several other suchlike abominations, which the Scripture nowhere commands—but everywhere forbids; which inventions and abominations of theirs tend only to derogate from the dignity and sufficiency of Christ's sufferings, and to reflect dishonor and disgrace upon that full and perfect price which Christ has paid for our ransom, and to set up other saviors in the room of our blessed Redeemer. [Surely that religion which loves to lap blood, and which is propagated and maintained by blood, and which prefers their own inventions and

abominations before the blood and sufferings of Christ—that religion is not of God. But such is the Romish religion; consequently their religion is not of God.]

Certainly all Popish pardons, penances, pilgrimages, masses, whippings, scourgings, etc., they unavoidably fall before the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ—as Dagon fell before the ark, Goliath before David, Haman before Mordecai, and as the darkness falls before the morning light. And as for their purgatory, they do not know certainly where it is, nor how long it will last, nor what sort of fire is there; neither can they show us how corporeal fire should work upon the souls in purgatory, they being spiritual and incorporeal; they cannot tell us whether the pains of purgatory be at all times alike, neither can they tell us whether the good or evil angels are the tormentors of the souls in purgatory. And as for the whipping, scalding, freezing of souls in purgatory, they are but "old wives' fables," and the brain-sick fancies of some deceitful people, to cheat poor ignorant people of their money, under a blind pretense of praying their souls out of purgatory.

Christ offered himself "once for all," Heb. 10:10. But the Romish priests offer him up daily in the mass, an unbloody sacrifice; and so they do what lies in them to "tread under foot the blood of God, the blood of the covenant," Acts 20:28; Heb. 10:29. To be short, Popery in effect is nothing else but an underhand, secret witness-bearing against Christ in all his offices, and against all that he has done and suffered for the redemption and salvation of sinners, as might be made abundantly evident—but that I may not now launch out into that ocean. I only give this brief touch by the way, that I might raise up in all your hearts a greater detestation of Popery, in this day wherein many are so warm for it, as if it were their only *Diana*.

And let thus much suffice, concerning the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the improvement that we should make of them.

Thus you may clearly see, by what I have said concerning the active and passive obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, that whatever we are bound to do or suffer by the law of God—all that did Christ do and suffer for us, as being our surety and mediator. Now the law of God has a double

challenge or demand upon us: one is of *active* obedience, in fulfilling what it requires; the other is of *passive* obedience, in suffering that punishment which is due to us for the transgression of it, in doing what it forbids. For as we were created by God, we did owe unto him all obedience which he required; and as we sinned against God, we did owe unto him a suffering of all that punishment which he threatened. And we being fallen by transgression, can neither pay the one debt, nor yet the other. Of ourselves we can do nothing that the law requires; neither can we so suffer as to satisfy God in his justice wronged by us, or to recover ourselves into life and favor again.

And therefore Jesus Christ, who was God-man, did become our surety, and stood in our stead or room, and he did perform what we should, but could not perform; and he did bear our sins and our sorrows; he did suffer and bear for us—what we ourselves should have borne and suffered, whereby he did fully satisfy the justice of God, and made our peace, and purchased pardon and life for us.

Christ did fully answer to all the demands of the law, he did come up to perfect and universal conformity to it. He did whatever the law enjoins, and he suffered whatever the law threatens. Christ, by his active and passive obedience, has fulfilled the law most exactly and completely, Gal. 3:13. As he was perfectly holy, he did what the law commanded; and as he was made a curse, he underwent what the law threatened. And all this he did and suffered in our steads and as our surety. Whatever Christ did as our surety, he made it good to the full; so that neither the righteous God, nor yet the righteous law, could ever tax him with the least defect. This must be our great plea, our choice, our sweet, our safe, our comfortable, our acceptable plea, both in the day of our particular accounts when we die, and in the great day of our account, when a crucified Savior shall judge the world.

Although sin, as an *act*, be transient—yet in the *guilt* of it, it lies in the Lord's high court of justice, filed upon record against the sinner, and calling aloud for deserved punishment, saying, "Man has sinned, and man must suffer for sin!" But now Christ has suffered, that plea is taken off. "Lo here," says the Lord God, "the same nature that sinned, suffers; my own Son, being made flesh, has suffered death for sin in the flesh; the

thing is done, the law is satisfied." Thus whereas sin would have condemned us, Christ has condemned sin; he has weakened, yes, nullified and taken away sin—in the guilt and condemning power of it—by that abundant satisfaction that he has given to the justice of God by his active and passive obedience. So that, "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1, 3; for the blood of the mediator outcries the clamor of sin; and this must be a Christian's joy and triumph and plea in the great day of our Lord Jesus.

As Christ was "made sin for us," 2 Cor. 5:21, so the Lord does impute the sufferings of Christ to us—that is, he accepts of them on our behalf, and puts them upon our account; as if the Lord should say unto every particular believer, "My Son was your surety and stood in your stead, and suffered and satisfied and took away your sins by his blood. In his blood I find a ransom for your soul; I do acknowledge myself satisfied for you, and satisfied towards you, and you are delivered and discharged. I forgive you your sins, and am reconciled unto you, and will save you and glorify you for my Son's sake. In his blood you have redemption, and the forgiveness of your sins."

As when a surety satisfies the creditor for a debt, this is accounted to the debtor, and reckoned as a discharge to him in particular. "I am paid and you are discharged," says the creditor. Just so it is in this case; "I am paid, says God, and you are discharged, and I have no more to say to you but this. Enter into the joy of your Lord!" Mat. 25:21.

V. The fifth plea that you are to make in order to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:3; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] which respects the account that you are to give up in the great day of the Lord, is drawn from **the imputed righteousness of Christ to us. The justification of a sinner in the sight of God**, upon the account of Christ's righteousness imputed to him, whereby the guilt of sin is removed, and the person of the sinner is accepted as righteous with the God of heaven, is that which I

shall open to you distinctly in these following branches—

**1. First, That the grace of justification in the sight of God is made up of two parts—**

1. There is forgiveness of the offences committed against the Lord.
2. There is acceptance of the person offending—pronouncing him a righteous person, and receiving him into favor again, as if he had never offended. This is most clear and evident in the blessed Scriptures.

[1.] First, **There is an act of absolution and acquittal from the guilt of sin, and freedom from the condemnation deserved by sin.** The desert of sin is an inseparable attendant of sin, which can never be removed. It may be truly said of the sins of a justified person, that they deserve everlasting destruction—but justification is the freeing of a sinner from the guilt of his iniquity, whereby he was actually bound over to condemnation. [Romans 8:1. *Condemnation* is a forensic word, relating to what is in use among men in their courts of judicature to condemn. It is the sentence of a judge decreeing a penalty to be inflicted upon the guilty person.]

As soon as any man does sin, there is a guilt upon him, by which he is bound over to the wrath and curse of God; and this guilt or obligation is inseparable from sin; the sin does deserve no less than everlasting damnation. Now, forgiveness of sin has a peculiar respect to the guilt of sin, and removal of that. When the Lord forgives a man, he does discharge him of that obligation by which he was bound over to wrath and condemnation: Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus;" verse 33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies;" verse 34, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died." Beloved, the Lord is a holy and just God; and "he reveals his wrath from heaven against all unrighteousness," Romans 1:18; and there is a curse threatened to every transgression of the law, Gal. 3:10; and when any man sins, he is liable unto the curse, and God may inflict the same upon him, Romans 1:32. But when God forgives sins, he therein does interpose, as it were, between the sin and the curse, and between the obligation and the condemnation, Romans 6:23.

When the sinner sins, God might say unto him, "Sinner, by your sinning you are now fallen into my hands of justice; and for your sins I may, according to my righteous law, condemn and curse you forever! But such is my free, my rich, my sovereign grace, that for Christ's sake I will spare you and pardon you, and that curse and condemnation which you have deserved, shall never fall upon you. Oh, my affections, my affections, are yearning towards you, Jer. 31:20; and therefore I will have mercy, mercy upon you, and will deliver your souls from going down into the pit!" Job 33:13, 24, 28, 30.

When the poor sinner is indicted and arraigned at God's bar, and process is made against him, and he found guilty of the violation of God's holy law, and accordingly judged guilty by God, and adjudged to everlasting death, then *mercy* steps in and pleads, "I have found a ransom! Job 33:24. The sinner shall not die—but live!" When the law says, "Ah, sinner, sinner! thus and thus have you transgressed, all sorts of *duties* you have omitted, and all sorts of *sins* you have committed, and all sorts of *mercies* you have abused, and all sorts of *means* you have neglected, and all sorts of *offers* you have slighted!" Then God steps in and says, "Ah, sinner, sinner! what do you say, what can you say, to this heavy charge? Is it true or false? Will you grant it or deny it? What defense or plea can you make for yourself?" Alas! the poor sinner is speechless: Mat. 22:12, he was muzzled or haltered up, that is, he held his peace as though he had a bridle or a halter in his mouth. He has not one word to say for himself; he can neither deny, nor excuse, or extenuate what is charged upon him.

"Why now," says God, "I must and do pronounce you to be guilty; and as I am a just and righteous God, I cannot but adjudge you to die eternally. But such is the riches of my mercy, that I will freely justify you through the righteousness of my Son; I will forgive your sins, and discharge you of that obligation by which you were bound over to wrath, and curse, and condemnation!" The justified person may now triumphingly say, "Who is he who condemns?" He may read over the most dreadful passages of the law without being terrified or amazed, as knowing that the curse is removed, and that all his sins, which brought him under the curse, are pardoned, and are, in point of condemnation, *as if they had never been!* This is to be justified, to have the sin pardoned and the penalty remitted.

Romans 4:5-8, "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works—Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." It is observable that what David calls forgiveness of sin, and not imputing of iniquity, Paul styles a being justified. But,

[2.] Secondly, As the first part of justification consists in the pardon of sin, so **the second part of justification consists in the acceptance of the sinner's person as perfectly righteous in God's sight, pronouncing him such, and dealing with him as such**, and by bringing of him under the shadow of that divine favor which he had formerly lost by his transgressions: Cant. 4:7, "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you;" that is, none in my account, nor no such spots as the wicked are full of, Deut. 32:5. Look, as David saw nothing in lame Mephibosheth but what was lovely, because he saw in him the features of his friend Jonathan, 2 Sam. 9:3-4, 13-14. Just so, God, beholding his people in the face of his Son, sees nothing amiss in them. "They are all glorious within and without," Psalm 45:13. Look, as Absalom had no blemish from head to foot, so they are blameless and "without blemish before the throne of God," Rev. 14:5.

The pardoned sinner, in respect of divine acceptance, is "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. 5:26-27. God accepts the pardoned sinner as complete in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power, Col. 2:10. Christ makes us lovely through his beauty; he gives us white raiment to stand before the Lord. Christ is all in all, in regard of divine acceptance: Eph. 1:6, "He has made us accepted in the beloved." "He has made us favorites," so Chrysostom and Theophylact render it. "God has ingratiated us," he has made us gracious in the Son of his love. Through the blood of Christ, we are lovely and beautiful in God's eyes. Isaiah 62:4, "You shall no more be termed forsaken—but you shall be called Hephzibah; for the Lord delights in you." [All people outside of Christ are cursed enemies, objects of God's wrath and justice, displeasing, offending, and provoking creatures; and therefore God cannot but loathe

them and abhor them.]

The acceptance of our persons with God takes in six things:

- (1.) God's honoring of us;
- (2.) His delight in us;
- (3.) His being well pleased with us;
- (4.) His extending love and favor to us;
- (5.) His high estimation of us;
- (6.) His giving us free access to himself.

It is the observation of Ambrose, that though Jacob was not by birth the first-born—yet, hiding himself under his brother's clothes, and having put on his coat, which smelled most fragrantly, he came into his father's presence, and got away the blessing from his elder brother, Gen. 27:36; so it is very necessary, in order to our acceptance with God, that we lie hid under the precious robe of Christ, our elder brother; that, having the sweet savor of his garments upon us, our sins may be covered with his perfections, and our unrighteousness with the robes of his righteousness, 1 Cor. 2:15; so that we may offer up ourselves unto God "a living and acceptable sacrifice," Romans 12:1; "not having our own righteousness, which is but as filthy rags," Isaiah 64:6 but that which is "through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. 9.

Thus you see that justification, for the nature of it, lies in the gracious pardon of the sinner's transgressions, and in the acceptance of his person as righteous in God's sight. But,

**2. Secondly, In order to the partaking of this grace, of the forgiveness of our sins and the acceptance of our persons, we must be able to produce a perfect righteousness before the Lord, and to present it and tender it unto him.** And the reason is evident from the very nature of God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," Hab. 1:13, that is, with patience or pleasure, or without

punishing it. [Heb., "And to look on iniquity, you cannot do it."] There are four things that God cannot do:

(1.) He cannot lie;

(2.) He cannot die;

(3.) He cannot deny himself;

(4.) He cannot behold iniquity with approbation and delight.

Josh. 24:19, "And Joshua said unto the people, You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." Such is the holiness of God's nature, that he cannot behold sin, that he cannot but punish sin wherever he finds it, Psalm 5:4-6. God is infinitely, immutably, and inexorably just, as well as he is incomprehensibly gracious. Now, in the justification of a sinner God does act as a God of justice, as well as a God of compassion. God is infinite in all his attributes, in his justice as well as in his mercy: these two cannot interfere with each other. As justice cannot encroach upon mercy, so neither may mercy encroach upon justice; the glory of both must be maintained. Now, by the breach of the law, the justice of God is wronged; so that although mercy is apt to pardon—yet justice requires satisfaction, and calls for vengeance on sinners. "Every transgression must receive just recompense," Heb. 2:2, and God will not in any case absolve the guilty, Exod. 34:7; and until this is done, the hands of mercy are tied that she cannot act. And seeing satisfaction could not be made to an infinite Majesty—but by an equal person and price; therefore the Son of God must become a curse for us, by taking our nature and pouring out his soul to the death. By this means, justice and mercy are reconciled and kiss each other, and mercy now being set at liberty, has her free course to save poor sinners. God will have his justice satisfied to the full, and therefore Christ must bear all the punishment due to our sins; or else God cannot set us free, for he cannot go against his own just will.

Observe the force of that phrase, "Did not the Christ *have* to suffer these things," Luke 24:26; Mat. 26:54, "It *must* happen in this way." Why *must*? but because it was,

(1.) So decreed by God.

(2.) Foretold by the prophets. Every particular of Christ's sufferings were

foretold by the prophets, even to their very spitting in his face.

(3.) Prefigured in the daily morning and evening sacrifice; this Lamb of God was sacrificed from the beginning of the world.

A necessity then there was of our Savior's sufferings; not a necessity of co-action, for he died freely and voluntarily—but of immutability and infallibility, for the former reasons mentioned, John 10:11, 14, 17, 18.

An earthly prince who is just, holds himself bound to inflict punishment impartially upon the malefactor or his surety. It stands upon his honor; he says, "It must be so, I cannot do otherwise." This is true much more of God, who is justice itself. God, "who is great in counsel and excellent in working," had store of means at hand whereby to set free and recover lost mankind—yet he was pleased, in his infinite wisdom, to pitch upon this way of atonement, as being most agreeable to his holy nature, and most suitable to his high and sovereign ends—namely, man's salvation and his own glory. And that God does stand upon full atonement, and will not forgive one sin without it, may be thus made evident.

**[1.] First, From the nature of sin,** which is that "abominable thing which God hates," Jer. 44:4. [God could not simply pass over the sin of man, so as absolutely to let it go unpunished.] The sinner deserves to die for his sins: Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." Every sinner is worthy of death; "those who commit such things are worthy of death," Romans 1:32. Now God is just and righteous. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you," 2 Thes. 1:6. Yes, and God did, therefore, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice," Romans 3:25; "he did it to demonstrate his justice," verse 26.

Now, if God is a just and righteous God, then sin cannot absolutely escape unpunished; for it is just with God to punish the sinner who is worthy of punishment; and certainly God must deny himself if he will not be just, 2 Tim. 2:13—but this he can never do. Sin is of an infinite guilt, and has an infinite evil in the nature of it; and therefore no person in heaven or earth—but that person our Lord Jesus, who is God-man, and who had an infinite dignity—could either procure the pardon of it, or make

satisfaction for it. No prayers, no cries, no tears, no humblings, no repentings, no resolutions, no reformations, etc., can stop the course of justice, or procure the guilty sinner's pardon. It is Christ alone, who can dissolve all obligations to punishment, and break all bonds and chains of guilt, and hand a pardon to us through his own blood, Eph. 1:7. We are set free by the blood of Christ. "By the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit," Zech. 9:11: it is by his blood that we are justified and saved from wrath: Romans 5:9, "Much more being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath by him." What is it to be justified—but to be pardoned; and what is it to be saved from wrath—but to be delivered from all punishment? and both these depend upon the blood of Christ, Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20. But,

**[2.] The veracity of God requires it.** Look, as God cannot but be just, so he cannot but be true. And if he cannot but be true, then he will make good the threatenings which have gone out his mouth: Gen. 2:17, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die!" Heb. "In dying, you shall die." [Under the name of death are comprehended all other calamities, miseries, and sorrows.] Death is a fall that came in by a fall, and without all question, every man should die the same day he was born, for "the wages of sin is death," and this wages would be presently paid, did not Christ relieve poor sinners' lives for a season, upon which account he is said to be the Savior of all men, 1 Tim. 4:10; not of eternal salvation—but of a temporal preservation. "He will by no means clear the guilty." Exod. 34:7. "The soul that sins, it shall die." "The wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Ezek. 17:20. "He will render to every man according to his deeds." Romans 2:6.

O sirs, God can never so far yield as to abrogate his own law, and quietly to sit down with injury and loss to his own justice, he himself having established a law, etc. "The law pronounces him cursed, who continues not in all things which are written therein, to do them," Gal. 3:10. Now, though the threatenings of *men* are frequently vain and frivolous—yet the threatenings of the great *God* shall certainly take place and have their accomplishment! Though many ten thousand millions of sinners perish, not one tittle of the dreadful threatenings of God shall fail until all be fulfilled, Mat. 5:18.

Josephus says that from that very time that old Eli heard those terrible threatenings, that made their ears tingle and hearts tremble that heard them—that he never ceased weeping, 1 Sam. 3:11-14. Ah, who can look upon the dreadful threatenings which are pointed against sinners all over the book of God, and not tremble and weep! God cannot but in justice punish sinners; neither is it in his choice or freedom whether he will damn the obstinate impenitent sinner or not. Look, as God cannot but love holiness wherever he sees it, so he cannot but loathe and punish wickedness wherever he beholds it; neither will it stand with the infinite wisdom of God, to admit of a dispensation or relaxation of his threatenings without justice. God had passed an authoritarian doom, and made a solemn declaration of it in his word, that "he who sins, shall die the death!" He will not, he cannot break his word.

You know he had foreordained Jesus Christ, and set him forth to take upon himself this burden, to become a propitiation for sin through his blood, Romans 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:20, and made known his mind concerning it in his written word plainly, Isaiah 53:7. If we read the words, "it is exacted or strictly required," meaning the iniquity or punishment of us all, verse 6. It is required at his hands, he must answer it in our stead, and so he is afflicted, and this affliction reaches even to his death, verse 8. Therefore when Christ puts this work upon an *ought* and *must be*, he lays the weight of all on the Scriptures, "Thus it is written," as you may see in the texts lately cited; as if he should say, "God has spoken it, and his truth engages him to see it done." Just so, God has threatened to punish sin, and his truth engages him to see it done.

O sirs, there is no standing before that God that is "a consuming fire," a just judge, a holy God, except I have one to "undertake for me," Heb. 12:29, who is "mighty to save," Isaiah 63:1, and mighty to satisfy divine justice, and mighty to pacify divine wrath, and mighty to bear the threatenings, and mighty to forgive sin!

When God forgives sin, he does it in a way of righteousness, Isaiah 19:20. 1 John 1:9, "He is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He does not say he is *merciful*—but "*just*, to forgive us our sins;" because they are atoned and satisfied for, and God's justice will not let him demand the same debt twice—of the surety and of

the debtor also. It will never stand with the unspotted justice and righteousness of God, to require such debts of us, which Christ, by shedding his most precious blood, has discharged for us, Romans 3:25. Mark—the maledictory sentence of death, denounced by the law against sinners, was inflicted by God upon Christ. This is that which the prophet Isaiah positively asserts, where he says, "The chastisement," that is, the punishment (called a chastisement, because inflicted by a father, and only for a time,) "of our peace was upon him." And again, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted," Isaiah 53:5, 7; which, according to the genuine sense of the original, is better rendered, "It was exacted," that is, the punishment of our sin; and he was afflicted, or he answered, to the demand of the penalty.

"The curse to which we are subject," says Theodorus, "he assumed upon himself of his own accord." "The death that was not due to him—he underwent; that we might not undergo that death which was due to us," says Gregory. "He made himself a debtor for us, who were debtors; and therefore the creditor exacts it from him," says Arnoldus.

Now God's justice being satisfied for our offences, it cannot but remit those offences to us. As the creditor cannot demand that of the debtor which the surety has already paid—just so, neither can God exact the punishment of us which Christ has suffered; and therefore "it is just with God to forgive us our sins."

It will be altogether needless to inquire whether it had been injustice in God to forgive without payment and satisfaction. Austin's determination is very solid: "There was no lack in God to provide another possible way, and if it were unjust, it were impossible—but this way of satisfaction was most agreeable to divine wisdom. Before God did decree this way, it might be free to have used it or not—but in decreeing, this seemed most convenient, and after, it became necessary, so that there can be no remission without it; and however it might not have been unjust with God to have forgiven without it—yet we are sure it is most just with him to forgive upon satisfaction." [When you are forgiven, you are then released, and forever acquitted from any after-reckonings with the justice of God. Divine justice has no more to say or do against you, for, if the fault be forgiven, then also is the punishment forgiven; nay, let me speak

with a holy and humble reverence, God cannot in his justice punish—where he has first pardoned.]

Indeed, the debt being paid by Christ, God's very justice, as I may say with reverence, would trouble him if he should not give out an acquittance. The believing penitent sinner may, in a humble confidence, sue out his pardon, not only at the *throne of grace*—but at the *bar of justice*, in these or the like expressions: "Lord, you have punished my sins in your Son; will you punish them in me? You have accepted that suffering of your Son as the punishment of my sin, therefore you cannot in justice exact it of me; for this were to punish twice for one offence—which your justice cannot but abhor." O sirs! God does not pronounce men righteous when they are not—but first he makes them so, and then he pronounces them to be such; so that if a man will be justified, he must be able to produce such a complete righteousness wherewith he may stand before the justice of God. Ah sinners! the Lord is infinitely just, as well as merciful; and if ever your sins are pardoned, it must be by an admirable mixture of mercy and *justice* together. It was one of the great ends of the gospel dispensation that God might exalt his justice in the justification of a sinner: Romans 3:26, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." But,

**3. Thirdly, The only matter of man's righteousness, since the fall of Adam, wherein he can appear with comfort before the justice of God, and consequently whereby alone he can be justified in his sight—is the obedience and suffering of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of the mediator.** There is not any other way imaginable, how the justice of God may be satisfied, and we may have our sins pardoned in a way of justice—but by the righteousness of the Son of God; and therefore this is his name, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu, *the Lord our Righteousness*," Jer. 23:6. "This is his name," that is, this is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus, a matter that appertains to him alone, to be able to "bring in everlasting righteousness, and to make reconciliation for iniquity," Dan. 9:24.

The costly cloak of Alcisthenes, which Dionysius sold to the Carthaginians for an hundred talents, was indeed a base and beggarly

rag, compared to that embroidered mantle of Christ's righteousness, which he puts upon us. Isaiah 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and a bride adorns herself with her jewels." [It is a sign of great favor from the Great Turk, when a rich garment is cast upon any that come into his presence. —Knolles History. The application is easy.]

Christ's righteousness is that garment of wrought gold, which we all need, to cover all our imperfections, and to render us perfectly beautiful and glorious in the sight of God. [Psalm 45:13; Romans 5:19; Col. 2:10; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 14:5; Romans 3:21-22, 25-26.] In this robe of righteousness we are complete; we are without spot or wrinkle; we are without fault before the throne of God. Through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, we are made righteous in the sight of God. God looking upon us, as invested with the righteousness of his Son, accounts us righteous. All believers have a righteousness in Christ as full and complete, as if they had fulfilled the law. "Christ being the end of the law for righteousness to believers," Romans 8:3-4, invests believers with a righteousness every way as complete, as the personal obedience of the law would have invested them with.

When men had violated God's holy law, God in justice resolved that his law should be satisfied, before man should be saved. Now this was done by Christ, who was the end of the law; he fulfilled it actively and passively, and so the injury offered to the law is recompensed. God had rather that all men should be destroyed, than that his law should not be satisfied. No man can perfectly be justified in the sight of God without a perfect righteousness, every way commensurable to God's holy law, which is the rule of righteousness, "Do this and live." Neither can any person have any choice, spiritual, lively communion with a righteous God, until he is clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. All Christ's active and passive obedience was either for himself, or in our stead and behalf. But it was not for himself—but for us, that he suffered and obeyed. Whatever Christ did or suffered in the whole course of his life, he did it and suffered it as our surety, and in our steads. For as God would not

dispense with the penalty of the law without satisfaction, so he would not dispense with the commands of the law without perfect obedience.

Remember, once for all, that the *actions* and *sufferings* of Christ make but up one entire and perfect obedience to the whole law; nor had Christ been a perfect and complete Savior, if he had not performed what the law required, as well as suffered the penalty which the law inflicted. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us is a gracious act of God the Father, according to his good will and pleasure, whereby as a judge, he accounts believers' sins unto the surety, as if he had committed the same; and the righteousness of Christ unto the believer, as if he had performed the same obedience which Christ did in his own person. So Christ's imputed righteousness is as effectual to the full, for the acceptance of the believing sinner, as if he had yielded such obedience to the Lord himself. Hence *his* righteousness is called "*our* righteousness," Jer. 23:6. Now without this righteousness there is no standing with acceptance, before the justice of God. But,

**4. Fourthly, As this great design of Christ's redeeming sinners by his blood and sufferings, and by his being made a curse for them, does sound aloud the glory of divine JUSTICE, and the glory of God's VERACITY—so it sounds forth the glory of his WISDOM; for hereby he maintains the authority of his righteous law.** [Solon, that wise lawmaker, could never find out a law to put all other good laws in execution—but such as are living laws, will make the laws to live: and will not the wise and living God make his laws and threatenings to live? Surely he will.] When a law is solemnly enacted, with a penalty in case of transgression, all those whom it concerns may conclude for certain, that the lawgiver will proceed accordingly; and it is a rule in policy, that laws once established and published, should be vigorously preserved. If the Lord should have wholly waived the execution of the law upon sinners or their surety, it might have tended greatly to the weakening of its authority, and the diminishing of the reverence of his sovereignty in the hearts of the sons of men. How often does God use that oath, "As surely as I live," for the fulfilling of his *threatenings* as well as of his *promises*, Jer. 22:24, and Ezek. 5:9-11. The Lord Jehovah is as true, faithful, and constant in his *threatenings* as he is

in his *promises*. What he has threatened shall undoubtedly come to pass; he will be made known by his name *Jehovah* in the full execution of all his threatenings. The old world found it so, and Jerusalem found it so; yes, the whole nation of the Jews have found it so to this very day, see Ezek. 5:13, 15.

Look, as all the saints in heaven will readily put to their seals, that God is true and faithful in all his *promises*; just so, all the damned in hell will readily put to their seals, that God is faithful in all his *threatenings*. Men frequently deride the laws and threatenings of great men, when they are not put into execution. It is the *execution* of laws, which is the very life and soul of good laws, Eccles. 8:11. Should God pardon sin, without exacting the penalty of the law, how would sinners be hardened, and emboldened to say, with those men, or rather monsters, in Malachi 2:17, "Where is the God of justice?" That is, nowhere; either there is no God, or at least not a God of that exact, precise, and impartial justice, as some men say and as others teach. But now when God lets sinners see that he will not pardon sin without exacting the penalty of the law, either of the sinner or of his surety, then the sinner cries out, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Romans 11:33.

God stood so much upon the complete satisfaction and accomplishment of his law, that he was willing that Christ should be a sacrifice—that the law might be satisfied in its penalty; and that Christ in his own person should fulfill the righteousness of the law—that it might be satisfied in its commands, Romans 8:3-5. Now in this full satisfaction made to the law, the wisdom of God does gloriously shine. The heart of God was so set upon a full satisfaction to his law, that rather than it should not be done, his own Son must come from heaven and put on flesh, and be himself made under the law, Gal. 4:4-5; he must live a holy life, and die a cursed death—and all to satisfy the law, and to keep up the authority of it. But,

**5. Fifthly, God does stand upon full satisfaction, and will not forgive one sin without it, that he might hereby cut off all occasions, which the devil, his arch-enemy, might take to calumniate and traduce him; for if God did not stand upon full satisfaction, the devil might accuse him—**

(1.) of inconstancy and changeableness, that having threatened death to transgressors, he did quite forget himself, in waiving the threatening, and dispensing wholly with his law, by granting them free remission; yes,

(2.) of partiality and respect of people, that he should be so easy and forbearing, as to let them pass without any punishment at all; having been formerly so severe and rigid against Satan himself, in casting him and his angels down to hell, and keeping them in everlasting flames and chains of darkness, without the least hope of recovery, 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6. Satan might say, "Lord, you might have spared me, as well as man!" But the Lord can now answer, "Man has made satisfaction, he has borne the curse, and thereby fully discharged all the demands of the law; if he had not, I would no more have spared him than you!"

Ambrose brings in the devil boasting against Christ, and challenging Judas as his own; "he is not yours, Lord Jesus, he is mine, his thoughts beat for me; he eats with you—but is fed by me; he takes bread from you—but money from me; he drinks with you—but sells your blood to me." Had God pardoned sin without satisfaction, ah how would Satan have boasted and triumphed over God himself But,

**6. Sixthly, God's standing upon full satisfaction, and his not forgiving one sin without it, bears a visible character of his goodness and loving-kindness, as well as it sounds out aloud the glory of divine justice.** "The great and the holy God, whose name is holy," Exod. 15:1, 11, might have rigorously exacted the penalty of the law on the persons of sinners themselves—but he has so far dispensed with his own law, as to admit of a surety, by whom the end of the law, that is, the manifestation of his justice and hatred of sin, might be fulfilled, and yet a considerable part of mankind might be preserved from the jaws of the second death, which otherwise must unavoidably have perished to all eternity, Rev. 20:6. God seems to speak at such a rate as this, "I may not, I will not, allow this high affront of Adam and his posterity against my 'holy and righteous law,' Romans 7:12, 14, whereby the honor both of my justice and truth is in danger to be trampled underfoot. And yet if I should let out all my wrath upon them, they would never be able to stand under it." Psalm 78:38; Isaiah 57:16. "I will therefore let out all my wrath upon their surety, and he shall bear it for them, that they may be

delivered!" And thus the Lord "in wrath remembers mercy," Hab. 3:2. But,

**7. Seventhly, We can receive no benefit by the righteousness of Christ for justification in the sight of God, nor can we be pardoned and accepted thereupon, until that righteousness become ours, and is made over unto us.** How can we plead this righteousness before God, unless we have an interest in this righteousness? Isaiah 45:24-25. How can we rejoice and triumph in this righteousness, if this righteousness is not made ours? How can we have peace with God, and boldness at the throne of grace, through this righteousness, except we can lay claim to this righteousness? How can we conclude that we are happy and blessed upon the account of this righteousness, except it be made over to us? [2 Cor. 2:14; Gal. 6:14; Romans 5:1; Heb. 4:15-16; Psalm 32:1-2; Romans 4:7-11; Romans 4:8. If Christ's obedience is imputed to us, it must be so imputed as to be our righteousness before God; no imputation below this will serve our turns, cheer our hearts, and save our souls. Rev. 14:8; Isaiah 63:1; Rev. 3:18.]

There are none of us, who have such an inherent righteousness in ourselves, which we dare plead before the bar of God. And though God has provided such a glorious robe of righteousness for poor sinners, as is the wonder and amazement of angels—yet what would all this avail the poor sinner, if this righteousness be not made over to him? O sirs! remember this, Christ's righteousness must be yours—it must be made over to you, or else it will never stand you in good stead. Romans 5:17, "For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in glory by one, Jesus Christ." Except they receive the righteousness of Christ, it is nothing to them. Christ's righteousness is in itself white raiment, and beautiful and glorious apparel—but it will never cover our nakedness, except it be put on, and we are clothed with it. It must be made over to us, or we can never be justified by it. 1 Cor. 1:30, "He is made to us righteousness;" if he is not made to us righteousness, we shall never be righteous. Though man has lost a righteousness to be justified by—yet there is an absolute necessity of having one. God cannot love nor delight in anything but righteousness. God is a holy God, a righteous God,

and therefore can only love and take pleasure in those who are righteous, both by a righteousness imputed, and a *righteousness imparted*. Isaiah 45:24, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" verse 25, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory;" Isaiah 54:17, "Their righteousness is of me, says the Lord." Psalm 71:16, "I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours alone." Look, as no man can be made rich by another man's riches, except they are made his; so no man can be made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, except his righteousness be made over to him; hence he is called, "The Lord our Righteousness," Jer. 23:6; and hence we are said to be "the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. 5:21; hence we are said "by his obedience to be made righteous," 2 Cor. 5:21.

**8. Eighthly and lastly, The way whereby this righteousness of God's providing is conveyed and made over to us, that we may receive the benefit thereof, and be justified thereby—it is by way of IMPUTATION.** The meaning is this: God does reckon the righteousness of Christ unto his people—as if it were their own. He does count unto them Christ's sufferings and satisfaction, and makes them partakers of the virtue thereof—as if themselves had suffered and satisfied. This is the genuine and proper import of the word imputation, when that which is personally done by one, is accounted and reckoned to another, and laid upon his score—as if he had done it. [Romans 3:21, and Isaiah 53. Imputed righteousness seems to be prefigured by the skins wherewith the Lord, after the fall, clothed our first parents. The bodies of the animals were for sacrifice, and the skins, to put them in mind that their own righteousness was like the fig leaves, imperfect, and that therefore they must be justified another way.]

Thus it is in this very case: we sinned and fell short of the glory of God, and became liable to the vindictive justice of God; and the Lord Jesus Christ, by his obedience and death, has given full satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf. Now when God does pardon and accept us hereupon, he does put it upon our account, he does reckon or impute it unto us as fully, in respect of the benefit thereof—as if we ourselves had performed it in our own persons. And this is the way wherein the Holy Spirit frequently expresses it: Romans 4:6, "Even as David also describes

the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works;" and verse 11, "That righteousness might be imputed to them also." And therefore it highly concerns us to mind this scripture rule, that in order to the satisfaction of the justice of God, the sins of God's people were imputed and reckoned unto Christ. And in order to our partaking of the benefit of that satisfaction, or deliverance thereby, Christ's righteousness must be imputed and reckoned unto us.

The first branch of this rule you have, Isaiah 53:5-6, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," etc., and "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." And for the other branch of the rule, see Romans 5:19, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" verse 17, "As by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." From the comparison between the first and second Adam, it is evident that as Adam's transgression of the law of God is imputed to all his posterity, and that in respect thereof they are reputed sinners, and accursed and liable to eternal death; so also Christ's obedience, whereby he fulfilled the law, is so imputed to the members of his mystical body, that in regard of God, they stand as innocent, justified and accepted to eternal life.

Look, as Adam was the common root of all mankind, and so his sin is imputed to all his posterity; just so, Jesus Christ is the common root of all the faithful, and his obedience is imputed to them all. For it would be ridiculous to say that Adam's sin had more power to condemn, than Christ's righteousness has to save. And who but fools in folio will say that God does not impute Christ's righteousness, as well as Adam's sin? The apostle's parallel between the two Adams does clearly evidence that as the guilt of Adam's disobedience is really imputed to us, insomuch that in his sinning we all sin; just so, the obedience of Christ is as really imputed unto us, insomuch that in his obeying, imputatively and legally we obey also.

How did Adam's sin become ours? Why, by way of imputation. He transgressed the covenant, and did eat the forbidden fruit, and it was justly reckoned unto us. It was personally the sinful act of our first parent

—but it is imputed to all of us who come out of his loins; for we were in him not only naturally, as he was the root of mankind—but also legally, as he was the great representative of mankind. In the covenant of works, and the transactions thereof, Adam stood in the stead, and acted in the behalf, not only of himself—but of all his posterity, and therefore his sin is reckoned unto them. Even so, after the same manner, the obedience and righteousness of Christ is made over to many for justification. I cannot understand the analogy between the two Adams, wherein the apostle is so clear and full, unless this imputation, as here stated, is granted.

Look, as Christ was made sin for us only by imputation, so we are made righteous only by the imputation of his righteousness to us, as the Scripture everywhere evidences, 1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21, "He has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." How was Christ made sin for us? Not sin inherent, for he had no sin in him; he was "holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," Heb. 7:26—but by imputation. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, in that way wherein our sin was imputed to him. Now our sin was imputed to Christ, not only in the bitter effects of it—but he took the guilt of them upon himself, as I have in this treatise already evidenced; so, then, his righteousness or active obedience itself must be proportionably imputed to us, and not only in the effects thereof. The mediatorial righteousness of Christ can only become the believer's, only as the first Adam's disobedience became his posterity's, who never had the least actual share in his transgression; that is, by an act of imputation from God as a judge. The Lord Jesus having fulfilled the law as a second Adam, God the Father imputes it to the believing soul, as if he had done it in his own person. I do not say that God the Father does account the sinner to have done it—but I say that God the Father does impute it to the believing sinner—as if he had done it, unto all saving intents and purposes. Hence Christ is called "the Lord our Righteousness," Jer. 23:6.

An awakened soul, who is truly sensible of his own baseness and unrighteousness, would not have this golden sentence, "The Lord our Righteousness," blotted by a hand of heaven out of the Bible, for as many worlds as there are men in the world. Just so, is that text to a believer,

living and dying, a strong cordial, namely, 1 Cor. 1:30, "Christ Jesus is made unto us of God wisdom, righteousness," etc. [In 1 Cor. 1:30, the apostle (1.) distinguishes righteousness from sanctification, imputed righteousness from inherent righteousness; (2.) he says that Christ's righteousness is made ours of God. See Romans 4:6; Psalm 71:16.]

And pray how is Christ made righteousness to the believer? Not by *infusion*—but *imputation*; not by putting righteousness into him—but by putting a righteousness upon him, even his own righteousness, by the imputing his merits, his satisfaction, his obedience unto them, through which they are accepted as righteous unto eternal life, Romans 5:19. Christ's righteousness is his in respect of his inherent nature—but it is ours in respect of imputation; his righteousness is his personally—but ours meritoriously; we are justified by another's righteousness, and that alone—by imputed righteousness; for another's righteousness can no other way be made ours—but only by imputation. Romans 5:18, "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification." Were it any other than imputed righteousness, it would be as manifold a righteousness as there are people justified—but it is said to be "the righteousness of one, which comes upon all men for justification of life."

That is a choice word that you have in Rev. 19:8, "And to her," that is, Christ's spouse, "was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." The Greek word here is "righteousnesses" or "justifications." This, say some, signifies a double righteousness given to us—

(1.) The righteousness of justification, whereby we are justified before God.

(2.) The righteousness of sanctification, by which we evidence our justification to men.

But others say it is a Hebraism rather, by the plural righteousnesses noting the most absolute, complete, and perfect righteousness which we have in Christ. [So the Hebrew word is used, Isaiah 45:24.] Now though I would not exclude inherent righteousness—yet I judge that imputed righteousness is the righteousness here meant; and that,

(1.) Because this clothing is that which is the righteousness of all saints, by which they stand before God. Now there is no standing before God in our inherent righteousness; for though, next to Christ, our graces are our best jewels—yet they are but weak and imperfect, they have their specks and spots, they are like the moon, which, when it shines brightest—yet has her black spots. [Psalm 76:7, and 143:2; Job 9:15, 22:2-4, and 35:7. The saints are said (Rev. 7:15) to be clothed in white robes, not because they had merited, or adorned themselves with good works—but because they had washed and made white their robes in the blood of the Lamb.]

(2.) Christ's righteousness is the only pure, clean, white, spotless righteousness. There is no speck or spot to be found upon Christ's righteousness—but "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," as that evangelical prophet speaks, Isaiah 64:6, 3. The word here is plural, "righteousnesses." Christ has many righteousnesses—

First, He has his essential and personal righteousness as God. Now this essential personal righteousness of Christ cannot be imputed to us. Osiander was of opinion that men were justified by the essential righteousness of Christ as God, which was a most dangerous opinion, and learnedly and largely confuted by Calvin in his Institutions, and by others since.

Secondly, There is the mediatory righteousness of Christ. Now this is that righteousness which he wrought for us as mediator, whereby he did subject himself to the precepts, to the penalties, commands and curses, answering both God's vindictive and rewarding justice. There is Christ's *active* righteousness, and there is Christ's *passive* righteousness, etc. Of these I have spoken already in this treatise, and therefore a hint here is enough.

Thirdly, There are some expressions in the text which is under consideration that do best agree with the righteousness of Christ; as first that, "that she is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." This clearly points at imputed righteousness, which Christ puts upon his bride as a royal robe. That which makes Christ's bride beautiful, yes, whiter than the snow, and more glorious than the sun in his eyes, is not any beauty of

her own, nor any inherent righteousness in herself—but the white robe of Christ's own righteousness, which he puts upon her. Second, that expression in the text, "to her it was *granted*, that she should be arrayed in fine linen," etc. "It was granted to her," to show that this fine linen was none of her own spinning, it was a free gift of Christ unto her. Saints have no other righteousness, to make them lovely and acceptable in the eyes of God—but the robe of Christ's righteousness, which is that fine white linen, which Christ gives them, and which he puts upon them. Lastly, observe the confirmation and ratification that is given to these words in the 9th verse, "Write, these are the true sayings of God." These are not my sayings, nor the sayings of angels—but they are the sayings of that God who is truth itself, who cannot die, nor lie, nor deny himself, nor deceive the sons of God. And therefore you may safely rest upon these sayings of God, both in the 8th and 9th verses, as most sure and certain.

Surely the righteousness which the believer has is imputed; it is an accounted or reckoned righteousness to him; it is not that which he has inherently in himself—but God through Christ does esteem of him as if he had it, and so deals with him as wholly righteous—

(1.) It stands with reason that that satisfaction should be imputed to me, which my surety has made for my debt. Now Christ was our surety, as the apostle calls him, Heb. 7:22.

(2.) Adam's sin was justly imputed by God to all his posterity, though it was not their own inherently and actually, as the apostle tells us, Romans 5:14. All the sins of all the elect were imputed unto Christ, though they were not his own inherently and actually. "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," says the apostle, 2 Cor. 5:21; and "upon him was laid the iniquity of us all," Isaiah 53:6. [This must be Luther's meaning when he says, Christ was the greatest sinner; he was Manasseh that idolater, David that adulterer, Peter that denier of his Master, etc., namely, by imputation only, he being made sin for them, as the apostle speaks.]

All the sins of all the believers in the world, from the first creation to the last judgment, were laid on him. How were they laid on him—but by imputation? Surely there was in Christ no fundamental guilt! No, no—but he was made sin by imputation and law-account; he was our surety, and

so our sins were laid on him in order to punishment. And to prefigure this, all the iniquities of God's people were imputed to their sacrifice, though they were not inherently his own, as we read, Lev. 16:21, 22, "Aaron shall put all the iniquities of all the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins, upon the head of the goat; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities." And why then should it seem strange that the perfect righteousness of our sacrifice and surety, though it be not our own inherently, should be imputed to us by the Lord, and made ours? [To impute in the general, is to acknowledge that to be another's, which is not indeed his. It is used either in a good or bad sense, so that it is no more than to account or reckon. It is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and accepted for us, by which we are judged righteous.]

Frequently and seriously consider that the word answering this imputing is in the Hebrew and in the Greek, of which the sum, as the learned say, comes to this—that though the words in the general signify to think, to reason, to imagine, etc.—yet very frequently they are used to signify to account or reckon, by way of computation, as arithmeticians use to do, so that it is, as it were, a judgment passed upon a thing when all reasons and arguments are cast together. And from this it is applied to signify any kind of accounting or reckoning; and in this sense imputation is taken here for God's esteeming and accounting of us righteous; the Hebrew signifies to reckon or account.

It is taken by a borrowed speech from merchants' reckonings and accounts, who have their debt-books, wherein they set down how their reckonings stand in the particulars they deal in. Now, in such debt-books merchants use to set down whatever payments are made, either by the debtors themselves, or by others in the behalf of them. An example whereof we have in the Epistle of Philemon, verse 18, where Paul undertakes to Philemon for Onesimus, "If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, put that on my account;" that is, account Onesimus his debt to Paul, and Paul's satisfaction or payment to Onesimus, which answers the double imputation in point of justification; that is, of our sins to Christ, and of Christ's satisfaction to us, Psalm 32:1-2; both which are implied, 2 Cor. 5:21, "He made him to be sin for us;" that is, our sins were

imputed to him, "that we might be the righteousness of God in him;" that is, that his righteousness might be imputed to us. The language of Jesus Christ to his Father seems to be this, 'O holy Father, I have freely and willingly taken all the debts and all the sins of all the believers in the world upon me; I have undertaken to be their paymaster, to satisfy your justice, to pacify your wrath, to fulfill your law, etc. And therefore, lo, here I am, ready to do whatever you command, and ready to suffer whatever you please. I am willing to be reckoned a sinner, that they may be reckoned righteous. I am willing to be accounted cursed, that they may be forever blessed. I am willing to pay all their debts, that they may be set at liberty. I am willing to lay down my life, that they may escape the second death. I am willing that my soul should be exercised with the most hideous agonies, that their souls may be possessed of heaven's happinesses!" Psalm 40:6-8; Heb. 10:4-9; John 10:11, 15, 17-18; Rev. 20:6. Oh, what wonderful wisdom, grace, and love is here manifested! that when we were neither able to satisfy the penalty of the law, or to bring a conformity to it—that then Christ should interpose, and become both redemption and righteousness for us!

Now, from the imputed righteousness of Christ, a believer may form up this fifth plea, as to all these ten scriptures—that refer to the great day of account: [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:3; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] "O blessed God, you have given me to understand that the mediatorial righteousness of Christ includes, first, the habitual holiness of his person, in the absence of all sin, and in the rich and plentiful presence of all holy and requisite qualities; secondly, the actual holiness of his life and death by obedience. By his *active* obedience--he perfectly fulfilled the commands of the law; and by his *passive* obedience, his voluntary sufferings—he satisfied the penalty and demands of the law for transgressions. That perfect satisfaction to divine justice, in whatever it requires, either in the way of punishing for sin, or obedience to the law, made by the Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, the mediator of the new covenant, as a common head, representing all those whom the Father has given to him, and made over unto those who believe in him. This is that righteousness which is imputed to all believers in their justification, and this imputed righteousness of your dear Son and my dear Savior, is now my plea before

your bar of justice."

Imputed righteousness is the same materially with that which the law requires. It is obedience to the law of God, exactly and punctually performed, to the very utmost iota and tittle thereof. Without the least abatement, Christ has paid the uttermost farthing. He is the fulfilling of the law for righteousness, and he has fulfilled the law in the human nature, to the intent that it might be fulfilled in the same nature to which it was at first given; and all this he has expressly done in all their names, and on all their behalfs—who believe in him, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in them," Romans 8:3-4. [The righteousness which the law requires, upon pain of damnation, is a perfect obedience and conformity to the whole law of God, performed by every son and daughter of Adam in his own person. Now imputed righteousness is the same materially with that which the law requires.]

It is as if our dear Lord Jesus had said, "O blessed Father, this I suffer, and this I do—in the stead and room of all those who have ventured their souls upon me, that they may have a righteousness which they may truly call their own, and on which they may safely rest, and in which they may forever glory." Isaiah 45:24-25. Now it will never stand with the unspotted holiness, justice, and righteousness of God, to reject this righteousness of his Son, or that plea which is founded upon it. Oh, the matchless happiness of believers, who have so fair, so full, and so noble a plea to make in the great day of our Lord Jesus!

### **Nine choice consolations of justification**

**QUESTION.** But some may say, What blessed **fruit** grows upon this glorious tree of paradise—namely, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to all believers? What strong **consolations** flow from this fountain—the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ? I answer, there are these *nine choice consolations*, which flow in upon all believers, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to them—

**1. First, Let all believers know for their comfort, that in this imputed righteousness of Christ—there is enough to satisfy the justice of God to the uttermost farthing, and to take off all his judicial anger and fury.** The mediatorial righteousness of Christ is so perfect, so full, so exact, so complete, and so fully satisfactory to the justice of God, as that divine justice cries out, "I have enough, and I require no more! I have found a ransom, and I am fully pacified towards you!" Ezek. 16:61-63; Heb. 10:10-12, 14; Isaiah 53:4-6.

It is certain that Christ was truly and properly a sacrifice for sin; and it is as certain that our sins were the meritorious cause of his sufferings. He did put himself into poor sinners' stead, he took their guilt upon him, and did undergo that punishment which they should have undergone. He died, and shed his blood, that he might thereby atone God and expiate sin, Romans 5:6-12. And therefore we may safely and boldly conclude, that Jesus Christ has satisfied the justice of God to the uttermost; so that now the believing sinner may rejoice and triumph in the *justice*, as well as in the *mercy* of God, Heb. 7:25; for doubtless the mediatorial righteousness of Christ was infinitely more satisfactory and pleasing to God, than all the sins of believers could be displeasing to him. God took more pleasure and delight in the bruising of his Son, in the humiliation of his Son, and he smelt a sweeter savor in his sacrifice—than all our sins could possibly offend him or provoke him, Isaiah 53:10.

When a believer casts his eyes upon his many thousand sinful commissions and omissions, no wonder if he fears and trembles! But then, when he looks upon Christ's satisfaction, he may see himself acquitted, and rejoice! For if there is no charge, no accusation against the Lord Jesus, there can be none against the believer, Romans 8:33-37. Christ's expiatory sacrifice has fully satisfied divine justice; and upon that very ground every believer has cause to triumph in Christ Jesus, and in that righteousness of his by which he stands justified before the throne of God! 2 Cor. 2:14; Rev. 14:4-5. Christ is a person of infinite, transcendent worth and excellency, and it makes highly for his honor to justify believers, in the most ample and glorious way imaginable, etc. And what way is that—but by working out for them, and then investing them with, a righteousness adequate to the law of God; a righteousness that should be

every way commensurate to the miserable estate of fallen man, and to the holy design of the glorious God.

It is the high honor of the second Adam that he has restored to fallen man a more glorious righteousness than that he lost in the first Adam. And it would be high blasphemy, in the eyes of angels and men, for any mortal to assert that the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, was less powerful to save, than the first Adam was to destroy. The second Adam is "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through him," Heb. 7:25. "The second Adam is able to save to all ends and purposes perfectly," says Beza. "He is able to save perpetually, or forever," says Tremellius. [He is able to save to the uttermost—of time, at all times, and forever, etc.] He is able to save to the uttermost obligation of the law, preceptive, as well as penal; and to bring in perfect righteousness, as well as perfect innocency. He is able to save to the uttermost demand of divine justice, by that perfect satisfaction that he has given to divine justice.

"Christ is mighty to save," Isaiah 63:1; and as he is mighty to save, so he loves to save poor sinners, in such a way wherein he may most magnify his own might; and therefore he will purchase their pardon with his blood, 1 Pet. 1:18-19, and make reparation to divine justice for all the wrongs and injuries which fallen man had done to his Creator and his royal law; and bestow upon him a better righteousness than that which Adam lost; and bring him into a more safe, high, honorable, and durable estate than that which Adam fell from when he was in his created perfection. All the *attributes* of God do acquiesce in the imputed righteousness of Christ, so that a believer may look upon the holiness, justice, and righteousness of God, and rejoice, and lay himself down in peace.

I have read in story, that Pilate being called to Rome, to give an account unto the emperor for some misgovernment and mal-administration, he put on the seamless coat of Christ; and all the time that he had that coat upon his back, Caesar's fury was abated. Christ has put his coat, his robe of righteousness, upon every believer, Isaiah 61:10; upon which account all the judicial anger, wrath, and fury of God towards believers ceases! Isaiah 54:10, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed—but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of

my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." But,

**2. Secondly, Know for your comfort, that this imputed, this mediatorial righteousness of Christ—takes away all your unrighteousness.** It cancels every bond; it takes away all iniquity, and answers for all your sins, Isaiah 53:5-7; Col. 2:12-15. "Lord, here are my sins of omission, and here are my sins of commission—but the righteousness of Christ has answered for them all. Here are my sins against the law, and here are my sins against the gospel, and here are my sins against the offers of grace, the strivings of grace, the affections of grace—but the righteousness of Christ has answered for them all."

I have read that when a cordial was offered to a godly man who was sick, "Oh," said he, "the cordial of cordials which I daily take is—that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all our sins!" 1 John 1:7. O sirs! it would be high blasphemy for any to imagine that there should be more demerit in any sin, yes, in all sin, to condemn a believer; than there is merit in Christ's righteousness to absolve him, to justify him, Romans 8:1, 33-35. The righteousness of Christ was shadowed out by the glorious robes and apparel of the high priest, Exod. 30. That attire in which the high priest appeared before God—what was it, but a type of Christ's righteousness? The filthy garments of Joshua, who represented the church, were not only taken off from him, thereby signifying the removal of our sins, Zech. 3:4-5—but also a new, lovely garment was put upon him, to signify our being clothed with the wedding-garment of Christ's righteousness.

If any shall say, "How is it possible that a soul which is defiled with the worst of sins, should be whiter than the snow, yes, beautiful and glorious in the eyes of God?" Psalm 51:7. The answer is at hand, because to whoever the Lord gives the pardon of his sins, which is the first part of our justification; to them he also imputes the righteousness of Christ, which is the second part of our justification before God. Thus David describes, says the apostle, "the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works; saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered," Romans 4:6, 7. Now to that man whose sins the Lord forgives—to him he does impute righteousness also: "Take off his filthy clothes," says the Lord of Joshua; "and he said unto him, See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich

garments on you." Zech. 3:4. And what was that rich garment? Surely the perfect obedience and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, which God does impute unto us; in which respect also we are said, by justifying faith, to put on the Lord Jesus, Romans 13:14; and to be clothed with him as with a garment, Gal. 3:27. And no marvel if, being so appareled, we appear beautiful and glorious in the sight of God! "To her," that is, Christ's bride, "was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints," Rev. 19:8. This perfect righteousness of Christ, which the Lord imputes to us, and wherewith, as with a garment, he clothes us, is the only righteousness which the saints have to stand before God with; and having that robe of righteousness on, they may stand with great boldness and comfort before the judgment-seat of God. But,

**3. Thirdly, Know for your comfort, that this righteousness of Christ, presents us perfectly righteous in the sight of God.** "He is made to us righteousness," 1 Cor. 1:30. The robe of innocency, like the veil of the temple, is rent asunder; our righteousness is a ragged righteousness, our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:4. Look, as under rags the naked body is seen, so under the rags of our righteousnesses the body of death is seen. Christ is all in all in regard of righteousness. Christ is "the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe," Romans 10:4.

That is, through Christ we are as righteous as if we had satisfied the law in our own persons. The end of the law is to justify and save those who fulfill it. Christ subjected himself thereto; he perfectly fulfilled it for us, and his perfect righteousness is imputed to us. Christ fulfilled the moral law, not for himself—but for us; therefore Christ doing it for believers, they fulfill the law in Christ. And so Christ by doing, and they believing in him who does it, do fulfill the law. Or Christ may be said to be the end of the law, because the end of the law is perfect righteousness, that a man may be justified thereby, which end we cannot attain of ourselves, through the frailty of our flesh—but by Christ we attain it, who has fulfilled the law for us. Christ has perfectly fulfilled the decalog for us, and that three ways:

(1.) In his pure conception.

(2.) In his godly life.

(3.) In his holy and obedient sufferings. And he did this all for us. For whatever the law required that we should be, do, or suffer—he has performed in our behalf. We are discharged by him before God. Christ, in respect of the integrity and purity of his nature, being conceived without sin, Mat. 1:18; and in respect of his life and actions, being wholly conformed to the absolute righteousness of the law, Luke 1:35; and in respect of the punishment which he suffered, to make satisfaction unto God's justice for the breach of the law, 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:20. In these respects Christ is the perfection of the law, and "the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe." Jacob got the blessing in the garment of his elder brother; so in the garment of Christ's righteousness, who is our elder brother, we obtain the blessing; yes, "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," Eph. 1:4. We are made "the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. 5:21.

"The church," says Marorate, "which puts on Christ, and his righteousness, is more illustrious than the air is by the sun." The infinite wisdom and power of dear Jesus in reconciling the law and the gospel, in this great mystery of justification, is greatly to be magnified. In the blessed Scriptures we find the righteousness of justification to take its various names. In respect of the *material* cause, it is called the righteousness of the law, Romans 5:17. In respect of the *efficient* cause, it is called the righteousness of Christ, 1 Cor. 1:30. In respect of the *formal* cause, it is called the righteousness of God, he imputing of it, Romans 3:22. In respect of the *instrumental* cause, it is called the righteousness of faith, Phil. 3:9. In respect of the *moving* and *final* cause, we are said to be justified freely by grace, Romans 3:24; Titus 3:7.

The law, as it was a covenant of works, required exact and perfect obedience, in men's proper persons; this was *legal* justification. But in the new covenant, God is contented to accept this righteousness in the hand of a surety, and this is *evangelical* justification. This righteousness presents us in the sight of God as "all fair," Cant. 4:7; as "complete," Col. 2:10; as "without spot or wrinkle," Eph. 5:27; as "without fault before the throne of God," Rev. 14:5; as "holy, and unblamably, and unreprouvable in

his sight," Col. 1:22. Oh, the happiness and blessedness, the safety and glory—of those precious souls, who, in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, stand perfectly righteous in the sight of God! But,

**4. Fourthly, Know for your comfort, that this imputed righteousness of Christ will answer to all the fears, doubts, and objections of your souls.** How shall I look up to God? The answer is—in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. How shall I have any communion with a holy God in this world? The answer is—in the righteousness of Christ. How shall I find acceptance with God? The answer is—in the righteousness of Christ. How shall I die? The answer is—in the righteousness of Christ. How shall I stand before the judgment-seat? The answer is—in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Your sure and only way, under all temptations, fears, conflicts, doubts, and disputes, is, by faith, to remember Christ, and the sufferings of Christ, as your mediator and surety; and say, "O Christ, you are my *sin*, in being made sin for me, 2 Cor. 5:21; and you are my *curse*, being made a curse for me, Gal. 3:13. Or rather, I am your sin, and you are my righteousness. I am your curse, and you are my blessing. I am your death, and you are my life. I am the wrath of God to you, and you are the love of God to me. I am your hell, and you are my heaven.

O sirs! if you think of your sins, and of God's wrath; if you think of your guiltiness, and of God's justice—your hearts will faint and fail; they will fear and tremble and sink into despair—if you do not think of Christ, if you do not stay and rest your souls upon the mediatorial righteousness of Christ, the imputed righteousness of Christ. The imputed righteousness of Christ answers all cavils and objections, though there were millions of them, which can be made against the good estate of a believer. This is a precious truth, more worth than a world—that all our sins are pardoned, not only in a way of *truth* and *mercy*—but in a way of *justice*. Satan and our own consciences will object many things against our souls, if we plead only the mercy and the truth of God; and they will be ready to say, "Oh—but where is then the *justice* of God? Can *mercy* pardon without the consent of his *justice*? But now, while we rest upon the satisfaction of Christ, "justice and mercy kiss each other," Psalm 85:10; yes, justice says, "I am pleased!"

In a day of temptation, many things will be cast in our dish, about the multitude of our sins, and the greatness of our sins, and the grievousness of our sins, and about the circumstances and aggravations of our sins—but that good word, "Christ has redeemed us from all iniquities," he has paid the full price that justice could exact or require; and that good word, "Mercy rejoices against judgment," James 2:13, may support, comfort, and bear us up under all!

The infinite worth of Christ's obedience, did arise from the dignity of his *person*, who was God-man; so that all the obedience of angels and men, if put together, could not amount to the excellency of Christ's satisfaction! The righteousness of Christ, is often called the righteousness of *God*, because it is a righteousness of God's providing, and a righteousness that God is fully satisfied with; and therefore, no fears, no doubts, no cavils, no objections, no disputes, can stand before this blessed and glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to us. But,

**5. Fifthly, Know for your comfort, that the imputed righteousness of Christ is the best title that you have to show,** for "a kingdom that shakes not, for riches that corrupt not, for an inheritance that fades not away, and for an house not made with hands—but one eternal in the heavens," Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:1-4. It is the fairest certificate that you have to show for all that happiness and blessedness that you look for, in that other world. The righteousness of Christ is your life, your joy, your comfort, your crown, your confidence, your heaven—your all. Oh, that you were still so wise as to keep a fixed eye and an awakened heart, upon the mediatorial righteousness of Christ; for that is the righteousness by which you may safely and comfortably live, and by which you may happily and quietly die. It was a very sweet and golden confession, which Bernard made, when he thought himself to be at the point of death. "I confess," said he, "I am not worthy, I have no merits of mine own to obtain heaven by—but my Lord had a double right thereunto; an hereditary right as a Son, and a meritorious right as a sacrifice. He was contented with the one right himself, the other right he has given unto me; by the virtue of which gift I do rightly lay claim unto it, and am not confounded."

Ah, that believers would dwell much upon this—that they have a

righteousness in Christ, which is as full, perfect, and complete, as if they had fulfilled the law. "Christ being the end of the law for righteousness to believers," invests believers with a righteousness, every way as complete, as the personal obedience of the law would have invested them with, Romans 8:3-4. Yes, the righteousness that believers have by Christ is, in some respect, better than that they would have had by Adam:

(1.) Because of the dignity of Christ's person, he being the Son of God, his righteousness is more glorious than Adam's was; his righteousness is called "The righteousness of God;" and we are made the "righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. 5:21. The first Adam was a mere man, the second Adam is God and man.

(2.) Because the righteousness is perpetual. Adam was a mutable person, he lost his righteousness in one day, say some, and all that glory which his posterity should have possessed, had he stood fast in innocency. But the righteousness of Christ cannot be lost. His righteousness is like himself, from everlasting to everlasting. It is an everlasting righteousness, Dan. 9:24. When once this white raiment is put upon a believer, it can never fall off, it can never be taken off. This splendid glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ's, is as really a believer's, as if he had wrought it himself, Rev. 19:8. A believer is no loser—but a gainer, by Adam's fall. By the loss of Adam's righteousness is brought to light, a more glorious and durable righteousness than ever Adam's was; and upon the account of an interest in this righteousness, a believer may claim all the glory of that upper world as his own. But,

**6. Sixthly, Know for your comfort, that this imputed righteousness of Christ is the only true basis, foundation, and ground—for a believer to build his happiness upon, his joy and comfort upon, and the true peace and quiet of his conscience upon.** What though Satan, or your own heart, or the world, condemns you; yet in this you may rejoice—that God justifies you. You see what a bold challenge Paul makes, Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God who justifies." Some read it question-wise, thus, "Shall God—who justifies?" In no way! And if the judge acquits the prisoner at the bar, he cares not though the jailer or his fellow-prisoners condemn him. Just so here, there are no accusers that a believer needs to

fear, seeing that it is God himself, who is the supreme judge—who absolves him as just. God absolves, and therefore it is to no purpose for *Satan* to accuse us, Rev. 12:10; nor for the *law* of Moses to accuse us, John 5:45; nor for our own *consciences* to accuse us, Romans 2:25; nor for the *world* to accuse us. God is the highest judge, and his tribunal-seat is the supreme judgment-seat; therefore from thence there is no appealing.

As among men, people accused or condemned, may appeal, until they come to the highest court—but if in the highest, they are absolved and discharged—then they are free, and safe and well. Just so, the believer being absolved before God's tribunal-seat, there are no further accusations to be feared, all appeals from thence being void and of no force. The consideration of which should arm us and comfort us and strengthen us against all terrors of conscience, guilt of sin, accusation of the law, and cruelty of Satan; inasmuch as these either dare not appear before God to accuse us or charge us; or if they do, it is but lost labor.

"It is God who justifies." Ambrose gives the sense thus, "None can or dare retract the judgment of God; for he confidently challenges all adversaries, if they dare come forth to accuse; not that there is no cause—but because God has justified." "It is God who justifies;" therefore it is in vain to accuse them. "It is God who justifies them;" if God does it none can reverse it, for there are none who are equal with God. Let all the accusations, which shall come in against you, from one hand or another, be true or false—they shall never hurt you; for he from whom there is no appeal, has fully acquitted you, and therefore no accusation can endanger your peace!

Ah! what a strong cordial would this be to all the people of God, if they would but live in the power of this glorious truth—that it is "God who justifies them," and that there lies no accusations in the court of heaven against them! The great reason why many poor Christians are under so many dejections, despondencies, and perplexities—is because they drink so little of this water of life, "It is God who justifies." Did Christians live more upon this breast, "It is God who justifies," they would be no more like Pharaoh's lean cows—but would be fat and flourishing, Gen. 41:1-3. Did they but draw more out of this well of salvation, "It is God who

justifies," how would their spirits revive, and a new life rise up in them, as did in the dead child, by the prophet Elisha's applying himself to it, 2 Kings 4:34-37.

The imputed righteousness of Christ is a real, sure, and solid foundation, upon which a believer may safely build his peace, joy, and everlasting rest. Yes, it will help him to glory in tribulations, and to triumph over all adversities; Romans 5:1-3; Isaiah 45:24, "Surely, shall one say—in the Lord I have righteousness and strength." That which is the greatest terror in the world to unbelievers, is the strongest ground of comfort to believers—that is, the justice and wrath of God against sin. Look how it was when the angel appeared at the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, "The keepers were affrighted, and became as dead men;" but it was said to the women, "Fear not, for you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified," Mat. 28:4-5: so it is much more in this case. When God's justice is powerfully manifested, the sinners of Zion and the world are afraid and terrified, Isaiah 33:14. But yet, poor believers, seek for Christ who was crucified; you need not fear anything; yes, you may be wonderfully cheered at this, and it is your greatest comfort that you have to deal with this just God, who has already received satisfaction for your sins.

It is observable that the saints triumph in the justice and judgments of God, which are most terrible to the enemies of God, in that which is the substance of the song of Moses and the Lamb, Rev. 15:3-5. Just so in Luke 21:28, where the day of judgment is described, say some, and that in it, "there shall be distress of nations, and men's hearts failing them for fear"—namely, of the justice and wrath of God. Why so? It is for "looking after those things which are to come upon the earth; for the powers of the earth shall be shaken," etc. "But when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near." This day is the most dreadful day that ever was in the world to all the ungodly. But the just and faithful then shall be able to lift up their heads, to see all the world on fire about them, and all the elements in terrible confusion. But how dare a poor creature lift up his head in such a case as this? "They shall see the Son of man, coming in a cloud, with power and great glory." Here is enough to comfort the poor members of Christ—to

see Christ, on whom they have believed, and who has satisfied God's justice for them, and imputed his own righteousness to them: to see him set upon his judgment-seat, cannot but be matter of joy and rejoicing to them. Now they shall find the power of that word upon their souls: Isaiah 40:1-2, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins;" that is, their conflict with the wrath of God is at an end, the punishment of their iniquity is accepted, they have received in their head and surety, Christ Jesus, double for their sins; that is, justice has passed upon them, in their head, Christ Jesus; and they are sure that the judge of all the earth will do right, and will not punish their sins twice. The exactness of God's justice cannot do this.

Job 34:10, "Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity;" verse 12, "Yes, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert justice." It would be high injustice in a magistrate to punish the same offence twice; and it would be high blasphemy for any to assert that ever God should be guilty of such injustice. While Christians set up a righteousness of their own, and build not upon the righteousness of Christ, how unsettled are they! Romans 10:3; how miserably are they tossed up and down, sometimes fearing and sometimes hoping, sometimes supposing themselves in a good condition, and afterwards seeing themselves upon the very brink of hell! But now all is quiet and serene with that soul that builds upon the righteousness of Christ; for, he being "justified by faith, has peace with God," Romans 5:1. Observe that noble description of Christ in that Isaiah 32:2, "And a man," that is, the man Christ Jesus, "shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." When a man is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, who is God-man, it is neither wind nor tempest, it is neither drought nor weariness, which can disturb the peace of his soul; for Christ and his righteousness will be a hiding-place, a covert, and rivers of water, and the shadow of a great rock unto him; for, being at perfect peace with God, he may well say with the psalmist, "I will lay me down in peace," Psalm 4:6-8.

The peace and comfort of an awakened sinner can never stand firm and stable—but upon the basis of a positive righteousness. When a sensible sinner casts his eye upon his own righteousness, holiness, fastings, prayers, tears, humblings, meltings—he can find no place for the sole of his foot to rest firmly upon, by reason of the spots, and blots, and blemishes, which cleave both to his graces and duties. He knows that his prayers need pardon, and that his tears need washing in the blood of the Lamb, and that his very righteousness needs another's righteousness to secure him from condemnation. "If you, Lord, should mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" Psalm 130:3, and 1:5; that is, "stand" in judgment. Extremity of justice he deprecates; he would not be dealt with in rigor and rage. The best man's life is fuller of sins than the sky is of stars, or the furnace of sparks; and therefore who can stand in judgment, and not fall under the weight of your just wrath, which burns as low as hell itself? that is, none can stand. Were the faults of the best man alive but written in his forehead, he was never able to stand in judgment.

When a man comes to the law for justification, it convinces him of sin. When he pleads his innocence, that he is not so great a sinner as others are, when he pleads his righteousness, his duties, his good meanings, and his good desires—the law tells him who they are all weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and found too light, Dan. 5:27; the law tells him who the best of his duties will not save him, and that the least of his sins will damn him; the law tells him who his own righteousnesses are as filthy rags, do but defile him, and that his best services do but witness against him. The law looks for perfect and personal obedience, and because the sinner cannot come up to it—it pronounces him accursed, Gal. 3:10. And though the sinner sues hard for mercy—yet the law will show him none, no, though he seeks it carefully with tears, Heb. 12:17.

But now, when the believing sinner casts his eye upon the righteousness of Christ, he sees that righteousness to be a perfect and exact righteousness, as perfect and exact as that of the law. Yes, it is the very righteousness of the law, though not performed by him—yet by his surety, "The Lord his righteousness;" and upon this foundation he stands firm, and "rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." The saints of old have always placed their happiness, peace, and comfort, in their perfect

and complete *justification*, rather than in their imperfect and incomplete *sanctification*, as you may see by these scriptures, with many others which are scattered up and down in the blessed book of God. [Jer. 23:6; 1 Peter 1:8; Luke 7:48, 50; Romans 4:6, 8, and 5:1, 3; Isaiah 38:16-17, and 45:24-25; Phil. 4:7.]

That text is worthy to be written in letters of gold: Isaiah 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord," says the sound believer, "my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation." He has imputed and given unto me the perfect holiness and obedience of my blessed Savior, and made it mine. "He has covered me (all over, from top to toe) with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." Though a Christian's inherent righteousness is weak and imperfect, maimed and stained, blotted and blurred, as it is—yet it affords much comfort, peace, joy, and rejoicing, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [1 Chron. 29:9; Job 27:4-6; Neh. 13:14, 22; Isaiah 38:31; Proverbs 21:14; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Pet. 3:3-4, and 5:4.]

Job was much taken with his inherent righteousness: Job 29:14, "I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban." Look, as sober, modest, lovely apparel does much set forth and adorn the body in the eyes of men; just so does inherent grace, inherent holiness, inherent righteousness, when it sparkles in the faces, lips, lives, and good works of the saints, much more beautify and adorn them in the eyes both of God and man. Now if this garment of inherent righteousness, that has so many spots and rips in it, will adorn us, and joy us so much, what a beauty and glory is that which the Lord our God has put upon us, in clothing us with the robe of his Son's righteousness; for by this means we shall recover more by Christ than we lost by Adam. The robe of righteousness which we have gotten by Christ, the second Adam, is far more glorious than that which we were deprived of by the first Adam. But,

**7. Seventhly, Then know for your comfort, that you have the highest reason in the world to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus,** Gal. 6:14: Phil. 3:3, "For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus." We rejoice in the

person of Christ, and we rejoice in the *righteousness* of Christ: 2 Cor. 2:14, "Now thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ." *Deo gratias* was ever in Paul's mouth, and should be ever in a Christian's mouth, when his eye is fixed upon the righteousness of Christ. Every believer is in a more blessed and happy estate, by means of the righteousness of Christ, than Adam was in innocency. And that upon a threefold account; all which are just and noble grounds for every Christian to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus.

(1.) That righteousness which Adam had was **uncertain**, and such as it was possible for him to lose, Gen. 3; yes, he did lose it, and that in a very short time, Psalm 8:5. God gave him power and freedom of will either to hold it or lose it; and we know soon after, upon choice, he proved a bankrupt. But the righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is made more firm and sure to us. It is that good part, that noble portion, which shall never be taken from us, as Christ said to Mary, Luke 10:42. Adam sinned away his righteousness—but a believer cannot sin away the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is not possible for the elect of God, so to sin as to lose Christ, or to strip themselves of that robe of righteousness which Christ has put upon them, 1 John 3:9; Romans 8:35, 39. The gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against that soul who is savingly interested in Christ, who is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, Mat 16:18. Now what higher ground of joy and triumph in Christ Jesus can there be than this? But,

(2.) The righteousness that Adam had was **in his own keeping**; the spring and root of it was founded in himself, and that was the cause why he lost it so soon. Adam, like the prodigal son, Luke 15:12-13, had all his portion, his happiness, his holiness, his blessedness, his righteousness—in his own hands, in his own keeping; and so quickly lost it all. Oh but now, that blessed righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ, is not in our own keeping—but in our Father's keeping. Look, as our persons, graces, and inherent righteousness are kept, as in a strong refuge, by the power of God unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1:5; so that righteousness which we have by Jesus Christ is kept for us by the mighty power of God unto salvation.

God the Father is the Lord Keeper, not only of our inherent righteousness

—but also of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ unto us. "My sheep shall never perish," says our Savior, John 10:28, 29, "neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; my Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." Though the saints may meet with many shakings and tossings in their various conditions in this world—yet their final perseverance, until they come to full possession of eternal life—is certain. God is so unchangeable in his purposes of love, and so invincible in his power—that neither Satan, nor the world, nor their own flesh—shall ever be able to separate them from the "crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. 4:7, 8; "the crown of life," Rev. 2:10; "the crown of glory," 1 Pet. 5:4. The power of God is so far above all created opposition, that it will certainly maintain the saints in a state of grace. Now what a foundation and ground for rejoicing and triumphing in Christ Jesus is here! But,

(3.) Admit, that the righteousness that Adam had in his creation had been unchangeable, and that he could never have lost it—yet, it had been but **the righteousness of a man**, of a mere creature; and what a poor, low righteousness would that have been, compared to that high and glorious righteousness which we have by Jesus Christ, which is the righteousness of such a person as was God as well as man. Yes, that righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is a higher righteousness, and a more excellent, transcendent righteousness than that of the angels. Though the righteousness of the angels be perfect and complete in its kind—yet it is but the righteousness of mere creatures—but the righteousness of the saints, in which they stand clothed before the throne of God, is the righteousness of that person who is both God and man. Look, as the second Adam was a far more excellent person than the first Adam was: "The first man was of the earth, earthy," as the apostle speaks; "the second was the Lord from heaven," 1 Cor. 15:47; not for the matter of his body, for he was made of a woman—but for the original and dignity of his person; whereof you may see a lively and lofty description in Heb. 1:2-3; so his righteousness also must needs be far more excellent, absolute, glorious, and every way all-sufficient to satisfy the infinite justice of God, and the exact perfection of his holy law—than ever Adam's righteousness could possibly have done.

Remember, sirs, that that righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is called the righteousness of God: "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the *righteousness of God* in him," says the apostle in 2 Cor. 5:21. Now that righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ, is called the righteousness of God:

(1.) Because it is such a righteousness as God requires.

(2.) As he approves of and accepts.

(3.) As he takes infinite pleasure and delight and satisfaction in.

The righteousness the apostle speaks of in that scripture last mentioned, is not to be understood of the essential righteousness of Christ, which is infinite, and no ways communicable to the creature, unless we will make a creature a God. But we are to understand it, of that righteousness of Christ which is imputed to believers, as their sin is imputed to him. Now what a well of salvation is here! What three noble grounds and what matchless foundations are here for a Christian's joy and triumph in Christ Jesus, who has put so glorious a robe as his own righteousness upon them! Ah, Christians, let not the consolations of God be small in your eyes, Job 15:11. Why do you take no more comfort and delight in Christ Jesus? Why do you not rejoice more in him? Not to rejoice in Christ Jesus is a plain breach of that gospel command, "Rejoice in the Lord always," that is, rejoice in Christ, "and again I say, rejoice," says the apostle, Phil. 4:4. He doubles the mandate, to show the necessity and excellency of the duty. Phil. 3:1, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Now, in some respects, the breach of the commands of the gospel are greater than the breach of the commands of the moral law; for the breach of the commands of the gospel carries in it a contempt and light esteem of Jesus Christ, see Heb. 2:2-3, 8:6, and 10:28-29. Men's not rejoicing in Christ Jesus must flow from some dangerous sin, and base corruption or other, which highly distempers their precious souls. If all created excellencies, if all the privileges of God's people, if all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them, were to be presented at one view, they would all appear as nothing and emptiness—in comparison of the excellency and fullness which is to be found in Christ Jesus. Therefore the greater is their sin, who rejoice not in Christ Jesus.

"Do you ask me where be my jewels? my jewels are my husband and his triumphs," said Phocion's wife. "Do you ask me where be my ornaments? my ornaments are my two sons brought up in virtue and learning," said the mother of the Gracchi. "Do you ask me where be my treasures? my treasures are my friends," said Constantius, the father of Constantine. But now, if you ask a child of God, when he is not clouded, tempted, deserted, dejected, where be his jewels, his treasures, his ornaments, his comfort, his joy, his delight; he will answer with that martyr, "none but Christ, none but Christ! Oh! none to Christ, none to Christ! Christ is all in all unto me!" Col. 3:11. That joy lasts forever, whose object remains forever. Such an object is our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the joy of the saints should still be exercised upon our Lord Jesus Christ. Shall the worldling rejoice in his barns, the rich man in his bags, the ambitious man in his honors, the voluptuous man in his pleasures, and the wanton in his Delilahs; and shall not a Christian rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in that robe of righteousness, and in those garments of salvation, with which Christ has covered him? Isaiah 61:10.

The joy of that Christian who keeps a fixed eye upon Christ and his righteousness cannot be expressed, it cannot be painted. No man can paint the sweetness of the honeycomb, nor the sweetness of a cluster of Canaan's grapes, nor the fragrance of the rose of Sharon. As the being of things cannot be painted, so the sweetness of things cannot be painted. The joy of the Holy Spirit cannot be painted; nor can that joy be painted, which arises in a Christian's heart, who keeps up a daily converse with Christ and his righteousness; it cannot be expressed. Who can look upon the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and seriously consider, that even every vein of that blessed body did bleed to bring him to heaven—and not rejoice in Christ Jesus? Who can look upon the glorious righteousness of Christ, imputed to him—and not be filled with an exuberance of spiritual joy in God his Savior?

There is not the pardon of the least sin, nor the least degree of grace, nor the least drop of mercy—but cost Christ dear, for he must die, and he must be made a sacrifice, and he must be accursed—that pardon may be yours, and grace yours, and mercy yours. And oh, how should this draw out your heart to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus! The work of

redemption sets both angels and saints a-rejoicing and triumphing in Christ Jesus, Rev. 5:11-14; and why not we, why not we also, who have received infinitely more benefit by the work of redemption, than ever the angels have? Rev. 1:5-6, and 5:8-10. A beautiful face is at all times pleasing to the eye—but then especially, when there is joy manifested in the countenance. Joy in the face puts a new beauty upon a person, and makes that which before was beautiful, to be exceeding beautiful, it puts a luster upon beauty. Just so, does holy joy and rejoicing in Christ Jesus, put, as it were, a new beauty and luster upon Christ. Though the Romans punished one who feasted, and looked out at a window with a garland on his head, in the second Punic war—yet, you may be sure, that God will never punish you for rejoicing and triumphing in Christ Jesus, let the times be ever so sad or bad, in respect of war, blood, or misery. But,

**8. Eighthly, The imputed righteousness of Christ may serve to comfort, support, and bear up the hearts of the people of God, from fainting and sinking under the sense of the weakness and imperfection of their inherent righteousness.** The church of old have lamentingly said, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is as filthy rags," Isaiah 64:6. When a Christian keeps a serious eye upon the spots, blots, blemishes, infirmities, and follies, which cleave to his inherent righteousness—fears and tremblings arise, to the saddening and sinking of his soul. But when he casts a fixed eye upon the righteousness of Christ imputed to him—then his comforts revive, and his heart bears up. For though he has no righteousness of his own, by which his soul may stand accepted before God—yet he has God's righteousness, which infinitely transcends his own, and such as, in God's account, goes for his, as if he had exactly fulfilled the righteousness which the law requires; according to that verse of the apostle, Romans 9:30, "What shall we say then? the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith."

Faith wraps itself in the righteousness of Christ, and so justifies us. The Gentiles sought righteousness, not in themselves but in Christ, which they apprehending by faith—and were by it justified in the sight of God. But the Jews, seeking righteousness in themselves, and thinking, by the

goodness of their own works, to attain to the righteousness of the law, missed of it; it being in no man's power perfectly to fulfill the law. Only Christ has exactly fulfilled it for all who by faith close savingly with him. O sirs! none can be justified in the sight of God, by a righteousness of their own making. But whoever will be justified, must be justified by the righteousness of Christ, through faith, Romans 3:20, 28, and 10:3; Gal. 2:16; Tit. 3:5. The Gentiles by faith attain the righteousness of the law, therefore the righteousness of the law and of faith are all one; namely, in respect of matter and form; the difference is only in the worker. The law requires it to be done by ourselves; the gospel mitigates the rigor of the law, and offers the righteousness of Christ, who performed the law, even to a hair's-breadth. The right way to righteousness for justification is by Christ—who is the way, the door, the truth, and the life. Because we lack a righteousness of our own, God has assigned us the righteousness of Christ, which is infinitely better than our own, yes, better than our very lives—may I not say, yes, better than our very souls? "The branch," Christ Jesus is called, "Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness."

Jer. 23:6, "And this is his name whereby he shall be called, *the Lord our Righteousness*." Where note, first, to be called by this name is to be so really, for Christ is never called what he is not; and so he is to the same purpose elsewhere called "Immanuel, God with us," Mat. 1:23; that is, he shall be so indeed, "God with us." So here he shall be called, "the Lord our righteousness;" that is, he shall be so indeed. Secondly, observe this is one of his glorious names; that is, one of his attributes, which he accounts his excellency and his glory. Now all the attributes of Christ are unchangeable, so that he can as easily change his nature as his name. Now remember that this imputed righteousness of Christ procures acceptance for our inherent righteousness.

When a sincere Christian casts his eye upon the weaknesses, infirmities, and imperfections, which daily attend his best services, he sighs and mourns—but if he looks upward to the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, that shall bring forth his infirm, weak, and sinful performances perfect, spotless, and sinless, and approved according to the tenor of the gospel, so that they become spiritual sacrifices, he cannot but rejoice, 1 Pet. 2:5. For as there is an imputation of righteousness to the persons of

believers, so there is also an imputation to their services and actions. As the act of Phinehas was imputed to him for righteousness, Psalm 106:31, so the imperfect good works which are done by believers are accounted righteousness, or, as Calvin speaks, "are accounted for righteousness, they being dipped in the blood of Christ," that is, they are accounted righteous actions. And so sincere Christians shall be judged according to their good works, though not saved for them, Rev. 11:18, and 20:12; Mat 25:34-37.

And it is observable, in that famous process of the last judgment, that the supreme judge makes mention of the bounty and liberality of the saints, and so bestows the crown of life and the eternal inheritance upon them; so that, though the Lord's faithful ones have eminent cause to be humbled and afflicted for the many weaknesses which cleave to their best duties—yet, on the other hand, they have wonderful cause to rejoice and triumph that they are made perfect through Jesus Christ, and that the Lord looks at them, through the righteousness of Christ, as fruits of his own Spirit, Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Cor. 6:11. The Sun of Righteousness has healing enough in his wings for all our spiritual maladies, Mal. 4:2. The saints' prayers, being perfumed with Christ's fragrance, are highly accepted in heaven, Rev. 8:3-4. Upon this foundation of imputed righteousness, believers may have exceeding strong consolation, and good hope through grace, that both their persons and services do find singular acceptance with God, as having no spot or blemish at all in them. Surely *imputed righteousness* must be the top of our happiness and blessedness, Romans 4:5-6. But,

**9. Ninthly and lastly, Know for your comfort, that imputed righteousness will give you the greatest boldness before God's judgment-seat.** There is an absolute and indispensable necessity of a perfect righteousness wherewith to appear before God. The holiness of God's nature, the righteousness of his government, the severity of his law, and the terror of wrath, calls aloud upon the sinner for a complete righteousness, without which there is no standing in judgment, Psalm 1:5. That righteousness alone, is able to justify us before God which is perfect, and which has no defect nor blemish in it, such as may abide the trial before his judgment-seat, such as may fitly satisfy his justice, and make

our peace with him; and consequently, such as whereby the law of God is fulfilled. Therefore it is called the *righteousness of God*, such a righteousness as he requires, as will stand before him, and satisfy his justice, Romans 10:3. Just so, the apostle says, "The righteousness of the law must be fulfilled in us," Romans 8:4. Now there is no other righteousness under heaven whereby the law of God was ever perfectly fulfilled—but by the righteousness of Christ alone. No righteousness below the righteousness of Christ was ever able to abide the trial at God's judgment-seat, and fully to satisfy his justice, and pacify his wrath. A gracious soul triumphs more in the imputed righteousness of Christ, than he would have done if he could have stood in the righteousness in which he was created. This is the crowning comfort to a sensible and understanding soul, that he stands righteous before a judgment-seat, in that full, exact, perfect, complete, matchless, spotless, peerless, and most acceptable righteousness of Christ imputed to him.

The righteousness of Christ is therefore called the *righteousness of God*, because it is it which God has assigned, and which God does accept for us in our justification, and for and in which he does acquit and pronounce us righteous before his seat of justice, Romans 3:21-22, and 10:3; Phil. 3:9. There is an indispensable necessity which lies upon the sinner, to have such a righteousness to his justification as may render his appearance safe and comfortable in the day of judgment. Now there is no righteousness which can abide that day of fiery trial—but the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. Paul, that great apostle, had as fair and as full a certificate to show for a *legal* justification as any person under heaven had, Phil. 3:4-6; Acts 23:6; 2 Cor. 11:22; but yet he dared not stand by that righteousness, he dared not plead that righteousness, he dared not appear in that righteousness before the dreadful judgment-seat.

But oh, how earnest, how importunate is he, that he may be found, in that great day of the Lord—in the mediatorial righteousness of Christ, and not in his own personal righteousness, which he looked upon as filthy rags, as dross, dung, dogs' meat, Phil. 3:9-10. The great thing that he most strongly insists upon is, that he might be clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness; for then he knew that the law could not condemn him, and

that the judge upon the bench would pronounce him righteous, and bid him enter into the joy of his Lord, Mat. 25:21, 23, 24; a joy too great to enter into him, and therefore he must enter into that. When the match is made up between Christ and the soul, that soul bears her sovereign's name. The spouse of the first Adam and her husband had both one name, "God called their name Adam, in the day that he made them," Gen. 5:2; so the spouse of the second Adam, in the change of her condition, from a single to a married estate with Christ the Lamb, had a change of her name. The head is called, "the Lord our righteousness," Jer. 23:6; and so is the church: Jer. 33:16, "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." Here is a sameness of name. [Christ and Christians are namesakes. The head is called Christ, and the members are called Christ, 1 Cor. 12:12. Christ is called Solomon, Cant. 1:1, and 3:11, in Hebrew, Shelomah of peace, and the church is called Shulamite, by her bridegroom's name, Cant. 6:13.] As Christ is called, "the Lord our righteousness," so his spouse is called, "the Lord our righteousness." Oh, happy transnomination! Christ's bride being one with himself, and having his righteousness imputed to her, is called, "the Lord our righteousness;" and therefore they may, with the greatest cheerfulness and boldness, bear up, in the great day of account, who have **the perfect righteousness of Christ** imputed to them, especially if you consider,

(1.) That this righteousness is of infinite value and worth.

(2.) That it is an everlasting righteousness, a righteousness that can never be lost, Dan. 9:24.

(3.) That it is an unchangeable righteousness. Though times change, and men change, and friends change, and providences changes, and the moon changes—yet the Sun of Righteousness never changes, "in him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," Mal. 4:2; James 1:17.

(4.) That it is a complete and unspotted righteousness, an unblamably righteousness, and unblemished righteousness. And therefore God can neither in justice except it, or object against it. In this righteousness the believer lives, in this righteousness the believer dies, and in this

righteousness believers shall arise, and appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to the deep admiration of all the elect angels, and to the transcendent terror and horror of all reprobates, and to the matchless joy and triumph of all on Christ's right hand, who shall then shout and sing, Isaiah 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorned herself with jewels."

Oh, how will Christ, in this great day, be admired and glorified in all his saints, 2 Thes. 1:10, when every saint, wrapped up in this fine linen, in this white robe of Christ's righteousness, shall shine more gloriously than ten thousand suns! In the great day of the Lord, when the saints shall stand before the tribunal of God, clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, they shall then stand and be pronounced righteous, even in the court of divine justice, which sentence will fill their souls with comfort, and the souls of sinners with astonishment, Rev. 20:12, and 12:10. Suppose we saw the believing sinner, holding up his hand at God's bar; the books opened, the accuser of the brethren present, the witnesses ready, and the judge on the bench thus bespeaking the sinner at the bar, Romans 7:12, 14, 16, and Gal. 3:10. "O sinner, sinner, you stand here indicted before me, for many millions of sins of commission, and for many millions of sins of omission; you have broken my holy, just, and righteous laws beyond all human conception or expression, and hereof you are proved guilty! What have you now to say for yourself, why you should not be eternally lost"? Upon this, the sinner pleads guilty—but withal he earnestly desires that he may have time and liberty to plead for himself, and to offer his reasons why that dreadful sentence, "Go, you cursed," etc., Mat. 25:41, should not be passed upon him. The liberty desired, being granted by the judge, the sinner pleads that his surety, Jesus Christ, has, by his blood and sufferings, given full and complete satisfaction to divine justice, and that he has paid down upon the penny, the whole debt at once, and that it can never stand with the holiness and unspotted justice of God to demand satisfaction twice, Heb. 10:10, 14. If the judge shall further object, "Ay—but sinner, sinner, the law requires an exact and perfect righteousness in the personal fulfilling of it; now, sinner, where is your exact and perfect righteousness?" Gal. 3:10; Isaiah

45:24. Upon which the believing sinner very readily, cheerfully, humbly, and boldly replies, "My righteousness is upon the bench—in the Lord have I righteousness. Christ, my surety, has fulfilled the law on my behalf!"

The law's righteousness consists in two things,

(1.) In its requiring perfect conformity to its commands.

(2.) In its demanding satisfaction, or the undergoing of its penalty, upon the violation of it.

Now Christ, by his active and passive obedience, has fulfilled the law for righteousness; and this active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ is imputed to me. His obeying the law to the full, his perfect conforming to its commands, his doing, as well as his dying obedience—is by grace made over and reckoned to me, in order to my justification and salvation; and this is my plea, by which I will stand before the judge of all the world. Upon this, the sinner's plea is accepted as good in law, and accordingly he is pronounced righteous; and goes away, glorying and rejoicing, triumphing and shouting it out, Righteous, righteous, righteous, righteous! "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," Isaiah 45:25. And thus you see that there are nine springs of strong consolation that flow into your souls, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness unto you.

### **Christ our representative and surety**

**VI.** The sixth plea that a believer may form up, as to these ten scriptures [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:3; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 12:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] which refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account, may be drawn from the consideration of **Christ as a common person—a representative**

**head**, one who represents another man's person, and acts the part of another, according to the appointment of the law, and the acceptance of the judge; so that what is done by him, the person is said to do, whose person he does represent. And so was Adam a common person, and that by an act of God's sovereignty appointing him, in making a covenant with him so to be, and he did represent all mankind, Romans 5:15-19. And hence it comes to pass that his sin is imputed unto us, and made ours. [We were all in Adam, and although we chose not—yet God chose for us.]

So in our law an attorney appears in the behalf of his client, and so Christ is said to be gone to heaven as our attorney, to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. 9:24. The Greek word signifies to appear as a lawyer appears for his client, opens the cause, pleads the cause, and carries it. The word appear is *verbum forense*, an expression borrowed from the custom of human courts; for in them, when the plaintiff or defendant is called, their attorney appears in their behalf; so 1 John 2:1.

You know that the Levitical priest was accustomed to appear before God in the people's name. Now he was but a figure; in Christ is the solid truth, and full effect of the figure. Or as taking possession, livery, and seizing by an attorney is all one as if done by the person himself who is represented, and is valid. Just so, the Lord Jesus, he is a common person by an act of God's sovereignty, representing the persons of all the elect of God, being designed and appointed by God to be a second Adam. And as the first Adam did represent all in him, so the second Adam does represent all in him also. And therefore as judgment came upon all who are in the first Adam, so righteousness comes upon all who are in the second Adam. We all transgressed the royal law in Adam, we were all in Adam's loins; what he was, we were; what he did, we did. Although we did not in our own persons either talk with the serpent, or put forth our hands to take the fruit—yet we did eat the forbidden fruit as well as he, and so broke the holy law, and turned aside in him; for he was not a single person, standing for himself alone—but a public person, standing in the room and stead of all mankind. Therefore his sin, being not merely the sin of his person—but of the whole nature of man, is justly imputed to us all.

If Adam had stood fast in his uprightness, in his primitive purity, glory and excellency, we would all have shared in his happiness and

blessedness, Eccles. 7:29. But he falling and forfeiting all, we must all share with him in his loss and misery. Ponder upon Romans 5:12, "In whom all have sinned." As the murrain infects the whole flock, so sin and the curse seize upon all the whole world, as well as upon Adam and Eve. And verse 19, "By one man's disobedience, the many are made sinners." "The many" is here put for "all," as "all" elsewhere is put for "many," 1 Tim. 2:3. All sinners are tainted with Adam's guilt and filth. Adam was the head, all his posterity the members. If the head plots and practices treason against the state—is not this judged the act of the whole body? Adam was the *tree*, we the branches; when the tree falls, all the branches fall with it.

When Christ died on the cross, he did stand in our room, and place, and stead; for he did lay down his life for us as a ransom. Now when one dies for another in way of ransom, he does not only die for the benefit and profit of the ransomed—but in the place, and room, and stead of the ransomed; and thus Christ died for us, as himself testifies: "The son of man came to give himself a ransom for many," Mark 10:45. Christ rose as a common person, representing all his elect; and Christ was sanctified as a common person, representing all his elect; and Christ was justified as a common person, representing all his elect. Look, as we were condemned in Adam, as he was a common person; just so, are we are justified by Christ, as in a common person also; so that every believer may well look upon himself as acquitted, in his justification, from the guilt of his sins, they being laid upon the head of his surety, Heb. 9:28.

It is a very great part of a Christian's wisdom to be often looking upon Christ as a representative-head, as one in whom he *died*, in whom he *rose*, in whom he is *sanctified*, and in whom he is *justified*, Eph. 2:6. How would such a daily eyeing of Christ scatter a Christian's fears, arm him against temptations, support him under afflictions, weaken his sins, strengthen his graces, cheer his soul, and mend his life!

It is very observable, that in the Levitical expiatory sacrifices there was the substitution of them in the place and stead of the offenders themselves. The people's sin, and the punishment due to them thereupon, was laid upon the poor animals which died for them. I might multiply scriptures to evidence this—but I shall only hint at one or two plain,

pregnant texts to clear it. Take Lev. 17:11, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." Mark here, the blood is to make atonement for the souls of the people of Israel—that is, in the room and stead of their souls, and accordingly it did make atonement for their souls; so that in the blood sacrificed, which was a type of the blood of Christ, there was soul for soul, life for life; the soul and life of the sacrifice—for the precious soul and life of the sinner. Now here you see substitution of the one in the room of the other. The transferring of the guilt and punishment of the people's sins over to their sacrifices in those days, was the reason why the sacrifices were said to bear the iniquities of the people, Lev. 16:22, and 10:17, etc.

And it is observable that at the great expiation, Aaron was to lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and to confess over him all the sins of the children of Israel, etc., Lev. 16:21. By this ceremony of imposition of hands, is signified the transferring of their sins upon the goat. Herein was a type of Christ—upon whom God "did lay the iniquity of us all," Isaiah 53:6. Certainly the main thing that is held forth by this rite—namely, Aaron's laying both his hands upon the head of the live goat, is the translation of the sinner's guilt to the sacrifice, and the substitution of it in his stead. Typically, the very sins of the people were imposed upon the goat, who herein was a type of Christ who did in fact, bear our sins.

Yes, the Hebrews [Maimonides] themselves hold that the scapegoat made atonement for all their sins, lighter and greater, presumptuously and ignorantly committed. Certainly the scapegoat was a most lively type of our blessed Savior—

(1.) In that "the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all," as the sins of Israel were laid upon the head of the goat.

(2.) As the goat was carried away, so Christ was "cut off from the land of the living, his life was taken from off the earth," Isaiah 4:3, and 53:8.

(3.) As this goat was not killed, so "Christ through the eternal Spirit offered up himself," whereby he was made alive after death, Acts 9:33; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 3:18. Though Christ Jesus died for our sins according to

his humanity—yet death could not detain him nor overcome him, nor keep him prisoner, Hosea 13:14—but, by virtue of his deity, he rises again and triumphs over death and the grave, and over principalities and powers, Col. 2:15.

(4.) As this goat went into an inhabitable place, so Christ went into heaven—"where I go you cannot come," John 13:33. Christ speaks this not to exclude his disciples out of heaven—but only to show that their entrance was put off for a time, verse 36. Saints must not expect to go to heaven and rest with Christ until they have "fought the good fight of faith, finished their course, run their race," and "served their generation." [2 Tim. 4:7-8; Heb. 12:1; 1 Cor. 9:24; Acts 13:36; John 14:1-3.] Christ's own children, by all their studies, prayers, tears, and endeavors, cannot get to heaven unless Christ comes and fetches them there. Christ's own servants cannot get to heaven presently nor of themselves, no more than the Jews could do.

Now if you cast your eye upon the Lord Jesus, you will find an exact correspondence between the type and the antitype, the one fully answering to the other. Did they carry substitution in them? that eminently was in Christ. He indeed substituted himself in the sinner's room; he took our guilt upon him, and put himself in our place, and died in our stead; he died that we might not die. Whatever we should have undergone, that he underwent in his body and soul; he did bear as our substitute all the punishments and torments that were due to us. Christ's suffering, dying, satisfying in our stead, is the great article of a Christian's faith, and the main prop and foundation of the believer's hope. It is founded, as an eternal and unmovable truth, upon the sure basis of the blessed word.

Substitution, in the case of the old sacrifices, is not so evidently held forth in the law—but substitution with respect to Christ and his sacrifice is more evidently set forth in the gospel. Ponder seriously upon these texts: Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly;" verse 8, "For God commends his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Herein God lays naked to us the tenderest affections of his Fatherly compassions, as in an anatomy. [This shows us the greatness of man's sin and of Christ's love, of

Satan's malice and of God's justice. And it shows us the madness and blindness of the popish religion, which tells us that some sins are so light and venial as that the sprinkling of holy water and ashes will purge them away.]

There was an absolute necessity of Christ's dying for sinners, for,

- (1.) God's justice had decreed it.
- (2.) His word had foretold it.
- (3.) The sacrifices in the law had prefigured it.
- (4.) The foulness of man's sin had deserved it.
- (5.) The redemption of man called for it.
- (6.) The glory of God was greatly exalted by it.

Just so, 1 Pet. 3:18, "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." To see *Christ the just* suffer in the stead of the unjust, is the wonderment of angels and the torment of devils! 1 Pet. 4:1, "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh," etc., that is, in the human nature, for the expiation and taking away of our sins. 1 Pet. 2:21, "Because Christ also suffered for us." John 10:11, "I lay down my life for the sheep." This good shepherd lays down life for life, his own dear life for the life of his sheep. John 11:50, "You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." Caiaphas took it for granted, that either Christ or their nation must perish, and, as he foolishly thought, that of two evils he designed the least to be chosen, that is, that Christ should rather perish than their nation. But God so guided his tongue that he unwittingly, by the powerful instinct of the Spirit, prophesied of the fruit of Christ's death for the reconciliation and salvation of the elect of God.

Heb. 2:9, "That he by the grace of God should taste death *for* every man," or, for every creature. Who all these are, the context shows—

- (1.) Sons, who must be led unto glory, verse 10;

(2.) Christ's brethren, verse 11;

(3.) Such children as are given by God unto Christ, verse 13.

In all which scriptures the preposition is used, which most commonly notes substitution, the doing or suffering of something by one in the stead and place of others, and so it is all along here to be taken.

But there is another preposition that proves the thing I am upon undeniably: Mat. 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto—but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." A ransom signifies a redemptory price, a valuable rate; for it was the blood of God with which the church was purchased, Acts 20:28: 1 Tim. 2:6, "Who gave himself a ransom for all." The Greek word signifies a counterprice, such as we could never have paid—but must have remained everlasting prisoners to the wrath and justice of God. O sirs! Christ did not barely deliver poor captive souls—but he delivered them in the way of a ransom, which ransom he paid down upon the nail. When their ransom was ten thousand talents, and they had not one farthing to lay down, Christ stands up in their room and pays the whole ransom! Mat. 18:24. Christ gave himself as a ransom in the room and stead of sinners. John 2:28-29.

Certainly no head can invent, no heart can conceive, nor no tongue can express more clear, plain, pregnant, and appropriate words and phrases for the setting forth of Christ's substitution, than is to be found in that golden chapter of Isaiah 53. In this chapter, as in a holy armory, we may find, had I time to go through it, many pointed daggers, and two-edged swords, and shields of brass—to arm us against the corrupt notions and opinions of the blinded and deluded Socinians, who fight with all their might against the doctrine of Christ's substitution. Verse 4, "Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," etc.; verse 5, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed;" verse 6, "The Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all;" or, "the Lord has made the iniquity of us all to meet on him;" verse 7, "He was oppressed and he was afflicted," verse 8, "For the transgression of my people he was stricken;" verse 11, "For he shall bear their iniquities;" verse 12, "And he bore the sin of many." All men of worth and weight

conclude that all this is spoken of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what more clear and evident proofs can there be of Christ's assumption of the sinner's guilt, and of his bearing the punishment due for it? The priests of old, you know, are said to bear the iniquity of the people: Lev. 10:17, "God has given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord." The sinner bears his iniquity *subjectively*, the priest *typically*, and the Lord Christ *really*!

Exod. 28:38, "That Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things." Herein the high priest was a type of Christ; answerable to which, the prophet Isaiah tells us that Christ, our high priest, had the iniquities of all believers laid upon him, and that he bore them in his own person, Heb. 4:14-15. Just so, the apostle in Heb. 9:28, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," etc. It is an allusion to the priests who carried up the sacrifice, and with it the sins of the people, to the altar. Christ our priest did carry up the sins of his people upon the cross, and there made satisfaction for them, in their room or stead, by the sacrifice of himself.

That scripture is more worth than the Indies—namely, 1 Pet. 2:24, "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree," "he bore them aloft"—namely, when he climbed up his cross, and nailed them thereunto, Col. 2:13-15. Christ in the human nature, when he was upon the cross, did suffer all the punishments and torments that were due to our sins; he cancelled all debts, annihilated the curse; in which respects he is said "to bear our sins in his own body on the tree."

But to prevent wordiness, I shall produce no more scriptures, though many more might have been produced, to prove Christ a common person, a representative head of all his elect; and that he did really substitute himself in their room, and took upon himself their guilt, and put himself in their place, and did undergo whatever they should have undergone.

Now from all these considerations, a child of God may form up this sixth plea as to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:3; Romans 4:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17, and 1 Pet. 4:5.] that refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account. "O blessed God, Jesus Christ was a common person, a representative head: I am to be considered in him, who is my surety, and

therefore he is bound to pay all my debts: and as he is a common person and stood in my stead, so the satisfaction that is made unto your justice by him, is legally to be accounted mine, as really as if my attorney should pay a debt for me. Therefore, I must rest satisfied that the debt is paid, and in law shall never be exacted of me; though it was not paid by myself in person—but by another who did substitute for me in that act, and did it for me and in my behalf.

Christ was a common person, personating as a second Adam, the first Adam and all his posterity; offering the same nature for sin, which fell by sin from the pattern of perfection, God himself. "By man came death, and by man came the resurrection from the dead," 1 Cor. 15:21, man for man, person for person, nature for nature, and name for name. There are *two roots* out of which life and death springs.

(1.) As all who die, receive their death-wounds by the disobedience of the first Adam; so all who live, receive life from the obedience of the second Adam.

(2.) As all die who are the sons of the first Adam by natural generation; so all live, who are the sons of the second Adam through spiritual regeneration. "O holy and blessed God, you have set up Jesus Christ as a common person, as the representative head of all your elect, and I am to be considered in that common head. All that he has done as my head, and in my stead and room—is to be reckoned to me—as if I had done it in my own person, and by this plea I will stand, rejoice, and triumph. Upon this God accepts of the plea, as sound and good, and says to him who pleads it, "enter into the joy of your Lord!" Mat. 25:21.

**VII.** The seventh plea that a believer may form up, as to the ten scriptures formerly cited, which refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account, may be drawn from the consideration of **Christ's suretyship**. Christ is called a surety: Heb. 7:22, "Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant." A surety is one who willingly promises and undertakes to pay and discharge the debt, if the debtor fails, and is not able to make satisfaction himself. Thus Paul willingly and spontaneously, from the love he had to his new convert Onesimus, promised and undertook to make satisfaction to Philemon, for any wrong

that Onesimus had done him: Philem. 18, 19, "If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, charge it to my account; I Paul have written it with my own hand, I will repay it." That is, account Onesimus' debt to Paul, and Paul's satisfaction or payment to Onesimus; which answers the double imputation in point of justification, that is, of our sins or debts to Christ, and of Christ's satisfaction to us. Consider Christ as a surety, and so he has fully paid all our debts, and set us perfectly free forever. A surety is one who enters into bond, and engages himself for the debt of another; and so Christ is become our surety. Therefore he was bound by our bond, and engages himself for the debt of another. For our debt he was made under the law, and so as a sacrifice, he stood in the stead of a sinner, and the sacrifice was to be offered for the man.

And so some expound that verse, "He was made sin for us," 2 Cor. 5:21, that is, a sin-offering; therefore he does take our sins upon him as his own, Isaiah 53; and so the Lord does impute them and lay them upon him as his own: verse 6, "He did make to meet upon him the iniquities of us all." The original word here used comes from a word in its native propriety intends a kind of force or violence—they met with all their violence upon him, and therefore "he was made sin for us," that is, as a surety in our stead, "he did bear our sins in his body upon the tree; he was delivered for our transgressions." Our surety has paid all our debts.

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and it pleased the Father to bruise him," Isaiah 53:5, 10. The original word signifies to break him to pieces as in a mortar. By the great things that our surety has done for us, and the great things that he has suffered for us—he has given most perfect and complete satisfaction both to his Father's law, and to his Father's justice; and this pleased the Father.

Weigh well Col. 2:14, "He canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." **Christ has crossed out the black lines of our sin, with the red lines of his own blood.** The *written code*, some do take here for a writing written with God's own hand in tables of stone, as the law of the ten commandments were, Exod. 34:1; and this is by them understood of the moral law, or of the ten commandments, which are said to be against us, in respect of their strict requiring of perfect

obedience, or in default thereof, by reason of its curse, which Christ as our surety has borne for us on the cross, and delivered us from it, Gal. 3:10, 13.

But others by this *written code* do understand the law of the ceremonies of the Old Testament. In the general, it was something that God had against us; to show or convince, or prove, that we had sinned against him, and were his debtors. I suppose that this *written code* was principally the moral law, obliging us unto perfect obedience, and condemning us for the defect of the same, and likewise those ceremonial rites, which, as Beza observes, were a kind of public confession of our debts. Now these were against, and contrary unto us, inasmuch as they did argue us guilty of sin and condemnation, which the moral law threatened and sentenced, etc. But says the apostle, "Christ has canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." That is, Jesus Christ has not only abrogated the ceremonial law—but also the damnatory power of the moral law, as our surety, by performing an act of obedience which the law did require, and by undergoing the punishment which the law did exact from the transgressors of it. And so Christ doing and suffering, what we were bound to do and to suffer—he did thereby blot out the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. Therefore we may safely conclude, that the creditor is fully satisfied, when he gives in his bond to be cancelled. The bond is cancelled, blotted out—and can no more be read than if it had never been; the obligatory power of the law as a covenant is taken away.

God delivered his people from Pharaoh by force, and from Babylon by favor—but that deliverance that Christ, as our surety, hands out to us, from sin, from wrath, from hell, from the curse, and from the moral law as it is a covenant of works—is obtained by paying a full price; by which one becomes satisfied, and another thereupon delivered.

Heb. 9:26, "He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" to put away sin, Dan. 9:24, is to abolish or make void the guilt or obligation of sin, whereby it binds over unbelievers to condemnation. To put away sin is to abrogate it, it is to bind it up in a bundle, to seal it up in a bag, to cast it behind him, as cancelled obligations, Isaiah 38:17; Micah

7:19; it is to blot out the black handwriting with the red lines of his blood drawn over it; so that sin has no force, no power to accuse or condemn, or shut such poor souls out of heaven—who have that Jesus for their surety—who made himself a sacrifice to put away sin. Christ as our surety laid down a satisfactory price, not only for our good—but also in our stead or room: 1 Pet. 3:18, "Christ also has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." What the unjust sinner should have suffered, that the just Christ suffered for him: 1 Cor. 5:21, "He was made sin for us;" that is, an offering, a sacrifice in our stead, for the expiation of our sins.

"Christ was made a curse for us," Gal. 3:13. Now Christ's becoming a curse for us stands in this, that whereas we are all accursed by the sentence of the law because of sin, he now comes into our room, and stands under the stroke of that curse which of right belongs to us; so that the curse no longer lies on the backs of poor sinners—but on him for them and in their stead; therefore he is called a surety, Heb. 7:22. The surety stands in the room of a debtor, malefactor, or him who is any way liable to the law. Such are Adam and all his posterity. We are, by the doom of the law, evildoers, transgressors; and upon that score we stand indebted to the justice of God, and lie under the stroke of his wrath. Now the Lord Jesus Christ seeing us in this condition, he steps in and stands between us and the blow; yes, he takes this wrath and curse off from us unto himself; he stands not only or merely after the manner of a surety among men in the case of debt, for here the surety enters bond with the principal for the payment of the debt.

Christ Jesus does not expect that we should pay the debt ourselves—but he takes it wholly upon himself. As a surety for a murderer or traitor, or some other notorious malefactor who has broken prison and is run away, he lies by it body for body, state for state, and undergoes whatever the malefactor is chargeable with, for satisfying the law. Even so the Lord Jesus stands surety for us runaway malefactors, making himself liable to all that curse that belongs to us, that he might both answer the law fully, and bring us back again to God. As the first Adam stood in the room of all mankind who are fallen; so Christ, the second Adam, stands in the room of all mankind who are to be restored. He sustains all those who

spiritually descend from him, and unto whom he bears the relation of a head.

When God appointed his dearest Son to be a surety for us, and charged all our debts upon him, and required an exact satisfaction to his law and justice, insomuch that he would not abate the Son of his love one farthing-token of the debt—he demonstrated a greater love to justice than if he had damned as many worlds as there are men in the world. Oh, let us never cast an eye upon Christ's suretyship—but let us stand and wonder, yes, let us be swallowed up in a deep admiration of Christ's love, and of his Father's impartial justice!

Ah, what transcendent *wisdom* also does here appear in reconciling the *riches of mercy* and *infinite justice* both in one by the means of a surety! If all the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth, had been put to answer these questions, "How shall sin be pardoned? How shall the sinner be reconciled and saved? How shall the wrath of God be pacified? How shall the justice of God be satisfied? How shall the redemption of man be brought about, in such a way whereby God may be most eminently glorified?" they could never have answered the questions. But God, in his infinite wisdom, has found out a way to save sinners, not only in a way of mercy and grace—but in a way of justice and righteousness; and all this by the means of Christ's suretyship, as has been already declared.

Now, from the consideration of Christ's suretyship, a believer may form up this seventh, safe, comfortable, and blessed plea as to the ten scriptures formerly cited, which refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account: "O blessed Father, remember that your own Son was my ransom, his blood was the price; he was my surety, and undertook to pay for my sins. I know, O blessed God, that you must be satisfied—but remember my surety has satisfied you; not for himself, for he was holy and harmless, a lamb without a spot—but for me. They were my debts he satisfied for; and look over your books, and you shall find that he has cleared all accounts and reckonings between you and me. [When a man marries a woman, he takes her debts too; just so, does Christ when he takes us to be his, he takes our sins also to be his.] The guilt of all my sins have been imputed to my surety, who presented

himself in my stead, to make full payment and satisfaction to your justice."

As Paul said to Philemon, verse 18, concerning his servant Onesimus, "If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, charge it to my account," so says Christ to the penitent and believing soul, "If you have any guilt, any debt to be answered for unto God—charge them all to my account. If you have wronged my Father, I will make satisfaction to the uttermost: for I was made sin for you, Isaiah 53:12; 2 Cor. 5:21. I poured out my soul for your transgressions. It cost me my heart's blood to reconcile you to my Father, and to slay all enmity!" Acts 20:28.

And as Rebekah said to Jacob in another case, "Upon me, my son, be the curse," Gen. 27:13, so says Christ to the believing soul, "Why, your sins exposed you unto the curse of the law—but I was made a curse for you, Gal. 3:13. I did bear that burden myself upon the cross, and upon my shoulders were all your griefs and sorrows borne; I was wounded for your transgressions, and I was bruised for your iniquities!" Isaiah 53:4-8, 10. Therefore we are said to have "redemption and remission of sins in his blood," Eph. 1:7.

"O blessed God! you know that a surety does not pay the debt only for the debtor's good—but as standing in the debtor's stead, and so his payment is reckoned to the debtor. And thus the case stands between Christ and my soul; for, as my surety, he has paid all my debts, and that very payment that he has made, in honor and justice, you are obliged to accept of as made in my stead. O dearest Father! that Jesus, who is God-man, as my surety, he has done all that the law requires of me, and thereby he has freed me from wrath to come, and from the curse that was due to me for my sins, 1 Thes. 1:10. This is my plea, O holy God, and by this plea I shall stand." Hereupon God declares, "This plea I accept as just and good, and therefore enter into the joy of your Lord!"

Christian reader, I have gone as far in the opening and clearing up of those grand points of the gospel that have fallen under our consideration, as I judge fit at this time. By the title-page you may safely conclude, that I have promised much more than in this treatise I have performed—but be a little patient, and by divine assistance, I shall make sure and full

payment.

The covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption, with some other points of high importance, I shall present to you in the second part, which will be the last part. In this first part I did not offer you that which cost me nothing. I desire that all the interest you have in heaven may be so fully and duly improved, that this first part may be so blessed from on high, as that saints and sinners may have cause to bless God to all eternity, for what is brought to hand; and beg hard, that the other part, which is drawn up and fitted for the press, may also be crowned with many blessings. Hereby you will put a high obligation upon the author, to do all he can, to be yet a little further serviceable to your soul and others', to your salvation and others', before he goes hence and shall be seen no more.

**Paradise Opened, or the Secrets, Mysteries,  
and  
Rarities of Divine Love, of Infinite Wisdom,  
and  
of Wonderful Counsel—Laid Open to Public  
View**

By Thomas Brooks, London, 1675.

The Covenant of Grace, and the high and glorious transactions of the Father and the Son in the Covenant of Redemption opened and improved at large, with the resolution of important questions and cases concerning both Covenants.

You have further—Several singular pleas, that all sincere Christians may safely and groundedly make to those ten Scriptures, which speak of the general Judgment, and of that particular Judgment, which must certainly pass upon them all after death.

With some other points of high importance, that tend to the Peace, Comfort, Settlement and Satisfaction of all serious sincere Christians.

To which is added a sober and serious discourse, about the favorable, signal and eminent presence of the Lord with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers.

[The Epistle Dedicatory](#)

[The Covenant of Grace \(Part 1\)](#)

[The Covenant of Grace \(Part 2\)](#)

[The Covenant of Redemption \(Part 1\)](#)

[The Covenant of Redemption \(Part 2\)](#)

[The Covenant of Redemption \(Part 3\)](#)

[The Book of Life](#)

## **THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY**

To my honored friends, Sir John and Mary Moore. The Father of all mercies, and the God of all blessings, bless you with grace and peace here,

and glory hereafter.

**Christian friendship** makes such a knot, that great Alexander cannot cut. It was well observed by Sir Francis Bacon, "That old wood is best to burn, and old books best to read, and old friends best to trust." It was a witty saying of the Duke of Buckingham, "Faithful friends," says he, "are in this age for the most part gone all in pilgrimage, and their return is uncertain." "They seem to take away the sun out of the world," said the heathen orator, who take away friendship from the life of men, and we do not more need fire and water than true friendship." In this epistle I shall endeavor so to acquit myself as becomes a real friend, a cordial friend, a faithful friend, and a soul-friend, as to your great and everlasting concernments, that it may go well with you forever and ever.

The points that are handled in this following treatise, and in the first part, are of as high, choice, necessary, noble, useful, and comfortable a nature, as any that can be treated by mortal man. The four things which God minds most and loves most are:

- (1.) His honor.
- (2.) His worship.
- (3.) His people.
- (4.) His truth.

Surely their souls must needs be of a very sad state, who can read the great truths that are here opened and applied, and not

- (1.) dearly love them,
- (2.) highly prize them,
- (3.) cordially bless God for them,
- (4.) seriously ponder and meditate upon them,
- (5.) and not frequently and diligently study them, and make a gracious

and daily improvement of them.

The covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption, are a rich armory, out of which you may furnish yourselves with all sorts of spiritual weapons, wherewith you may encounter Satan's temptations, wiles, devices, methods, depths, stratagems. Nothing of Satan's can stand before the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption, when well understood and well applied, Eph. 6:11; 2 Cor. 2:11; Rev. 2:24.

In the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption that is passed between God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, [2 Sam. 23:5; Isaiah 54:9-10; Jer. 32:38-41; Zech. 9:11; Heb. 13:20.] you will find many rich and rare cordials, which have a strong tendency to preserve all gracious souls from desponding and fainting:

- (1.) in times of affliction;
- (2.) in times of temptation;
- (3.) in times of desertion;
- (4.) in times of suffering for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake;
- (5.) in times of opposition;
- (6.) and at the time of death and dissolution.

There are no comforts nor cordials which can reach the souls of Christians in their deep distresses, but such as flow from these two covenants. The more it concerns all such Christians to study these two covenants, and to be well acquainted with them, that so they may the more readily have recourse to such cordials as their present estate and condition calls for.

In these two covenants you will find much matter which has a strong tendency:

- (1.) to inflame your love to God and Christ, and all in the covenant of grace;

- (2.) to strengthen your faith;
- (3.) to raise your hopes;
- (4.) to cheer your souls;
- (5.) to quiet and satisfy your consciences;
- (6.) to engage you to a close and holy walking with God;
- (7.) to provoke you to triumph in free grace, and in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- (8.) to sit loose from this world.

[Psalm 116:1-9, 16, and Psalm 3; 2 Sam. 23:5; Psalm 103:17-18, and 111:5, 9, 17; 2 Cor. 2:14; Gal. 6:14.] The riches and treasures that are wrapped up in both these covenants are so *great*, so *sure*, so *durable*, and so *suitable* to all believers—as may well deaden their hearts to all the riches and glories of this lower world, Rev. 12:1.

In these two covenants every sincere Christian will find:

- (1.) a special salve for every spiritual sore;
- (2.) a special remedy against every spiritual malady;
- (3.) a special plaster against every spiritual wound;
- (4.) a spiritual storehouse to supply all their spiritual needs;
- (5.) a spiritual shelter under every spiritual storm.
- (6.) food to nourish you;
- (7.) a staff to support you;
- (8.) a guide to lead you;
- (9.) a fire to warm you;

(10.) springs of life to cheer and refresh you.

In this covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption, you may clearly see the wisdom, counsel, love, and transactions between the Father and the Son sparkling and shining; there being nothing under heaven which contributes more to the peace, comfort, assurance, settlement, and satisfaction of sincere Christians, than such a sight. [It was the saying of an eminent saint, on his deathbed, that he had much peace and quietness, not so much from a greater measure of grace than other Christians had, or from any immediate witness of the Spirit; but because he had a more clear understanding of the covenant of grace than many others, having studied it and preached it so many years as he had done.

The main reason why so many gracious souls are so full of fears, doubts, darkness, and disputes about their internal and eternal estates, is because they have no more clear and full understanding of these two covenants; and if such Christians would but more seriously buckle down to the study of those two covenants, as they are opened and applied in the following treatise, their fears and doubts, etc., would quickly vanish. They would have their triumphant songs; their mourning would soon be turned into rejoicing; and their complaints into hallelujahs. Neither do I know anything in all this world that would contribute more to *seriousness, spiritualness, heavenliness, humbleness, holiness, and fruitfulness*, than a right understanding of these two covenants, and a divine improvement of them. There are many choice Christians who have always either *tears* in their eyes, *complaints* in their mouths, or *sighs* in their breasts; and oh that these, above all others, would make these two covenants their daily companions! Let these few hints suffice concerning the following treatise.

Now, Sir John, I shall crave permission to put you a little in mind of your deceased and glorified father. "He is a true friend," says the Smyranean poet of old, "who continues the memory of his deceased friend." When a friend of Austin's died, he professed he was put into a great strait, whether he himself should be willing to live or willing to die: he was unwilling to live, because one half of himself was dead; yet he was not willing to die, because his friend did partly live in him, though he was dead. Let you and I make the application as we see cause. Your glorified

father's name and memory remains to this day as fresh and fragrant as the Rose of Sharon among all those who fear the Lord, and had the happiness of inward acquaintance with him. "The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot," Proverbs 10:7. In the original it is, "The memory of the just shall be for a blessing;" the very remembering of them shall bring a blessing to such as do remember them. The moralists say of *fame*, or of a man's good *name*—"Whatever commodity you lose, be sure yet to preserve that jewel of a good name." [Heb. 11:13, 39.] This jewel, among others, your honored father carried with him to the grave—yes, to heaven.

There is nothing which raises a man's name and fame in the world like *holiness*. The *seven deacons* which the church chose, were "holy men," Acts 6:5; and they were men of "good report," ver. 3. They were men well witnessed unto, well testified of, as the Greek word imports. [The Persians seldom write their king's name but in characters of gold. Throughout the Old and New Testaments God has written the names of just men in *golden letters*, as I may speak.] *Cornelius* was a "holy man," Acts 10:1-4; and he was a man of "good report" among all the nation of the Jews, ver. 22. *Ananias* was a "holy man," Acts 9:10, 20; and he was a man of a "good report," Acts 22:12. *Caius* and *Demetrius* were both "holy men," and of a "good report;" witness that Third Epistle of John. The *patriarchs* and *prophets* were "holy men," and they were men of a "good report," Heb. 11:1-2, "For by it the elders obtained a good report;" their holiness did eternalize their names. The *apostles* were "holy men," 1 Thes. 2:10; and they were men of "good report," 2 Cor. 6:8.

Now certainly it is none of the least of mercies to be well reputed and reported of. Next to a good *God* and a good *conscience*—a good report, a good *name*—is the noblest blessing. It is no great matter, if a man is great and rich in the world, to obtain a *great* report; but without holiness you can never obtain a *good* report. Holiness, uprightness, righteousness, will embalm your names; it will make them immortal. Psalm 112:6, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." Wicked men many times outlive their names, but the names of the righteous outlive them. Holy Abel has been dead above five thousand years, and yet his name is as fresh and fragrant as it was the first day he was made a martyr, 1 John

3:12. When a sincere Christian dies, he leaves his *name* as a sweet and as a lasting scent behind him; his *fame* shall live when he is dead. This is verified in your precious father, who is now "asleep in Jesus," 1 Thes. 4:14.

Now you both very well know that there was no Christian friend who had so great a room in his heart, in his affections, as I had; and you can easily guess at the reasons of it. Neither can you forget how frequently, both in his health, sickness, and before his death, he would be pressing of me to be a soul-friend to you, and to improve all the interest I had in heaven for your internal and eternal good, that he might meet you both in that heavenly world, Mat. 25:33, and that you might both be found with him at the right hand of Christ in the great day of the Lord. I know that your glorified father, while he was on earth, did lay up many a prayer for you in heaven. My desire and prayer is, that those prayers of his may return in mighty power upon both of your hearts; and having a fair opportunity now before me, I shall endeavor to improve it for the everlasting advantage of both your souls. Therefore let my following counsel be not only accepted, but carefully, faithfully, and diligently followed by you, that so you may be happy here and blessed hereafter.

**1.** The first word of counsel is this: **Let it be the principal care of both of you, to look after the welfare of your precious and immortal souls.** If your souls are safe, all is safe; if they are well, all is well. But if they are lost, all is lost, and you lost and undone in both worlds. [Mat. 16:26. "The soul is a greater miracle in man than all the miracles wrought among men," says Augustine.] Christ, who only paid the price of souls, has told us that one soul is more worth than all the world. Chrysostom well observes, "that whereas God has given us many other things double—namely, two *eyes* to see with, two *ears* to hear with, two *hands* to work with, and two *feet* to walk with, to the intent that the failing of the one might be supplied with the other—he has given us but one *soul*. If that is lost, have you, another soul to give in recompense for it?"

Ah, friends! Christ left his Father's bosom and all the glory of heaven, for the good of souls. He assumed the nature of men for the happiness of the soul of man. He trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath for souls. He

prayed for souls. He paid for souls. He bled out his heart-blood for souls. [Isa 63:3; John 17; Luke 23:34; Mat. 26:28.] The soul is the breath of God, the beauty of man, the wonder of angels, and the envy of devils! It is of an angelical nature; it is a heavenly spark, a celestial plant, and of a divine offspring, 1 Pet. 5:8.

Again, weigh well "the incomparable price" which Christ paid for the redemption of the soul, 1 Pet. 1:18-19. What are the riches of the East or West Indies, the spoil of the richest nations, mountains of diamonds and gold, compared to the price that Christ laid down for souls! John 1:4, 12, and Heb. 22:23. The soul is a spiritual substance, capable of the knowledge of God, of union with God, of communion with God, and of an eternal fruition of God. There is nothing which can suit the soul below God, nor anything which can satisfy the soul without God, nor anything which can save the soul but God. The soul is so choice, so high, and so noble a piece—that it divinely scorns all the world in point of acceptance, justification, satisfaction, enjoyment, and salvation.

Christ made himself an offering for sin—that souls might not be undone by sin. The Lord died—that slaves might live. The Son died—that servants might live. The natural Son died—that adopted sons might live. The only-begotten Son died—that bastards might live. Yes, the judge died—that malefactors might live! Heb. 9:11-14, and 10:10,14; Gal. 4:4-6; Heb. 2:8. Ah, friends! as there was never sorrow like Christ's sorrow, so there was never love like Christ's love, and of all his love, there is none compared to his love for souls, Isaiah 53:3, and Gal. 2:20. To say much in a little space, the spiritual enemies which daily war against the soul, the glorious angels which hourly guard the soul, and the precious ordinances which God has appointed as means both to convert and nourish the soul, show forth that love. Eph. 6:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:11; Romans 10:17; 1 Cor. 11:23-27. The soul is capable of "a crown of life," Rev. 2:10; of "a crown of glory," 1 Pet. 5:4; of "a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. 4:8; of "an incorruptible crown," 1 Cor. 9:25.

Earthly crowns have so many cares, fears, vexations, and dangers which daily attend them, that oftentimes they make the heads and hearts of monarchs ache, which made Cyrus say, "You look upon my crown and my purple robes, but did you but know how they were lined with thorns, you

would not stoop to take them up!" [Proverbs 27:4, "Does the crown endure to all generations?"] But the crowns which immortal souls are capable of, are crowns without crosses; they are not attended with care of keeping or fear of losing; there are no evil persons nor evil spirits who haunt those crowns. Darius, that great monarch, fleeing from his enemies, he threw away the crown of gold from his head that he might run the faster; but a sincere Christian is in no danger of losing his crown, 2 Tim. 4:8. His crown is laid up in a safe hand, in an omnipotent hand, 1 Pet. 1:5. Now what do all these things speak out, but the preciousness and excellency of the soul?

Once more, the excellency of the body, intimates a more than ordinary excellency of this jewel. The body is of all materials the most excellent. How does David admire the rare texture and workmanship of his body! "I am fearfully and wonderfully made. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb." Psalm 139:14-15. When workmen have some choice piece in hand, they perfect it in private, and then bring it forth to the light for men to gaze at. So here, the greatest miracle in the world is man, in whose very body—how much more in his soul!—are miracles enough to fill a volume.

Austin complains that men much wonder at the high mountains of the earth, the huge waves of the sea, the deep waterfalls of rivers, the vastness of the ocean, and at the motions of the stars, etc., but they wonder not at all at their wonderful selves. Galen, a profane physician and a great atheist, writing of the excellent parts of man's body, he could not choose but sing an hymn to that God, whoever he was, who was the author of so excellent and admirable a piece of work; he could not but cry out, "Now I adore the God of nature." Now if the *cabinet* (the body) is so marvelously wrought, how much more is the *jewel* (the soul) which is contained in it! Oh, how richly and gloriously is the soul embroidered! How divinely inlaid and enameled is the soul!

Princes impress their images or effigies upon the choicest metals, namely, gold and silver. God has engraved his own image with his own hand upon angels and men, Gen. 1:26. The soul is the glory of the creation, a beam of God, a spark of celestial brightness, a vessel of honor, a bird of paradise, a habitation for God. The soul is spiritual in its essence; God breathed it in;

God has invested it with many noble endowments; he has made it a mirror of beauty, and printed upon it a surpassing excellency. The soul is spiritual in its object; it contemplates God and heaven. God is the orb and center where the soul does fix. [Gen. 2:7; Heb. 12:9; Eccles. 12:7; Zech. 12:1; P. 116:7; John 14:8; Psalm 17:16.] God is the terminus of the soul—the soul moves to him as to his rest, "Return to your rest, O my soul." This dove can find no rest but in this heavenly ark. ["Lord," says Austin, "you have made us for yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it comes unto yourself!"]

Nothing can *fill* the soul but God, nothing can *quiet* the soul but God, nothing can *satisfy* the soul but God, nothing can *secure* the soul but God, nothing can *save* the soul but God. The soul being spiritual, God only can be the adequate object of it. The soul is spiritual in its operations. It being immaterial, does not depend upon the body in its working. The rich and rare endowments, and the noble operations of the soul, speak out the excellency of the soul. "The soul," says Aristotle, "has a nature distinct from the body; it moves and operates of itself, though the body be dead, and has no dependence upon, or co-existence with, the body." The soul has an intrinsic principle of life and motion, though it be separate from the body. And does not the *immortality* of the soul speak out the *excellency* of the soul? [Luke 23:43; 1 Thes. 4:17-18; Phil. 1:23; Acts 7:59.]

Luke 12:4, "Fear not those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Therefore the soul, not being capable of being killed, is not in a possibility of dying. The essence of the soul is spiritual. It has a beginning, but no end; it runs parallel with eternity. The soul does not wax old; it lives forever, which we cannot affirm of any sublunary created glory. To conclude this first word of counsel, what Job says of wisdom, I may fitly apply to the soul, "Man knows not the price thereof; it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire, the gold and crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold," Job 28:13, 16-17. O my friends, it is the greatest wisdom, policy, equity, and justice, to provide for your precious souls, to secure your precious souls; for they are jewels of more worth than ten thousand worlds. All the honors, riches, greatness, and glory of this world

are but chips, toys, and pebbles, compared to these glorious pearls. But,

**2.** The second word of counsel is this, as you would be safe here, and saved in the great day of the Lord, as you would be happy here, and blessed hereafter, **be taken up with nothing below a gracious acquaintance with Christ, a choice acceptance of Christ, a holy reliance upon Christ, a full resignation of yourselves to Christ, and a real and glorious union with Christ.** Acts 2:20; Job 22:21; 1 Tim. 1:15; Job 13:15; 2 Cor. 2:11. If you do, you are lost and undone in both worlds!

**[1.] First, Some rely on a *name* to live, when they are dead,** Rev. 3:1, dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2:1, dead God-wards, and dead Christ-wards, and dead heaven-wards, and dead holiness-wards. The the worst men, often get the best names. The *Alcoran* of the Turks has its name from *brightness*; but it is full of darkness, and fraught with falsehoods. It will be but a poor comfort to any, for the *world* to commend them as gracious, if *God* condemns them as graceless; for the *world* to commend them as pious, if *God* condemns them as impious; for the *world* to commend them as sincere, if *God* condemns them as hypocrites. But,

**[2.] Secondly, Some rely on a 'form of godliness' when they are strangers to the 'power of godliness'.** 2 Tim. 3:5; when they deny, yes, when they oppose and persecute, the godly. Such monsters this age has abounded with; but their *seeming* goodness is but a religious cheat, Acts 13:45, 50.

**[3.] Thirdly, There are some who rely on their religious duties and services;** in their praying, fasting, prophesying, hearing, receiving. They make a God, a Christ, a Savior of their own duties and services! This was the undoing and damning sin of the Scribes and Pharisees, and is the undoing and damning sin of many thousands in our days, Mat. 7:22; Luke 18:12, 13:26, and 16:15; Ezek. 33:31-32.

**[4.] Fourthly, There are many who rely on their common gifts and abilities;** in a gift of knowledge, and in a gift of teaching, and in a gift of utterance, and in a gift of memory, and in a gift of prayer; and this

proves ruinous and destructive to them, Mat. 7:22; Romans 2:17-24; 1 Cor. 12.; Heb. 6:4-5.

**[5.] Fifthly, There are many who rely on their riches, prosperity, and worldly grandeur and glory.** Proverbs 18:11, "The rich man's wealth is his strong city." "Don't weary yourself trying to get rich. Why waste your time? For riches can disappear as though they had the wings of a bird!" Proverbs 23:4-5. It is hard to have wealth, and not trust to it, Mat. 19:24. Wealth was never true to those who have trusted it. There is an utter *uncertainty* in riches, 1 Tim. 6:17; an *impotency* to help in an evil day, Zeph. 1:18; an impossibility to stretch to eternity, unless it be to destroy the owner forever, [Rich men's wealth proves an hindrance to their happiness, Eccles. 5:13; James 5:1-2.] Proverbs 10:15; Psalm 73:19; Mat. 20:26. There is nothing more clear in Scripture and history, than that riches, prosperity, and worldly glory—have been commonly their portion who never have had a God for their portion, Luke 16:25. It was an excellent saying of Lewis, emperor of Germany: "Such goods are worth getting and owning—which will not sink or wash away if a shipwreck happens." [Riches are called thick clay, Hab. 2:6, which will sooner break the back, than lighten the heart.] "Only the wise man is the rich man," says the philosopher. Augustine says, "that earthly riches are full of poverty, they cannot enrich the soul; for oftentimes under silken apparel there is a threadbare soul."

He who is rich in conscience, sleeps more soundly than he who is richly clothed in purple.

"No man is rich, who cannot carry into eternity, that which he has. That which we must leave behind us, is not ours—but belongs to someone else." [Ambrose]

"The shortest way to true riches is by their contempt. It is great riches not to desire riches. He has most—who covets least." [Seneca.]

When one was commending the riches and wealth of merchants; the poor man replied, "I do not love that wealth which hangs upon ropes; for if they break, the ship miscarries, and then where is the merchant's riches?"

"If I had an enemy, whom it was lawful to wish evil unto, I would chiefly wish him great store of riches, for then he should never enjoy peace and quiet." [Latimer.]

The historian Tacitus observes, that the riches of Cyprus invited the Romans to hazard many dangerous fights for the conquering of it.

"Earthly riches," says Augustine, "are an evil master, a treacherous servant, fathers of flattery, sons of grief, a cause of fear to those that have them, and a cause of sorrow to those who lack them."

I have read a famous story of Zelimus, emperor of Constantinople, who after he had captured Egypt, he found a great deal of treasure there; and the soldiers coming to him, and asked him what they should do with the rich citizens of Egypt. "Oh," says the emperor, "hang them all—for they are too rich to be made slaves!" This was all the thanks they had for the riches they were robbed of. What more contemptible than *a rich fool, a golden beast*? Not but that some are great and gracious, rich and righteous, as Abraham, Lot, Job, David, Hezekiah, etc.

By these short hints you may see the folly and vanity of those men who trust in their riches. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, Many rely on their own righteousness,** which at best is but as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:6. This was the damning sin of the Jews, and of the scribes and Pharisees; and is the undoing sin of many of the professors of this age, Romans 10:2-3; Mat. 5:20.

**[7.] Seventhly, Many rely on their external church privileges,** crying out, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!" Jer. 7:4, 8-11, when they have no union nor communion with the Lord of the temple. These forget that there will come a day, when the "children of the kingdom shall be cast out," Mat. 8:12. It would be very good for such people to make these five scriptures their daily companions, Mat. 22:10, 12-14; Luke 13:25-28; Romans 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15; Jer. 9:25-26. They should never dare to rely on their outward church privileges, which can neither secure them from hell, nor secure them of heaven. But,

## **[8.] Eighthly, Many who rely on common convictions.**

*Judas* had mighty convictions of his sin, but they ended in desperation, Mat. 27:4-5.

*Balaam* was mightily enlightened and convinced, in as much that he desired to die the death of the righteous; but under all his convictions he died Christless and graceless, Num. 23 and 24.

*Nebuchadnezzar* had great convictions, Dan. 4:31-32, yet we do not read that ever he was converted before he was driven from the society of men, to be a companion with the beasts of the field, Dan. 4:31-32. He had strong convictions, (1.) by Daniel's interpreting of his dream, Dan. 2:47. (2.) He told Daniel, that "his God was the God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets;" and yet presently he fell into gross idolatry, Dan. 3, and strictly commanded to worship the golden image that he had set up; and as if he had lost all his former convictions. He was so swelled up with pride and impudence, as to say to the three Hebrew children, when they divinely scorned to worship the image he had set up, "What God is there that can deliver you out of *my* hand?" ver. 15.

*Saul* had great convictions, "I have sinned! Return, my son David, I will no more do you harm," etc. "And Saul lifted up his voice and wept; and he said unto David, You are more righteous than I, for you have rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded you evil," 1 Sam. 26:21, 25, and 24:16-19. But these convictions issued in no saving change, for after these he lived and died in the height of his sins.

*Pharaoh* had great convictions: "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them—I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." And again, "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said—I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you," Exod. 9:27, and 10:16. But these convictions issued in no reformation, in no sound conversion, and therefore drowning and damning followed.

*Cain* was under convictions, but went and built a city, and lost his convictions in a crowd of worldly business, Gen. 4.

*Herod* and *Felix* were under convictions, but they went off, and never issued in any saving work upon their souls, Mark 6:20; Acts 24:25.

Oh, how many men and women have fallen under such deep convictions, that they have day and night cried out of their sins, and of their lost and undone estates, and that they would certainly go to hell and be damned forever, so that many good people have hoped that these were the pangs of the new birth; and yet either merry company, or carnal pleasures and delights, or much worldly business, or else length of time—have wrought off all their convictions, and they have grown more profane and wicked than ever they were before. As water heated, if taken off the fire, will soon return to its natural coldness, yes, becomes colder after heating than before, (says Aristotle,) this has been the case of many under convictions. I shall forbear giving of particular instances. But,

**[9.] Ninthly, Many rely on an outward change and reformation;** they have left some old courses and sinful practices which formerly they walked in, etc., and therefore they conclude and hope that their condition is good, and that all is well, and shall be forever well with them. They were accustomed to swear, whore, be drunk, profane Sabbaths, reproach saints, etc.; but now they have left all these practices, and therefore they assume that the main work is done, and they shall be saved forever.

I confess that sin is that abominable thing which God hates, Jer. 44:4, and therefore it is a very great mercy to turn from it. To leave one sin is a greater mercy than to win the whole world, Mat. 16:26; and it is certain that he who does not outwardly reform, shall never go to heaven, Job 22:23, 26. He who does not leave his sins, he can never be happy here nor blessed hereafter. And yet it is possible for a man, with Herod, to reform many things, and yet be a lost and undone man forever, as he was, Mark 6:20. Judas was a very reformed man, but he was never inwardly changed nor throughout sanctified, Mat. 26:20-22; 1 Thes. 5:23. The scribes and Pharisees were outwardly reformed, but they were not inwardly renewed. A man may be another man than what once he was, and yet not be a new man, a new creature.

When a sinner is *sermon-sick*, oh, then he will leave his sins; but when that sickness is off, he returns with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow

to her wallowing in the mire, 2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Pet. 2:20, 22. Sometimes *conscience* is like the handwriting upon the wall, Dan. 5:5-8: it makes the sinner's countenance to change, and his thoughts to be troubled, and the joints of his loins to be loosed, and his knees to knock one against another. And now the sinner is all for reforming, and turning over a new leaf; but when these agonies of conscience are over, the sinner returns to his old courses again, and oftentimes is twofold more a child of hell than before, Mat. 23:15.

There was a man in this city who was given up to the highest wickednesses; on his sick-bed conscience made an arrest of him, and he was filled with such amazing horror and terror, that he cried out day and night that he was damned, he was damned, he was damned; and when he had some small intervals, oh, what large promises did he make! what a new man, a reformed man, he would be! but when in time his terrors and sickness wrought off, he was sevenfold worse than before. Sometimes the awakened sinner parts with some sins to make room for others, and sometimes the sinner seems to give a bill of divorce to this sin and that; but it is only because his bodily strength fails him, or because he lacks an opportunity, or because there is a more strict eye and watch upon him, or because the sword of the magistrate is more sharpened against him, or because he lacks fuel, James 4:3; he has not the money to afford it; or because some company, or some relations, or some friends lie between him and his sins, so that he must either tread over them, or else keep from his sins; or because he has deeply smarted for this sin—perhaps his name has been blotted, his credit and reputation stained, his trade decayed, his health impaired, his body wasted, etc., Proverbs 6:32-35. By these short hints it is evident that men may attain to some outward reformation, whose states and hearts were never changed, and who were never taken into marriage union with Christ. But,

**[10.] Tenthly and lastly, Many rely on their particular church party.** As of old some cried up Paul as the only deep preacher, and others cried up Apollos as the only eloquent preacher, and many cried up Cephas as the most zealous preacher, 1 Cor. 1:10-13. "We are for the Church of England," say some. "We are for the Baptist way," say others. "We are for the Presbyterian government," cry some. "We are for the

Congregational way," cry others. I have so much charity, as to judge that some of all these different parties and persuasions are really holy and will be eternally happy, are gracious and will be glorious, are sanctified and will be saved, are now governed by Christ and will be hereafter glorified with Christ.

*Judas* was one of Christ's party, if I may so speak, and yet he had no part nor portion in Christ, Mat. 26:20-26. *Demas* was one of Paul's party, and yet he played the apostate, and turned an idolatrous priest at Thessalonica, as Dorotheus says, 2 Tim. 4:10. And *Phygellus* and *Hermogenes* were of Paul's party, but were only famous for their relapse and apostasy, 2 Tim. 1:15. *Hymeneus* and *Alexander* were of Paul's party, but they made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, 1 Tim. 1:19-20. The *five foolish virgins* were in society with the wise, and were accounted as members of their association, and yet the door of heaven was shut against them, Mat. 25:1-2, 12. Many light, slight, and vain people went with the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, even a mixed multitude that embarked in the same journey with them, and yet never arrived at the land of promise, Exod. 12:38; Num. 11:4.

O my friends, it is not a man's being of this *party* or that, this *church* or that, this way or that, this *society* or that—which will bring him to heaven, without a spiritual union and communion with Christ, 1 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 1:2. He who would enjoy the heavenly inheritance must be espoused to Christ, the heir of all things: "For he who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son has not life," 1 John 5:12. This marriage-union between Christ and the soul is set forth to the life, throughout the book of Solomon's Song, Cant. 2:16. Though the marriage-union between Christ and the soul is imperceptible to the eye of reason, yet it is real, 1 Cor. 6:17. Things in nature often work insensibly, yet really. We do not see the hand move on the dial, yet it moves. The sun exhales and draws up the vapors of the earth insensibly, yet really, Eccles. 11:6. Now **this marriage-union between Christ and the soul** includes and takes in these following particulars—

**First, This marriage-union between Christ and the soul, includes the soul's giving a present bill of divorce to all other lovers—sin, the world, and Satan.** [Consult these scriptures: Hosea

14:8; Isaiah 2:20, and 30:22; Psalm 45:10; Exod.12:33; Isaiah 59:20.] Are you seriously and sincerely willing forever to renounce these, and be divorced from these? There is no mixing between Christ and them. Sin and your souls must part—or Christ and your souls can never meet! Sin and your souls must be two—or Christ and your souls can never be one! You must in good earnest fall out with sins—or else you can never in good earnest fall in with a Savior! The heart must be separated from all other lovers—before Christ will take the soul into his bed of loves. Christ takes none into marriage-union with himself, but such as are cordially willing that all old former leagues with sin and the world shall be forever broken and dissolved. Your *cordial willingness* to part with sin—is your parting with sin in divine account.

You may as soon bring east and west together, light and darkness together, heaven and hell together—as bring Christ to espouse himself to such a soul, as has no mind, no will, no heart to be divorced from his former lovers. It is a foolish thing for any to think of keeping both Christ and their lusts too. It is a vain thing for any to think of saving the life of his sins, and the life of his soul too. If sin escapes, your soul cannot escape! If you are not the death of your sins, they will be the death and ruin of your soul! Marriage is a knot or tie, wherein people are mutually limited and bound each to other, in a way of marital separation from all others; and this in Scripture is called a covenant, Proverbs 2:7. So when anyone marries Christ, he does therein discharge himself in affection and subjection from all that is contrary unto Christ, and solemnly covenants and binds himself to Christ alone; he will have no Savior and no Lord but Christ, and to him will he cleave forever! Psalm 63:8; Acts 11:23. But,

**Secondly, This marriage-union with Christ includes a hearty willingness, to take, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ for your Savior and sovereign.** [John 1:12; Acts 5:31; Col. 2:6: weigh well these scriptures: Psalm 112:3, and 25:5; Hosea 2:7.] Are you willing to consent to the match? It is not enough that Christ is willing to enter into a marriage-union with us—but we must be willing also to enter into a marriage-union with him. [Many can choose Christ as a refuge to hide them from danger, and as a friend to help them in their need—who yet refuse him as a husband.] God will never force a Christ, nor force

salvation upon us, whether we will or not. Many approve of Christ, and cry up Christ, who yet are not willing to give their consent, that he, and he alone shall be their Prince and Savior. Though the *knowledge* of the other person is necessary and fit; yet it is not sufficient to marriage, without *consent*; for marriage ought to be a voluntary transaction of persons. In marriage we do in a sort give away ourselves, and elect and make choice for ourselves, and therefore *consent* is a necessary concurrence to marriage.

Now this *consent* is nothing else but a free and plain act of the will, accepting of Jesus Christ before all others to be its head and Lord, and in the soul's choice of him to be its Savior and sovereign. Then a man is married to Christ—when he does freely and absolutely and presently receive the Lord Jesus. Not, "I would have Christ if it did not prejudice my worldly estate, ease, friends, relations, etc." Nor is it, "*Hereafter*, I will accept of him when I come to die, and am in distress." But it is, "Now when salvation is offered, now while Christ offers himself, I now yield up my heart and life unto him." But,

**Thirdly, This marriage-union with Christ includes a universal and perpetual consent for all time, and in all states and conditions.** There is, you know, a great difference between a wife and a strumpet; a wife takes her husband upon all terms, to have and to hold, for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health; whereas a strumpet is only for hire and lust. When the purse is emptied, or the body wasted and strength consumed, the harlot's love is at an end. Just so here. That acceptance and consent which ties the marriage-knot between Christ and the soul, must be an unlimited and universal acceptance and consent, when we take the Lord Jesus Christ wholly and entirely, without any secret reservations or exceptions. That soul that will have Christ—must have *all Christ* or *no Christ*, "for Christ is not divided," 1 Cor. 1:13. That soul must entertain him to all purposes and intents, he must follow the Lamb wherever he goes, Rev. 14:4, though it should be through fire and water, over mountains and hills. He must take him with his cup of *affliction*—as well as his cup of *consolation*, Psalm 66:12; with his *shameful cross*—as well as his *glorious crown*; with his great *sufferings*—as well as his great *salvation*, Heb. 2:3; with his *grace*

—as well as his *mercy*; with his *Spirit* to lead and govern them—as well as his *blood* to redeem and justify them; to *suffer* for him—as well as to *reign* with him; to *die* for him—as well as to *live* to him, 2 Tim. 2:12; Acts 21:13; Romans 14:7-8.

Christianity, like the wind acacias, does ever draw clouds and afflictions after it. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution," 2 Tim. 3:12. A man may have many faint wishes and cold desires after godliness, and yet escape persecution; yes, he may make some tries and attempts, as if he would be godly, and yet escape persecution. But when a man is thoroughly resolved to be godly, and sets himself in good earnest upon pursuing after holiness, and living a life of godliness—then he must expect to meet with afflictions and persecutions. Whoever escapes, the godly man shall not escape persecution in one kind or another, in one degree or another. [Within the first three hundred years after Christ, all who made a profession of the apostle's doctrine, were cruelly persecuted.]

He who is peremptorily resolved to live up to holy rules, and to live out holy principles—must prepare for sufferings. All the roses of holiness are surrounded with pricking briars. The history of the Ten Persecutions, and that little Book of Martyrs, the 11th of the Hebrews, and Mr. Fox's Acts and Monuments, with many other treatises that are extant, do abundantly evidence that from age to age, and from one generation to another—they those who been born after the flesh have persecuted those who have been born after the spirit; and that the seed of the serpent have been still a-multiplying of troubles upon the seed of the woman, Gal. 4:29. But a believer's future glory and pleasure will abundantly recompense him for his present pain and ignominy.

But such as will have Christ for their Savior and sovereign, but still with some *proviso* or other—namely, that they may keep such a beloved lust, or enjoy such carnal pleasures and delights, or raise such an estate for them and their children, or comply with the times, and such and such great men's desires, or that they may follow the Lamb only in *sunshine* weather, etc., these are still Satan's bond-slaves, and such as Christ can take no pleasure nor delight to espouse himself unto. But,

**3. The third word of advice and counsel is this, namely, "Put off**

**the old man, and put on the new man."** Col. 9-10. Consult these scriptures. [Eph. 4:22-24; Gal. 6:35; 1 Pet. 2:2.] You must be new creatures, or else it had been better that you had been any creatures than what you are: 2 Cor. 5:17, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." The new creature includes a new light, a new sight, a new understanding. The new creature sees **sin** to be the greatest evil, and **Christ** and **holiness** to be the chief good, Psalm 38:4, and Cant. 5:10. When a man is a new creature, he has a new judgment and opinion, he looks upon **God** as his only happiness, and **Christ** as his all in all, Col. 3:11, and upon the ways of God as ways of pleasantness, Proverbs 3:17. The new man has new cares, new requests, new desires. Oh that my soul may be saved! Acts 2:37, and 16:30; Oh that my interest in Christ may be cleared! Oh that my heart may be adorned with grace! Oh that my whole man may be secured from wrath to come! 1 Thes. 1:10.

The new man is a man of new principles. If you make a serious inspection into his soul, you shall find a principle of faith, of repentance, of holiness, of love, of contentment, of patience, etc. [Phil. 1:29; Acts 11:18; 1 Thes. 4:9; Phil. 4:11; 1 Cor. 4:12.] There is not any one spiritual and heavenly principle respecting salvation, but may be found in the new creature. The new man experiences a new combat and conflict in his soul. "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit lusts against the flesh." "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind," Gal. 5:17, and Romans 7:23. The new man experiences a combat in every faculty. Here is the new judgment against the old judgment, and the new will against the old will, and the new affections against the old affections. And the reason is this; because there is flesh and spirit, sin and grace co-existent and cohabiting in every faculty of the soul; renewing grace is in every faculty, and remaining corruption is also in every faculty, like Jacob and Esau struggling in the same womb, or like heat and cold in the same water, and in every part of it.

The new man also combats with all sorts of known sins, whether they are great or small, inward or outward, whether they are the sins of the heart or the sins of the life. This conflict in the new man is a daily conflict, a constant conflict. The new creature can never, the new creature will

never, be at peace with sin; sin and the new creature will fight it out to the death. The new creature will never be brought into a league of friendship with sin.

The new man is a man of a new life and conversation. A new life always attends a new heart. You see it in Paul, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, the jailor, and all the others that are upon Scripture record. [See 1 John 3:14; 2 Cor. 6:14; Psalm 120:5, 139:21, and 42:4.]

The new man has new society, new company: Psalm 119:63, "I am a companion of all those who fear you, and of those who keep your precepts," Psalm 16:3, "My goodness extends not to you, but to the saints who are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." Holy society is the only society for people with holy hearts, and in that society can no man delight, until God renews his heart by grace.

Many men be as the planet Mercury, good when in company of those that are good; and bad when in company of those that are bad. These are those who put honesty to an open shame. [Cicero had rather have no companion than a bad one.] Clothes and company do oftentimes tell tales in a mute but significant language. "Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you what you are," says the Spanish proverb. Algerius, an Italian martyr, had rather be in prison with Cato than with Caesar in the senate-house.

But to conclude this word of counsel, the new man walks by a new rule. As soon as ever God has made a man a new creature, he presently sets up a new rule of life to walk by, and that is no other but that which God himself sets up for his people to walk by, and that is his written word: Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony;" Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path;" ver. 133, "Order my steps in your word;" Gal. 6:16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." This rule he sets up for all matters of faith, and for all matters of fact. The word is like the stone Garamantides, which has drops of gold within itself, enriching of every soul who makes it his rule to walk by. Alexander kept Homer's *Iliads* in a cabinet, embroidered with gold and pearls; and shall not we keep the word in the cabinet of our hearts, that it may be always

ready at hand as a rule for us to walk by? Well, friends, whatever you do forget, be sure that forever you remember this—namely, that none can or shall be glorious creatures, but such as by grace are made new creatures. But,

**4. The fourth word of advice and counsel is this—Labor to be more inwardly sincere, than outwardly glorious.** "The king's daughter is all glorious within," Psalm 45:13. Oh labor rather to be good, than to be *thought* to be good; to live than to have a name to live, Rev. 3:1, 15-17. Whatever you let go, be sure you hold fast your integrity. A man were better to let friends go, relations go, estate go, liberty go, and all go—than let his integrity go. "I will maintain my integrity until I die." Job 27:5. Job is highly and fully resolved to keep his integrity, against all assaults of enemies or suspicions of friends. Job's integrity was the best jewel he had in all the world, and this jewel he was resolved to keep to his dying day. It was neither good men, nor bad men, nor devils—which could baffle Job out of his integrity; and though they all pulled, and pulled hard, at his integrity, yet he would not let it go, he would hold fast this pearl of great price, whatever it cost him. The sincere Christian, like John Baptist, will hold his integrity though he lose his head for it, Mark 6. The very heathens loved an honest and sincere spirit, as he who wished that there was a window in his bosom—that all the world might see what was in his heart. **Integrity** will be a sword to defend you, a staff to support you, a star to guide you, and a cordial to cheer you; and therefore, above all gettings—get sincerity, and above all keepings—keep sincerity, as your crown, your comfort, your life. But,

**5. The fifth word of comfort and counsel is this—Be true to the light of your consciences, and maintain and keep up a constant tenderness in your consciences.** A tender conscience is a mercy worth more than a world. **Conscience is God's spy in our bosoms:** keep this clear and tender, and then all is well, Acts 24:16; 2 Cor. 1:12. Never act against the dictates of conscience; never rebel against the light of conscience. It would be better that all the world should upbraid you and reproach you—than that your consciences should upbraid you and reproach you, Job 27:5-6. Beware of stifling conscience, and of suppressing the warnings of conscience—lest a warning conscience prove

a gnawing conscience, a tormenting conscience. The blind man in the Gospel, Mark 8, newly recovering his sight, imagined trees to be men; and the Burgundians expecting a battle, supposed long thistles to be lances. Thus men under guilt are apt to conceit every thistle a tree, and every tree a man, and every man a devil. Take heed of *tongue-tied consciences*; for when God shall untie these strings, and unmuzzle your consciences, conscience will then be heard, and ten concerts of music shall not drown her clamorous cries.

Hearken to the voice of conscience, obey the voice of conscience, and when conscience shall whisper you in the ear, and tell you there is this and that amiss in the house, in the habit, in the heart, in the life, in the closet; don't say to conscience, "Conscience be quiet, be still, make no noise now, I will hear you in a more convenient season," Acts 24:24-25. The heathen orator could say, "A man may not depart a hair's-breadth all his life long from the dictates of a good conscience." Will not this heathen one day rise in judgment against those who daily crucify the light of their own consciences? But,

**6. The sixth word of advice and counsel is this—Make it the great business of your lives to make sure of those things which will go with you beyond the grave.** Riches and honors and titles, and all worldly grandeur—won't go with us beyond the grave. Saladin, a Turkish emperor, lying at the point of death, after many glorious victories, commanded that a white sheet should be borne before him to his grave, upon the point of a spear, with this proclamation: "These are the rich spoils which Saladin carries away with him, of all his triumphs and victories, of all his riches and realms that he had; now nothing at all is left for him to carry with him but this sheet." It is with us in this world as it was in the Jewish fields and vineyards—they might pluck and eat what they would while they were there—but they might not pocket nor put up anything to carry with them, Deut. 23:24-25. Death, as a porter, stands at the gate, and strips men of all their worldly wealth and glory!

Athenseus speaks of one who, at the hour of death, devoured many pieces of gold, and sewed the rest in his coat, commanding that they should be buried with him. Hermocrates, being loath that any man should enjoy his goods after him—in his will, made himself the heir of his own goods.

These muck-worms would fain live still on this side Jordan; having made their gold their God, they cannot think of parting with it. They would, if possible, carry the world out of the world. But what says the apostle? "We brought nothing with us into this world, and it is certain"—see how he assures it, as if some rich wretches made question of it—"we can carry nothing out," nothing but a winding-sheet, 1 Tim. 6:7. Oh, how should this alarm us to make sure our calling and election, [2 Pet. 1:10; 2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Sam. 23:5; 1 Thes. 5:23; 2 Cor. 1:12.] to make sure our interest in Christ, to make sure our covenant-relation, to make sure a work of grace in power upon our souls, to make sure the testimony of a good conscience, Gal. 4:5-7, to make sure our sonship, our saintship, our heirship, etc., Romans 8:15-16; for these are the only things that will go with us into another world.

In the Marian persecution there was a woman who, being convened before Bonner, then Bishop of London, upon the trial of religion, he threatened her that he would take away her husband from her. Says she, "Christ is my husband." I will take away your child. "Christ," says she, is better to me than ten sons." I will strip you, says he, of all your outward comfort. "Yes, but Christ is mine," says she, "and you cannot strip me of him." Assurance that Christ was hers, and that he would go with her beyond the grave, bore her heart up above the threats of being robbed of all, Heb. 10:34. When a great and rich man had showed a sober, serious, knowing Christian his riches, his stately habitation, his pleasant gardens, his delightful walks, his rich grounds, and his various sorts of pleasure; the serious Christian, turning himself to this great man, said: "Sir, you had need to make sure Christ and heaven, you had need make sure something that will go with you beyond the grave, for else when you die you will be a very great loser!"

O my friends, I must tell you, it highly concerns you to make sure something that will go with you beyond the grave, or else you will be very great losers when you come to die, God having given you an abundance of the good things and of the great things of this world, beyond what he has given to many thousands of others. But,

**7. The seventh word of advice and counsel is this—Look upon all the things of this world, and value all the things of this**

**world now—as you will certainly look upon them and value them when you come to lie upon a sick-bed, a dying-bed.** 1 Cor. 7:29-31. When a man is sick in good earnest, and when death knocks at the door in good earnest—oh, with what a disdainful eye, with what a weaned eye, with what a scornful eye does a man then look upon the honors, riches, dignities, and glories of this world! If men could but thus look upon them now, it would keep them from being fond of them, from trusting in them, from doting upon them, from being proud of them, and from venturing a damning—either in getting or in keeping of them. But,

**8. The eighth word of advice and counsel is this—In all places and companies carry your soul-preservatives still about you—namely, a holy care, a holy fear, a holy jealousy, a holy watchfulness over your own thoughts, hearts, words, and ways,** Proverbs 4:23, and 28:14; Gen. 6:9, and 39:9, 10; Psalm 17:4, 18:23, and 39:1, etc. You know that in infectious times men and women carry their several preservatives about them, that they may be kept from the infection of the times. Never were there more infectious times than now. Oh the snares, the baits, the infections which attend us at all times, in all places, in all companies, in all employments, and in all enjoyments; so that if we do not carry our soul-preservatives about us, we shall be in imminent danger of being infected with the pride, sinful customs, and vanities of the times wherein we live. But,

**9. The ninth word of advice and counsel is this—Live not at uncertainties as to your spiritual and eternal estates.** There are none so miserable as those that are strangers to the state of their own souls. It is good for a man to know the state of his *flock*, the state of his *family*, the state of the *nation*, the state of his *body*; but above all to know the state and condition of his own *soul*. How many thousands are there, who can give a better account of their lands, their lordships, their riches, their crops, their shops, their trades, their merchandise, yes, of their hobbies and their hounds—than they can of the estate of their own souls! O my friends, your souls are of more worth than ten thousand worlds, Mat. 16:26, and therefore it must be the greatest prudence, and the choicest policy in the world—to secure their everlasting welfare, and to know how things stands between God and your souls, what you are worth

for eternity, and how it is likely to go with you in that other world.

While a Christian lives at uncertainties as to his spiritual and everlasting estate, as whether he has grace or no grace; or whether his grace be true or counterfeit; whether he has a saving interest in Christ or not; or whether a work in power upon his soul or not; or whether God loves him or loathes him; whether God will bring him to heaven or throw him to hell—how can any Christian who lives at so great an uncertainty delight in God, rejoice evermore, triumph in Christ Jesus, be ready to suffer, and be desirous to die? Job 27:10; Phil. 4:4; 2 Cor. 2:14; Phil. 1:23. All men love to be at a certainty in all their outward concernments; and yet how many thousands are there that are at an astonishing uncertainty as to the present and future state of their precious and immortal souls! But,

**10. The tenth word of advice and counsel is this—Set the highest Scripture examples and patterns before you, of grace and holiness—for your imitation.** 1 Cor. 4:16. In the point of *faith* and *obedience* set an Abraham before you, Gen. 12 and 22. In the point of *meekness* set a Moses before you, Num. 12:3. In the point of *courage* set a Joshua before you, Josh. 1. In the point of *uprightness* set a David before you, Psalm 18:23. In the point of *zeal* set a Phinehas before you. In the point of *patience* set a Job before you. *Make Christ your main pattern*, "Be followers of me, as I am of Christ," James 5:11-12, and 1 Cor. 11:1. And next to him set the patterns of the choicest saints before you for your imitation. [**Precepts may instruct, but examples persuade.**]

The nearer you come to those blessed copies that they have set before you, the more will be your joy and comfort, and the more God will be honored, Christ exalted, the Spirit pleased, piety adorned, the mouths of sinners stopped, and the hearts of saints rejoiced. He who shoots at the sun, though he shoot far short, yet will shoot higher than he who aims at a shrub. It is safest, it is best, to eye the highest and worthiest examples.

**Examples** are,

- (1.) More *awakening* than precepts;
- (2.) More *convincing* than precepts;
- (3.) More *encouraging* than precepts, Heb. 11:8; and that because in them we see that the exercise of godliness, though difficult, yet is possible. When we see men subject to like passions with ourselves to be

very mortified, self-denying, humble, holy, etc.; what should hinder, but that it may be so with us also? Such as begin to work with the needle, look much on their pattern: it is so in learning to write, and indeed in learning to live also. Observe the gracious conversations and carriage of the choicest saints; keep a fixed eye upon the wise, prudent, humble, holy, and heavenly deportment; write after the fairest copy you can find; labor to imitate those Christians who are most eminent in grace. But,

**11. The eleventh word of advice and counsel is this—Be much in the most spiritual exercises of religion.** There are **external** exercises of religion—such as hearing, praying, singing, receiving, holy conference, etc., Isaiah 1:11-14, and 1 Tim. 4:8, and Mat. 6. Now custom, conviction, education, and a hundred other external considerations, may lead people to these external exercises. But there are the more **spiritual** exercises of religion—such as loving of God, delighting in God, prizing of Christ, compliance with the motions, counsels, and dictates of the Spirit, living in an exercise of grace, triumphing in Christ Jesus, setting our affections upon things above, meditation, self-examination, self-judging, etc. Now the more you live in the exercise of these, more spiritual duties of religion—the more you glorify God, the more you evidence the power of grace, and the in-dwellings of the Spirit—and the more you difference and distinguish yourselves from hypocrites and all unsound professors, and the better foundation you lay for a bright, strong, and growing assurance. But,

**12. The twelfth and last word of advice and counsel I shall give you is—To make a wise, a seasonable, a sincere, a daily, and a thorough improvement of all the talents that God has entrusted you with.** There is a talent of time, of power, of riches, of honor, of greatness—which some are more entrusted with than others are. The improvement of these is your great wisdom, and should be your daily works, 1 Cor 4:1-2. You know you are but stewards, and that you must shortly give an account of your stewardship, Luke 16:1-4. And oh that you may make such a faithful and full improvement of all the great talents which God has entrusted you with—that you may give up your account at last with joy, and not with grief!

Some princes have wished upon their beds, that they had never reigned,

because they have not improved their power for God and his people, but against God and his people. And some rich men have wished that they had never been rich, because they have not improved their riches for the glory of God, nor for the support and relief of his suffering saints. A beggar upon the way asked something of an honorable lady: she gave him sixpence, saying, "This is more than ever God gave me." "Oh!" says the beggar, "Madam, you have abundance, and God has given you all that you have; say not so, good madam." "Well," says she, "I speak the truth, for God has not given but lent unto me what I have, that I may bestow it upon such as you are." And it is very true, indeed, that *poor* Christians are Christ's alms-men, and the *rich* are but his stewards, into whose hands God has put his moneys—to distribute to them as their necessities require.

It is credibly reported of Mr. Thomas Sutton, the sole founder of that eminent hospital commonly known by his name, that he used often to go into a private garden, where he poured forth his prayers unto God, and, among other passages, was frequently overheard to use this expression: "Lord, you have given me a liberal and large estate, give me also a heart to make good use of it;" which was granted to him accordingly. **Riches are a great blessing, but wisdom, and a heart to use them aright, is a far greater blessing.** Every rich man is not so much a treasurer as a steward, whose praise is more how to give well, than to have received much. I know I have transgressed the bounds of an epistle, but love to your souls, and theirs into whose hands this treatise may fall, must be my apology.

Sir, if you and your lady were both my own children, and my only children, I could not give you better nor more faithful counsel than what I have given you in this epistle. I have given all out of a sincere, serious, and cordial desire and design, that both of you may be happy here, and found at Christ's right hand in the great day of account, Mat. 25:33-34.

Now the God of all grace fill both your hearts with all the fruits of righteousness and holiness, and greatly bless you both with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and make you meet-helpers to each other heaven-ward, and at last crown you both with ineffable glory in the life to come! 1 Pet. 5:1; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 1:3.

Your assured friend, and soul's servant,  
Thomas Brooks, 1675.

### **The Covenant of Grace Proved and Opened**

Beloved in our Lord,  
In the first part of my book, *The Golden Key*, I have showed you seven different pleas, which all sincere Christians may form up, as to those ten scriptures, which refer either to the great day of account, or to their particular days of account. In this second part, I shall go on where I left,

and show you several other choice pleas, that all believers may make in the present case.

VIII. The eighth plea that a believer may form up as to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] that refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account, may be drawn up from the consideration of the **covenant of grace**, or the **new covenant** which all believers are under. It is of high concernment to understand the nature of the covenant of grace, or the new covenant, which is the law you must judge of your estates by, for if you mistake in that—you will err in the conclusion. That person is very unfit to make a judge, who is ignorant of the law, by which himself and others must be tried. For the clearing of my way, let me **premise these six things—**

**1. First, Premise this with me—that God has commonly dealt with man in the way of a covenant;** that being a way which is most suitable to man, and most honorable for man, and the most amicable and friendly way of dealing with man. No sooner was man **made**, but God entered into covenant with him, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall die the death," Gen. 2:17; and after this, he made a covenant with the world, by **Noah**, Gen. 9:11-15, and 6:18; and after this, he made a covenant with **Abraham**, Gen. 17:1-2; and after this, he made a covenant with the **Jews** at Mount Sinai, Exod. 19. Thus you see that God has commonly dealt with man in the way of a covenant. But,

**2. Secondly, Premise this with me—All men are under some covenant or other;** they are either under a covenant of **works**—or they are under a covenant of **grace**. All people who live and die without a saving interest in Christ—they live and die under a covenant of works. Such as live and die with a saving interest in Christ—they live and die under a covenant of grace. There is but a twofold standing taken notice of in the blessed Scriptures; the one is under the **law**, the other is under **grace**. Now he who is not under grace, is under the law, Rom 6:14. It is true, in the Scripture you do not read, of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace; but that of the apostle comes near it: Romans 3:27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith." [The apostle expressly tells us that there are two

covenants, and no more, in Gal. 4:24.]

Here you have the law of **works**, opposed to the law of **faith**; which essentially means the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The apostle sets forth this twofold condition of men, by a very pertinent resemblance, namely, by that of marriage, Romans 7:1-3. All Adam's seed are married to one of these two husbands; either to the law, or to Christ. He who is not spiritually married to Christ, and so brought under his covenant—is still under the law as a covenant of works; even as a wife is under the law of her husband while he is yet alive. Certainly there were never any but two covenants made with man, the one **legal**, the other **evangelical**; the one of **works**, the other of **grace**; the first in innocence, the other after the fall. Ponder upon Romans 4:13. But,

**3. Thirdly, Let me premise this—that the covenant of grace was so legally dispensed to the Jews, that it seems to be nothing else but the repetition of the covenant of works;** in respect of which *legal* dispensations of it, the same covenant, under the law, is called a covenant of works. Under the gospel, in regard of the clearer manifestation of it, it is called a covenant of grace: but these were not two distinct covenants, but one and the same covenant diversely dispensed. The covenant of grace is the same for substance now to us since Christ was exhibited, as it was to the Jews before he was exhibited; but the manner of administration of it is different, because it is:

(1.) Now **clearer**. Things were then declared, in types and shadows. Heaven was then typed out by the land of Canaan. But now we have things more plainly manifested, 2 Cor. 3:12; Heb. 7:22. In this respect it is called "a better covenant," Heb. 8:6; not in substance, but in the manner of revealing it; and the promises are said to be "better promises" upon the same account, Acts 10:35.

(2.) The covenant of grace, is now **more largely extended**. Then it extended only to the Jews; but now it extends to all who know the Lord, and who choose him, fear him, love him, and serve him in all nations, Col. 3:11; Neh. 7:2; Job 1:1, 8; Acts 13:22, seq.; Romans 4:18-20.

(3.) There is **more abundance of the Spirit, of grace, of light, of**

**knowledge, of holiness**, poured out generally upon the people of God now—than there was in those times. Though then some few eminent saints had much of the Spirit, and much of grace and holiness, both in their hearts and lives; but now the generality of the saints have more of the Spirit, and more grace and holiness, than the generality of the saints had in those times. But,

**4. Fourthly, Premise this with me—that a right notion of the covenant, according to the originals of the Old and New Testament—will conduce much to a right understanding of God's covenant.** [The word *covenant* in our English tongue, signifies, as we all know, a mutual promise, agreement, and obligation, between two people. A covenant is a solemn compact or agreement between two chosen parties; whereby, with mutual, free, and full consent, they bind and oblige themselves one to another. A covenant is "A friendly state between allies." Martin Luther. The derivation of the Hebrew word, and of the Greek, may give us great light, and is of special use to show the nature of the covenant which they principally signify, and what special things are therein required.

**(1.) The Hebrew word, Berith**, a covenant, is by learned men derived from several roots:

**[1.]** First, Some derive it from Barar—to **purify**, make clear, and to purge out dross, chaff, and all uncleanness; and to **select**, and choose out, and separate the pure from the impure, the gold and silver from the dross, and the pure wheat from the chaff. The reasons of this derivation are these:

(1.) Because by covenants, open and clear *amity* is confirmed, and *faithfulness* is plainly and clearly declared and ratified, without deceit or fraud, between covenanters; and things are made plain and clear between them in every point and article.

(2.) Because God, in the covenant of works, did choose out man especially, with whom he made the covenant; and because in the covenant of grace, he chooses out of the multitude his elect, even his church and faithful people, whom he did separate by predestination and

election from all eternity, to be a holy people to himself in Christ, Eph. 1:4.

(3.) Some derive it from Barah, and truly, the Lord, when he makes a covenant with any, he does separate them from others, he looks on them, and takes them, and owns them for his "peculiar people," 1 Pet. 2:9, for his "peculiar treasure," Exod. 19:5, and agrees with them as the chosen and choicest of all others. The first staff in Zech. 11:10, is called "Beauty," and this was the covenant; and certainly it must be a high honor for a people to be in covenant with God; for by this means God becomes ours, and we are made near unto him, Jer. 31:38, 40-41. He is ours, and we are his, in a very peculiar way of relation; and by this means God opens his love and all his treasures of grace unto us. In his covenant he tells us of his special care, love, kindness, and great intentions of good to us; and by this means his faithfulness comes to be obliged to make good all his covenant relations and engagements to us, Deut. 7:9. Now in all this God puts a great favor and honor upon his people. Hence, when the Lord told Abraham that he would make a covenant with him, Abraham fell upon his face; he was amazed at so great a love and honor, Gen. 17:2-3.

**[2.]** Secondly, Some derive the word from Barah—to **eat**, because usually they had a feast at the making of covenants. In the Eastern countries they commonly established their covenants by eating and drinking together. Herodotus tells us that the *Persians* were accustomed to contract leagues and friendship in a full feast, whereat their wives, children, and friends, were present. The like custom, Tacitus reports of the *Germans*. Among the *Greeks* and other nations, the covenanters ate bread and salt together. The Emperor of Russia, at this day, when he would show extraordinary grace and favor unto any, sends him bread and salt from his table. When he invited Baron Sigismund, he did it in this form: "Sigismund, you shall eat our bread and salt with us." Hence that symbol of Pythagoras, "break no bread," is interpreted by Erasmus and others to mean, "break no friendship."

Moreover, the Egyptians, Thracians, and Lybians in special, are said to have used to make leagues, and contract friendships—by presenting a cup of wine one to another; which custom we find still in use among our western nations. It has been the universal custom of mankind, and still

remains in use, to contract covenants, and make leagues and friendship—by eating and drinking together.

When *Isaac* made a covenant with Abimelech, the king of Gerar, the text says, "He made him, and those that were with him, a feast; and they did eat and drink, and rose up early in the morning, and swore one to another," Gen. 26:30-31. When *Jacob* made a covenant with Laban, after they had sworn together, he made him a feast, "and called his brethren to eat bread," says the text, Gen. 31:54. When *David* made a covenant with Abner, upon his promise of bringing all Israel unto him, David made "Abner and the men who were with him a feast," says the text, 2 Sam. 3:20. Hence, in the Hebrew tongue a covenant is called Berith, of Barak to **eat**, as if they should say *an eating*; which derivation is so natural, that it deserves, say some, to be preferred before the other signification of the same verb, which is to choose.

Now they that derive Berith from Barah, which signifies to eat and refresh one's self with a meal, they give this reason for that derivation, namely, because the old covenant of God, made with man in the creation, was a covenant wherein the condition or law was about eating; that man should eat of all the trees and fruits, except of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Gen. 2:16-17; and in the solemn making and sealing of the covenant of grace in Christ, the blessed seed, the public ceremony was slaying and sacrificing of animals, and eating some part of them, after the fat and the choice parts were offered up and burned on the altar. For God, by virtue of that covenant, gave man leave to eat the flesh of animals, Deut. 12:27, which he might not do in the state of innocency, Gen. 1:29, being limited to fruits of trees, and herbs bearing seed, for his meat. So, also, in solemn covenants between men, the parties were accustomed to eat together, Gen. 31:46.

**[3.]** Thirdly, Others derive the word Berith from Bara, or Barah, to **smite**, strike, cut, or divide, as both these words signify. The word also signifies to **elect** or choose; and the reasons they give for this derivation, are these two:

First, Because covenants are not made, but by choice **persons**, chosen out one by another, and about choice **matters**, and upon choice

**conditions**; chosen out, and agreed upon by both parties.

Secondly, Because, in making of covenants, commonly sacrifices were stricken and slain, for confirmation and solemnity. Of old, God sealed his covenants by sacrifices of animals slain, divided, and cut asunder, and the choice fat, and other parts, offered upon the altar. And in making of great and solemn covenants, men, in old time, were accustomed to kill and cut asunder sacrificed animals; and to pass between the parts divided, for a solemn testimony, or for the confirmation of the covenants that they had made, Gen. 15:9-10, 17. [Jer. 34:18-20, and Lev. 26:25. Weigh well these two scriptures. Covenant breakers may well look upon them as flaming swords, as terrible thunderbolts.]

And as learned men have long since observed, that the very heathen, in their covenanting, used sacrifices, and divided them, passing between the parts; and this they did, as some conjecture, in imitation of God's people.

This third opinion, is the common opinion, about the original of this name; and therefore preferred before all others. So this word Berith, covenant, seems to sound as much as Kerith, a smiting or striking, because of sacrifices slain in covenanting. Hence the word covenant is often joined with Karath, which signifies striking of covenant. An example of this beyond all exception, says my author, is in that sacrifice, wherein God by Moses, made a covenant with all the people of Israel, and bound them to obey his law: the description of it is in Exodus 24:4-8, "Then Moses carefully wrote down all the Lord's instructions. Early the next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also set up twelve pillars around the altar, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent some of the young men to sacrifice young bulls as burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord. Moses took half the blood from these animals and drew it off into basins. The other half he splashed against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They all responded again, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded. We will obey." Then Moses sprinkled the blood from the basins over the people and said, "This blood confirms the covenant the Lord has made with you in giving you these laws."

[Ancient covenants were made with blood, to betoken constancy in the

covenant, even to the shedding of blood, and loss of life.] I shall not trouble my reader with that mystical and too curious a sense, that some of the ancients put upon these words. The historical sense is here more fit: for in this ceremony of dividing the blood in two parts, and so besprinkling the altar with the one half, which represented God; and the people with the other, between whom the covenant was confirmed, the old use in striking of covenants is observed. For the ancient custom was, that they which made a league or covenant, divided some animals, and put the parts asunder, walking in the midst; signifying that as the animal was divided, so they should be, who broke the covenant. So when Saul went against the Ammonites, coming out of the field, he hewed two oxen, and sent them into all the coasts of Israel, 1 Sam. 11:7; expressing the like signification, that so should his oxen be served, which came not forth after Saul and Samuel. After the same manner, when God made a covenant with Abraham, Gen. 15:12-19, and he had divided certain animals, as God had commanded him, and laid one part against another, a smoking firebrand went between, representing God, signifying, that so he who violated the covenant should be divided. So in this place, not much unlike; the blood is parted in twain, showing that so should his blood be shed, who kept not the covenant.

[4.] Fourthly, Some derive the word Berith from Bara, to **create**; and the reason they give for this derivation is this—because the first state of creation was confirmed by the covenant which God made with man, and all creatures were to be upheld by means of observing of the law and condition of the covenant. And that covenant being broken by man, the world, made subject to ruin, is upheld, yes, and as it were created anew, by the covenant of grace in Christ.

[5.] Fifthly, Some derive the word Berith from Berath, which signifies firmness, **sureness**, because covenants are firm and sure, and all things agreed on are confirmed and made sure by them. God's covenant is a sure covenant: Deut. 7:9, "The Lord your God, he is the faithful God," or the God of truth, "who keeps covenant with those who love him." Psalm 89:34, "My covenant will I not break"—Hebrew, "I will not profane" "nor alter the thing which have gone out of my lips." [Jer. 31:31, 33, 35-37; Psalm 19:7; Rev. 3:14; Isaiah 54:10.] All God's precepts, all God's

predictions, all God's threatenings, and all God's promises—are the expression of a most just, faithful, and righteous will. There are three things that God cannot do:

(1.) He cannot die.

(2.) He cannot lie: Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began."

(3.) He cannot deny himself.

Now the derivation of Berith, from the several roots specified, and not from one only, does give much light to the point under consideration; and does reconcile in one, all the several opinions of the learned, and justifies their several derivations, without rejecting or offering any wrong or disgrace to any.

**(2.) Secondly, The Greek name Diatheke, a covenant** or a testament. By this Greek word the Septuagint, does commonly express the Hebrew word Berith; and it is observable that this is the only word by which the Hebrew word Berith is rendered in the New Testament. This Greek word, diatheke, is translated *covenant* in the New Testament about twenty times; and the same word is translated *testament* in the New Testament about twelve times. [Heb. 8:6-10, and 1:4; Luke 1:72; Romans 9:4, etc.; Mat. 26:28; Luke 22:20, etc.] Wherever you find the word *covenant* in the New Testament, there you shall find *Diatheke*; and wherever you find the word *testament* in the New Testament, there you shall find *Diatheke*; so that it is of importance for us to understand this word aright.

Now this Greek word is derived from Diatithemi, which has several of the significations of the Hebrew words of which Berith is derived; for it signifies to set things in order and frame, to appoint orders, and make laws, to pacify and make satisfaction, and to dispose things by one's last will and testament. Now to compose and set things in order is to uphold the creation; to walk by orders and laws made and appointed is to walk by rule, and to live, to deal plainly and faithfully without deceit. To pacify and make satisfaction includes sacrifices and sin-offerings. To dispose by

will and testament implies choice of persons and gifts; for men do commonly by will give their best and most choice things to their most dear and most choice friends. Thus the Greek which the apostles use in the New Testament to signify a covenant, to express the Hebrew word Berith, which is used in the law and the prophets, does confirm our derivation of it from all the words before named.

And this derivation of the Hebrew and Greek names of a covenant being thus laid down, and confirmed by the reasons formerly cited, is of great **USE**. The various acceptance and use of these two names in the Old and New Testament is very considerable for the opening of the covenant:

**First**, To show unto us the full signification of the word covenant, and what the nature of a covenant is in general.

**Second**, To justify the several acceptations of the word, and to show the nature of every word in particular, and so to make way for the knowledge of the agreement, and difference between the old and new covenant. Here, as in a crystal glass, you may see that this word Berith, and this word Diatheke, signify all covenants in general, whether they are religious or civil; for there is nothing in any true covenant which is not comprised in the signification of these words, being expounded according to the former derivations. Here also we may see what is the nature of a covenant in general, and what things are thereunto required; as, first, every true covenant presupposes a division or separation; secondly, it comprehends in it a mutual promising and binding between two distinct parties.

**Thirdly**, there must be faithful dealing, without fraud, or dissembling on both sides.

**Fourthly**, this must be between choice persons.

**Fifthly**, it must be about choice matters and upon choice conditions, agreed upon by both.

**Sixthly** and lastly, it must tend to the well-ordering and composing of things between them.

Now all these are manifest by the several significations of the words from which *Berith* and *Diatheke* are derived. And thus much for the word *covenant* according to the originals of the Old and New Testament.

**5. Fifthly, Premise this with me, that there was a covenant of WORKS, or a reciprocal covenant, between God and Adam, together with all his posterity.** Before Adam fell from his primitive holiness, beauty, glory, and excellency—God made a covenant with Adam as a public person, in which he represented all mankind. The covenant of works was made with all men in Adam, who was made and stood as a public person, head and root, in a common and comprehensive capacity. I say, it was made with him as such, and we all in him; he and all stood and fell together.

**(1.) Witness the imputation of Adam's sin to all mankind.** Romans 5:12, "In whom," or forasmuch as, "all have sinned;" they sinned not all in themselves, therefore they sinned in Adam; see ver. 14, "In him all died."

**(2.) Witness the curse of the covenant that all mankind are directly under.** Consult these scriptures. [1 Cor, 15:47; Deut. 29:21; Romans 8:20,21; Gal. 3:10, 13.] Those on whom the curse of the covenant comes, those are under the bond and precept of the covenant. But *all* mankind are under the curse of the covenant, and therefore all mankind are under the bond and precept of the covenant. Adam did understand the terms of the covenant, and did consent to the terms of the covenant; for God dealt with him in a rational way, and expected from him a reasonable service. The end of this covenant was the upholding of the creation, and of all the creatures in their pure natural estate, for the comfort of man continually, and for the special manifestation of God's free grace; and that he might put the greater obligation upon Adam to obey his Creator and to sweeten his authority to man; and that he might draw out Adam to an exercise of his faith, love, and hope in his Creator; and that he might leave Adam the more inexcusable in case he should sin; and that so a clear way might be made for God's justification and man's conviction. Upon these grounds God dealt with Adam, not only in a way of sovereignty, but in a way of covenant.

**QUESTION.** But how may it be evidenced that God entered into a covenant of works with the first Adam before his fall, there being no mention of such a covenant in the Scripture that we read of?

**ANSWER.** Though the *name* is not in the Scripture, yet the *principal* and *thing itself* are in the Scripture, as will evidently appear by comparing scripture with scripture. [Socinians call for the word "Satisfaction," others call for the word "Sacrament," others call for the word "Trinity," and others call for the word "Sabbath," for Lord's day, etc.; and thence conclude against any Satisfaction, Sacraments, Trinity, Sabbath, for lack of express words, when the things themselves are plainly and lively set down, in other words, in the blessed Scriptures. So it is in this case of God's covenant with Adam. The vanity and folly of such ways of reasoning is sufficiently demonstrated by all writers upon those subjects, who are sound in the faith, etc.]

Though it be not positively and plainly said in the blessed Scripture that God made a covenant of works with Adam before his fall, yet, upon sundry scripture grounds and considerations, it may be sufficiently evidenced that God did make such a covenant with Adam before his fall. Therefore it is a fancy cavil, and a foolish vanity, for any to make such a noise about the word *covenant*—for lack of the word *covenant*, boldly to conclude that there was no such covenant made with Adam, when the thing is lively set down in other words, though the word *covenant* be not expressed. This I shall make evident by an induction of **particulars**, thus—

**[1.]** First, God, to declare his sovereignty and man's subjection, gave Adam, though innocent, a law. God's express prescription of a positive law unto Adam in his innocent state, is clearly and fully laid down in Gen. 2:16-17, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die!" Hebrew, "dying you shall die." Mark how God bounds man's obedience with a double fence:

First, He fenced him with a free indulgence to eat of *every* tree in the garden but *one*, which gave him less cause to be desiring after the one

forbidden fruit. But "stolen waters are sweet."

Secondly, By an *explanatory* prohibition, upon pain of death. By the first, the Lord woos him by love; by the second, he frightens him by the terror of his justice, and bids him touch and taste—if he dared.

The **two PARTIES** were God and Adam; God the Creator, and man, the creature, made "after God's image and likeness." At this time, Adam was not contrary to God, nor at enmity with him; but he was in some measure like unto God, though far different and inferior to God in nature and substance.

Here are also **TERMS** agreed on, and matters covenanted reciprocally, by these parties.

**Adam**, on his part, was to be obedient to God, in forbearing to eat of the tree of knowledge only. God's charge to our first parents was only negative—not to eat of the tree of knowledge; the other, to eat of the trees, was left unto their choice. Eve confesses that God spoke unto them *both*, and said, "You shall not eat of it," Gen. 3:2; and God speaks unto both of them together in these words, "Behold, I have given unto you every herb, and every tree," etc., Gen. 1:19. At which time also it is very likely that he gave them the other prohibition of not eating of that one tree; for if God had made that exception before, he would not have given a general permission after; or if this general grant had gone before, the exception coming should seem to abrogate the former grant. The Septuagint seems to be of this mind, that this precept was given both to Adam and Eve, reading thus in the plural number, "In what day *you both* shall eat thereof *you both* shall die." And though, in the original, the precept be given in the name of Adam only, that is only:

(1.) Because Adam was the more principal, and he had the charge of the woman; and

(2.) Because that the greatest danger was in his transgression, which was the cause of the ruin of his posterity;

(3.) Because, as Mercerus well observes, Adam was the common name

both of the man and woman, Gen. 5:2, and so is taken, ver. 15. And God, on his part, for the present, permits Adam to eat of all other trees of the garden; and for the future, in his explicit threatening of death in case of *disobedience*; implicitly promises life in case of *obedience* herein.

[2.] Secondly, The **promises** of this covenant on God's part were very glorious—

First, That heaven, and earth, and all creatures should continue in their natural course and order wherein God had created and placed them, serving always for man's use, and that man should have the benefit and lordship of them all.

Secondly, As for natural life, in respect of the body, Adam should have had perfection without defect, beauty without deformity, labor without weariness.

Thirdly, As for spiritual life, Adam would never have known what it was to be under terrors and horrors of conscience, nor what a wounded spirit means, Proverbs 18:14. He would never have found "the arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, nor the poison thereof drinking up his spirits, nor the terrors of God to set themselves in array against him," Job 6:4. Nor would he ever have tasted of death. Death is a fall that came in by a fall. Had Adam never sinned, Adam would have never died; had Adam stood fast in innocency, he would have been translated to glory without dissolution. Death came in by sin, and sin goes out by death. As the worm kills the worm that bred it, so death kills sin that bred it.

Now where there are parties covenanting, promising, and agreeing upon terms, and terms mutually agreed upon by those parties, as here, there is the substance of an express covenant, though it be not formally and in express words called a covenant. This was the first covenant which God made with man, and this is called by the name Berith, Jer. 33:20, where God says, "If you can break my covenant of the day and night, and that there shall not be day and night in their season," ver. 21, "then may also my covenant with David be broken." In these words he speaks plainly of the promise in the creation, that day and night should keep their course, and the sun, moon, and stars, and all creatures, should serve for man's

use, Gen. 1:14-16. Now though man did break the covenant on his part, yet God, being immutable, could not break covenant on his part, neither did he allow his promise to fail; but, by virtue of Christ promised to man in the new covenant, he will keep touch with man so long as mankind has a being on the earth.

In this first covenant, God promised unto man life and happiness, lordship over all the creatures, liberty to use them, and all other blessings which his heart could desire, to keep him in that happy estate wherein he was created. And man was bound to God to walk in perfect righteousness, to observe and keep God's commandments, and to obey his will in all things which were within the reach of his nature, and so far as was revealed to him. In the first covenant, God revealed himself to man as one God, Creator, and Governor of all things, infinite in power, wisdom, goodness, nature, and substance. God was man's good Lord, and man was God's good servant; God dearly loved man, and man greatly loved God with all his heart. There was not the least shadow or occasion of hatred or enmity between them; there was nothing but mutual love, mutual delight, mutual contentment, and mutual satisfaction between God and man. Man, in his primitive glory, needed no mediator to come between God and him. Man was perfect, pure, upright, and good, created after God's own image; and the nearer he came to God, the greater was his joy and comfort. God's presence now was man's great delight, and it was man's heaven on earth to walk with God. But,

**[3.]** Thirdly, Consider the intention and use of the two eminent trees in the garden, which are mentioned in a more peculiar manner—namely, the tree of *life* and the tree of *knowledge*. The intended use of these two trees in paradise was sacramental. Hence they are called symbolical trees, and sacramental trees, by learned writers, both ancient and modern. By these the Lord did signify and seal to our first parents that they should always enjoy that happy state of life in which they were made, upon condition of obedience to his commandments; that is, in eating of the tree of life, and not eating of the tree of knowledge. [The tree of life was the sign and seal which God gave to man for confirmation of this first covenant; and it was to man a sacrament and pledge of eternal life on earth and of all blessings needful to keep man in life.]

**The tree of life** is so called, not because of any native property and peculiar virtue it had in itself to convey life, but symbolically, morally, and sacramentally. It was a sign and obligation to them of life, natural and spiritual, to be continued to them as long as they continued in obedience to God. The seal of the first covenant was the tree of life, which if Adam had received by taking and eating of it, while he stood in the state of innocency before his fall, he had certainly been established in that estate forever; and the covenant being sealed and confirmed between God and him on both parts, he could not have been seduced and supplanted by Satan, as some learned men do think, and as God's own words seem to imply, Gen. 3:22, "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever."

"**The tree of knowledge of good and evil**" was spoken from the sad event and experience they had of it, as Samson had of God's departing from him when he lost his Nazaritish hair by Delilah. "The tree of life" was a sacrament of life; the "tree of knowledge" a sacrament of death. "The tree of life" was for confirmation of man's obedience, and "the tree of knowledge" was for caution against disobedience. Now if those two trees were two sacraments, the one assuring of life in case of obedience, the other assuring of death in case of disobedience, then hence we may collect that God not only entered into a covenant of works with the first Adam, but also gave him this covenant under sacramental signs and seals. But,

**[4.]** Fourthly, Seriously consider that a covenant of works lay clear, in that commandment, Gen. 2:16-17, which may thus be made evident:

(1.) Because that was the condition of man's standing and life, as it was expressly declared;

(2.) Because, in the breach of that commandment given him, he lost all, and we in him. God made the covenant of works primarily with Adam, and with us in him, as our head, inclusively; so that when he did fall—we did fall; when he lost all—we lost all. There are five things we lost in our fall:

1. Our holy image—and so became vile;

2. Our divine sonship—and so became children of Satan;
3. Our friendship with God—and so became His enemies;
4. Our communion with God—and so became strangers;
5. Our happiness—and so became miserable.

Sin and death came into the world by Adam's fall. In Adam's sinning—we all sinned; and in Adam's dying—we all died; as you may see, by comparing these scriptures together. [1 Cor. 15:22; Romans 5:12 to the end, etc.] In Adam's first sin, we all became sinners by imputation: Adam being a universal person, and all mankind one in him, by God's covenant of works with him. All were that one man, (Augustine,) namely, by federal association. God covenanted with Adam, and in him with all his posterity; and therefore Adam's breach of covenant fell not only upon him, but upon all his posterity. But,

**[5.]** Fifthly and lastly, We read of a **second covenant**, Heb. 10:9; Romans 9:4; Gal. 4:24; Eph. 2:12, and we read of a "new covenant:" Jer. 31:31, "Behold the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." So Heb. 8:8, "I will make a new covenant," etc.; ver. 13, "In that he says a new covenant, he has made the first old," etc.; chapter 12:24, "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant," etc. Now if there is a "second covenant," then we may safely conclude there was a "first;" and if there be a "new covenant," then we may boldly conclude that there was an "old covenant." A covenant of *grace* always supposes a covenant of *works*, Heb. 8:7-9. I know there is a repetition of the covenant of works with Adam, in the law of Moses; as in that of the apostle to the Galatians, "The law is not of faith, but the man that does these things shall live in them," Gal. 3:10-12. The law requires works. In the first covenant, three things are observable:

(1.) The precept, "continues not in *all* things." The precept requires perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience;

(2.) The promise, "live;" "the man that does them shall live;" live happily, blessedly, cheerfully, everlastingly;

(3.) The curse in case of transgression, "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." One sin, and that but in thought, broke the angels' covenant, and has brought them into everlasting chains, Jude 6. So the same apostle to the Romans further tells us, that "Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who does those things, shall live by them," Romans 10:5. Thus it was with Adam, principally and properly, therefore he was under a covenant of works, when God gave him that command, Gen. 2:16-17.

This first covenant is called a covenant of works, because this covenant required working on our part as the condition of it, for justification and happiness, "The man who does these things, shall live." Under this covenant God left man to stand upon his own foundation, and to live upon his own stock, and by his own industry. God made him perfect and upright, and gave him power and ability to stand, and laid no necessity at all upon him to fall. In this first covenant of works, man had no need of a mediator, God did then stipulate with Adam immediately; for seeing he had not made God his enemy by sin, he needed no mediator to make friendly intercession for him, Job 9:33.

Adam was invested and endowed with righteousness and holiness in his first glorious estate; with **righteousness**, that he might behave fairly, justly, evenly, and righteously towards man; and with **holiness**, that he might behave wisely, lovingly, reverentially, and holily towards God, and that he might take up in God as his chief good, as in his great all. [Eph. 4:22-24. In this scripture, the apostle speaks plainly of the renovation of that knowledge, holiness, and righteousness that Adam once had, but lost it by his fall, Psalm 8:4-6; Gen. 2:20.] I shall not now stand upon the discovery of Adam's beauty, authority, dominion, dignity, honor, and glory, with which he was adorned, invested, and crowned in innocency. Let this satisfy, that Adam's first estate was a state of perfect knowledge, wisdom, and understanding; it was a perfect state of holiness, righteousness, and happiness. There was nothing within him but what was desirable and delectable; there was nothing without him but what

was amiable and commendable; nor was there anything around him but what was serviceable and comfortable. Adam, in his innocent estate, was the wonder of all understanding, the mirror of wisdom and knowledge, the image of God, the delight of heaven, the glory of the creation, the world's great master, and the Lord's great darling. Upon all these accounts, he had no need of a mediator. And let thus much suffice to have spoken concerning the first covenant of works, that was between God and Adam in innocency. But,

**6. Sixthly, Premise this with me—namely, that there is a NEW covenant, a second covenant, or a covenant of GRACE between God and his people,** Heb. 8:6-13. Express scriptures prove this: Deut. 7:9, "Know therefore, that the Lord your God, he is God; the faithful God, who keeps covenant and mercy with those who love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations." 2 Sam. 23:5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Neh. 1:5, "I beseech you, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God; who keeps covenant and mercy for those who love him, and keep his commandments." Isaiah 54:10, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord, that has mercy on you." Jer. 32:40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Ezek. 20:37, "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." Deut. 29:12, "That you should enter into covenant with the Lord your God; and into his oath, which the Lord your God makes with you today." Consult these scriptures also, [Deut. 4:23; Isaiah 55:1-3; Jer. 24:7, 30:22, 31:31, 33, and 32:38; Heb. 8:8-10.] Now that there is a covenant between God and his people, may be further evinced by unanswerable arguments—let me point at some among many.

**[1.] First, Christ is said to be "the mediator of this covenant."** Heb. 9:15, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now

that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." Certainly that covenant, of which Christ is the mediator, must needs be a covenant made with us. The office of mediator, you know, is to stand between two at variance. The two at variance were God and man. Man had offended and incensed God against him. God's wrath was an insupportable burden, and a consuming fire; no creature was able to stand under it, or before it. Therefore Christ, to rescue and redeem man, becomes a mediator. Christ, undertaking to be a mediator, both procured a covenant to pass between God and man, and also engaged himself for the performance thereof on both parts. And to assure man of partaking of the benefit of God's covenant, Christ turns the covenant into a testament, that the conditions of the covenant, on God's part, might be as so many legacies, which, being confirmed by the death of the testator, none might disannul: Heb. 8:6, "He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." The promises of the new covenant are said to be better, in these six respects:

(1.) All the promises of the law were conditional; "Do this, and you shall live." The promises of the new covenant are absolute, of grace, as well as to grace.

(2.) In this better covenant God promises higher things. Here God promises Himself, his Son, his Spirit, a higher righteousness and a higher sonship.

(3.) Because of their stability; those of the old covenant were "swallowed up in the curse." These are "the sure mercies of David."

(4.) They are all founded upon faith, they all depend upon faith. [Romans 4:15-16; Gal. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 1:20; Cant. 5:16; Col. 1:19, and 2:3; Isaiah 44:3; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16-17; Gal. 3:2.]

(5.) They are all promised upon our saving interest in Christ. This makes the promises sweet—they lead us to Christ, the fountain of them, whose mouth is most sweet, and in whose person all the sweets of all created beings do center.

(6.) Because God has promised to pour out a greater measure of his Spirit

under the new covenant, than he did under the old covenant: Heb. 12:24, "And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant." Thus you see that Christ is called "the mediator of the covenant" three different times. Now he could not be the mediator of that covenant that is between God and himself, of which more shortly, but of that covenant that is between God and his people. But,

**[2.] Secondly, The people of God have pleaded the covenant that is between God and them.** "Remember your covenant." Now how could they plead the covenant between God and them if there were no such covenant? See the scriptures in the margin. [Jer. 14:21; Luke 1:72; Psalm 25:6.] But,

**[3.] Thirdly, God is often said to remember his covenant.** [Ponder upon these scriptures, Psalm 105:8, 106:45, and 111:5.] Gen. 9:15, "I will remember my covenant, which is between you and me;" Exod. 6:5, "I have remembered my covenant;" Lev. 26:42, "I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember;" Ezek. 16:60, "I will remember my covenant with you, and I will establish unto you an everlasting covenant." Now how can God be said to remember his covenant with his people, if there were no covenant between God and them? But,

**[4.] Fourthly, The temporal and spiritual deliverances that you have by the covenant, do clearly evidence that there is a covenant between God and you.** Zech. 9:11, "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant, I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit, wherein there was no water." [Gen. 9:11; Isaiah 54:9; Psalm 111:9; Isaiah 59:21.] These words include both temporal and spiritual deliverances. So that now, if there is not a covenant between God and you, what deliverances can you expect, seeing they all flow in upon the creature by virtue of the covenant, and according to the covenant? By the blood of the covenant believers are delivered from the infernal pit, where there is not so much water as might cool Dives his tongue, Luke 16:24-25; and by the blood of the covenant they are delivered from those deaths and dangers which surround them, 2 Cor. 1:8-10. When sincere Christians fall into desperate distresses and most deadly dangers, yet they are *prisoners of hope*, and may look for deliverance by the blood of the covenant. This

does sufficiently evince a covenant between God and his people. But,

**[5.] Fifthly, God has threatened severely to avenge and punish the breaking of his covenant.** Lev. 26:25, "And I will bring the sword upon you to avenge the breaking of the covenant." Consult these scriptures. [Deut. 29:20-21, 24-25, and 31:20-21; Josh. 7:11-12, 15, and 18:15-16 Judges 2:20; 2 Kings 18:9-12.] Breach of covenant between God and man, breaks the peace, and breeds a quarrel between them; in which he will take vengeance of man's revolt, except there be repentance on man's side, and pardoning grace on his. For breach of covenant, Jerusalem is long since laid waste, and the seven golden candlesticks broken in pieces; and many others, this day, lie a-bleeding in the nations which have made no more of breaking covenant with the great God, than if therein they had to do with poor mortals, with dust and ashes like themselves. Now how can there be such a sin as breach of covenant, for which God will be avenged, if there were no covenant between God and his people? But,

**[6.] Sixthly, The seals of the covenant are given to God's people.** Now to those to whom the seals of the covenant are given, with them is the covenant made; for the seals of the covenant, and the covenant, go to the same persons. The seals of the covenant are given to believers. "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith," Romans 4:11, consequently, the covenant is made with believers. Circumcision is a sign, in regard of the thing signified, and a seal, in regard of the covenant made between God and man. *Seal* is a borrowed word, taken from kings and princes, who add their broad seal, or privy-seal, to ratify and confirm the leagues, edicts, grants, covenants, charters, which are made with their subjects or confederates. God had made a covenant with Abraham, and by circumcision signs and seals up that covenant. [In reason, the covenant and the seals must go together. Would it not be a foolish thing in any man, to make a covenant with one, and to give the seals to another? In equity and justice, the covenant and the seals must go to the same persons.] But,

**[7.] Seventhly, The people of God are said sometimes to keep covenant with God.** Psalm 25:10, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." Mercies

flowing in upon us, through the covenant, are of all mercies the most soul-satisfying, soul-refreshing, soul-cheering mercies; yes, they are the very cream of mercy. Oh, how well is it with that saint that can look upon every mercy—as a present sent him from God, by virtue of the covenant! Oh, this sweetens every drop, and sip, and crust, and crumb of mercy, which a Christian enjoys—that all flows in upon him through the covenant! The promise last cited is a very sweet, choice, precious promise, a promise more worth than all the riches of the Indies. Mark, "all the paths of the Lord" to his people, they are not only "mercy," but they are "mercy and truth;" that is, they are sure mercies which stream in upon them, through the covenant. Solomon's dinner of green herbs, Proverbs 15:17; Daniel's vegetables, Dan. 1:12; barley loaves and a few fish, John 6:9; swimming in upon a Christian, through the new covenant, are far better, greater and sweeter mercies, than all those great things are, which flow in upon the great men of the world, through that general providence, which feeds the birds of the air, and the animals of the field.

Psalm 44:17, "We have not forgotten you or been false to your covenant," that is, we have kept covenant with you, by endeavoring to the uttermost of our power to keep off from the breach of your covenant, and to live up to the duties of your covenant, suitable to that of the prophet Micah, "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever," Micah 4:5. People in covenant with God will not only take a turn or two in his ways, as temporaries and hypocrites do, who are hot at hand, but soon tire and give in. No, but they will hold on in a course of holiness, and not fail to follow the Lamb, wherever he goes: Rev. 14:4, and 17:14; Psalm 103:17, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting:" ver. 18, "To such as keep his covenant," etc. All sincere Christians keep covenant with God:

- (1.) In respect of their sincere and cordial desires to keep covenant with God.
- (2.) In respect of their habitual purposes and resolutions to keep covenant with God.
- (3.) In respect of their habitual and constant endeavors to keep covenant with God, Neh. 1:11; Psalm 119:133, and 39:1-2.

This is an evangelical and incomplete keeping covenant with God, which in Christ God owns and accepts, and is as well pleased with it as he was with Adam's keeping of covenant with him before his fall. From what has been said, we may thus argue: Those who keep covenant with God, those are in covenant with God, those have made a covenant with God; but all sincere Christians they do keep covenant with God. But,

**[8.] Eighthly and lastly, The Lord has, by many choice, precious and sweet promises, engaged himself to make good that blessed covenant which he has made with his people, yes, with his choice and chosen ones.** 2 Pet. 1:4. Take a few instances, "If you hearken to these judgments," [Under the name judgments, the commandments and statutes of God are contained.] says God to Israel, "and keep and do them, the Lord your God shall keep unto you the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto your fathers," Deut. 7:12. This blessed covenant is grounded upon God's free grace; and therefore in recompensing their obedience God has a respect to his own mercy—and not to their merits. So Judges 2:1, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said—I will never break my covenant with you." God is a God of mercy, and his covenant with his people is a covenant of mercy; and therefore he will be sure to keep touch with them.

Psalm 89:34, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my mouth;" as if he should have said, Though they break my statutes, yet will I not break my covenant; for this seems to have reference to the 31st verse, "If they break my statutes," etc. Though they had profaned God's statutes, yet God would not profane his covenant, as the Hebrew runs, "My covenant will I not break;" that is, I will stand steadfastly to the performance of it, and to every part and branch of it, I will never be changeful, I will never be *off and on* with my people, I will never change my purpose, nor take back my words, nor unsay what I have said.

Jer. 33:20, "This is what the Lord says—If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant, can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to

reign on his throne," etc. It is impossible for any created power to break off the covenant with the day and the night so that they do not come on their usual schedule; so it is impossible for God to break the covenant that he has made with David.

Isaiah 54:10, "For the mountains may depart and the hills disappear, but even then I will remain loyal to you. My covenant of blessing will never be broken—says the Lord, who has mercy on you." "Even if earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea," Psalm 46:2, yet the covenant of God with his people shall stand unmovable. The covenant of God, the mercy of God, and the loving-kindness of God to his people, shall last forever, and remain constant and immutable, though all things in the world should be turned upside down.

Psalm 111:4, "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion;" ver. 5, "He will ever be mindful of his covenant." God looks not at his people's sins, but at his own promise; he will pass by their infirmities, and supply all their necessities. God will never break his covenant, he will never alter his covenant, he will still keep it, he will forever be mindful of it. The covenant of God with his people shall be as inviolable as the course and revolution of day and night, and more immovable than the very hills and mountains.

From what has been said, we may thus argue: If God has, by many choice, precious, and sweet promises, engaged himself to make good that blessed covenant which he has made with his people, then certainly there is a covenant between God and his people; but God has, by many choice, precious, and sweet promises, engaged himself to make good his covenant to his people. I might have laid down several other unanswerable arguments to have evinced this blessed truth, that there is a covenant between God and his people; but let these eight suffice for the present.

**7. Seventhly and lastly, Premise this with me—namely, that it is a matter of high importance and of great concernment, for all mortals to have a clear and a right understanding of that covenant under which they are, 2 Sam. 23:3-4. God deals with all men according to the covenant under which they stand. We shall never**

come to understand our spiritual estate and condition, until we come to know what covenant we are under, Psalm 105:8, 111:5; 1 Cor. 11:28; Gal. 4:23-25. If we are under a covenant of works, our state is miserable; if we are under a covenant of grace, our state is happy. If we die under a covenant of works, we shall be certainly damned; if we die under a covenant of grace, we shall be certainly saved.

Until we come to understand what covenant we are under, we shall never be able to put a right construction, a right interpretation, upon any of God's actions, dealings, or dispensations towards us. When we come to understand that we are under the covenant of **grace**, then we shall be able to put a sweet, a loving, and a favorable construction upon the most sharp, distressing, severe, and dreadful dispensations of God, knowing that all flows from love, and shall work for our external, internal, and eternal good, and for the advancement of God's honor and glory in the world. [Rev. 3:19; Job 1:21; Jer. 24:4-5; Romans 8:28; Heb. 12:10-11; 2 Cor. 4:15-18.] When we come to understand that we are under a covenant of **works**, then we shall know that there are wrath, and curses, and woes wrapped up in the most favorable dispensations, and in the greatest outward mercies and blessings which Christ confers upon us. [Proverbs 1:32; Mal. 2:2; Deut. 28:15-20; Lev. 26:14-24; 2 Cor. 2:14; Heb. 12:1.]

If a man is under a covenant of **grace**—and does not know it, how can he rejoice in the Lord? How can he sing out the high praises of God? How can he delight himself in the Almighty? How can he triumph in Christ Jesus? How can he cheerfully run the race which is before him? How can he bear up bravely and resolutely in his sufferings for the cause of Christ? How can he besiege the throne of grace with boldness? How can he be temptation-proof? How can he be dead to this world? How can he long to be with Christ in that other world?

And if a man be under a covenant of **works**—and does not know it, how can he lament and bewail his sad condition? How can he be earnest with God to bring him under the bond of the new covenant? How can he desire after Christ? How can he choose the things that please God? How can he cease from doing evil, and learn to do well? How can he lay hold on eternal life? How can he be saved from wrath to come? etc.

If we are under a covenant of **grace**—and do not know it, how can we manage our duties and services with that life, love, seriousness, holiness, spiritualness, and uprightness, as becomes us? [Psalm 16:4; Amos 8:5; Mal. 1:13; Hosea 6:4, and 4:10; Psalm 36:3.] etc. If we are under a covenant of grace, and do not know it, how rare shall we be in pious duties! How weary shall we be of pious duties, and how ready shall we be to cast off pious duties!

By these few things I have been hinting at, you may easily discern how greatly it concerns all people to know what covenant they are under; whether they are under the first or second covenant; whether they are under a covenant of works or a covenant of grace. Now having premised these seven things, my way is clear to that I would be at, which is this—namely,

**1. That there are but two covenants.** In one of them, all men and women in the world must of necessity be found—either in the covenant of grace or in the covenant of works. The covenant of *works* is a witness of God's holiness and perfection; the covenant of *grace* is a witness of God's goodness and mercy. The covenant of *works* is a standing evidence of man's guiltiness; the covenant of *grace* is the standing evidence of God's righteousness. The covenant of *works* is the lasting monument of man's impotency and changeableness; the covenant of *grace* is the everlasting monument of God's omnipotency and immutability.

No man can be under both these covenants at once. If he is under a covenant of works, he is not under a covenant of grace; and if he be under a covenant of grace, he cannot be under a covenant of works. Such as are under a covenant of *works*, they have the breach of that covenant to account for, they being the serpentine brood of a transgressing stock. But such as are under a covenant of *grace* shall never be tried by the law of works, because Christ, their surety, has fulfilled it for them, Acts 13:38-39; Romans 8:2-4; Gal. 4:4-6. But let me open myself more fully thus—

That all unbelievers, all Christless, graceless people, are under a covenant of **works**, which they are never able safely to live under. Should they live and die under a covenant of works, they were surely lost and destroyed forever; for the covenant of works condemns and curses the sinner: Gal.

3:10, "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Neither has the sinner any way to escape that curse of the law, nor the wrath of God revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness, but in the covenant of grace, Romans 1:18. This covenant of works the apostle calls "the law of works," Romans 3:27. This is the covenant which God made with man in the state of innocency before the fall, Gen. 2:16-17. In this covenant God promised to Adam, for himself and his posterity, life and happiness, upon the condition of perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience; and it is summed up by the apostle, "Do this and live," Gal. 3:12. God having created man upright, after his own image, Eccles. 7:29; Gen. 1:26-27, and so having furnished him with all abilities sufficient for obedience, thereupon he made a covenant with him for life upon the condition of obedience; I say, he made such a covenant with Adam, as a public person, as the head of the covenant; and as he promised life to him and his posterity in case of obedience, so he threatened death and a curse unto him and his posterity in case of disobedience: "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die;" or, "dying you shall die," Gen. 2:17. [Gal. 3:10. Not only the covenant of grace, but the covenant of works also, is an eternal covenant; and therefore the curse of the covenant remains upon men unto eternity. There is an eternal *obligation* upon the creature, he being bound to God by an eternal *law*; and the *transgression* of that law carries with it an eternal *guilt*, which eternal guilt brings sinners under an eternal *curse*.]

God, in this covenant of works, dealt with Adam and his posterity in a way of supremacy and righteousness, and therefore there is mention made only of the threatenings: "In the day you eat thereof, you shall die!" And it is further observable, that in this covenant which God made with Adam and his posterity, he did promise unto them eternal life and happiness in heaven, and not eternal life in this world only, as some would have it; for hell was threatened in these words, "In the day you eat thereof you shall die;" and therefore heaven and happiness, salvation and glory, was promised on the contrary. We must necessarily conclude that the promise was as ample, large, and full as the threatening was; yet this must be remembered, that when God did at first enter into covenant with us, and did promise us heaven and salvation, it was upon condition of our personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, and therefore called a

covenant of works. "Do this and live" was not only a command, but a covenant, with a promise of eternal happiness upon perfect and perpetual obedience. All who are under a covenant of works, are under the curse of the covenant, and they are all bound over unto eternal wrath. But the Lord Christ has put an end to this covenant, and abolished it unto all that are in him, being himself made under it; and satisfying the precept and the curse of it, and so he did cancel it, "as a handwriting against us, nailing it unto his cross," Col. 2:14. So that all those who are in Christ, are freed from the law as a covenant. But unto all other men it remains a covenant still, and they remain under the curse of it forever, and the wrath of God abides upon them, John 3:36. Though the covenant of works, as it is a covenant for life, ceases unto believers, yet it stands in force against all unbelievers.

Now, oh how sad is it for a man to be under a covenant of works! For,

**First**, The covenant of works, in the nature of it, requires perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience, under pain of the curse and death, according to the apostle, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse," Gal. 3:10—presupposing man's fall, and, consequently, his inability to keep it—"For it is written, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them," Deut. 27:26. The covenant of works, therefore, affords no mercy to the transgressors of it, but inflicts death and curse for the least delinquency: "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," James 2:10. The whole law is but one whole; he who breaks one commandment habitually, breaks all. A dispensatory conscience keeps not any commandment. When the disposition of the heart is qualified to break every command, then a man breaks every command in the account of God. Everyone sin contains virtually all sin in it. He who dares despise the lawgiver in any one command, he dares despise the lawgiver in every command. He who allows himself in any one known sin, in any course, way, or trade of sin, he lays himself under that curse which is threatened against the transgressors of the law.

Those who are under this covenant of works must of necessity perish. The case stands thus: Adam did break this covenant, and so brought the curse of it both upon himself and all his seed to the end of the world; in his sin

all men sinned, Romans 5:12. Now if we consider all men as involved in the first transgression of the covenant, they must all needs perish without a Savior. This is the miserable condition that all mortals are in, who are under a covenant of works. But,

**Secondly**, Such as are under a covenant of works, their best and choicest duties are rejected and abhorred—for the least miscarriages or blemishes which attend them or cleave to them. Observe the dreadful language of that covenant of works, "Cursed is he who continues not in all things that are written in the law of God to do them," Gal. 3:10. Hence it is that the best duties of all unregenerate persons are loathed and abhorred by God; as you may clearly see by comparing these scriptures together. [Isaiah 1:11-15; Jer. 6:20; Isaiah 66:3; Amos 5:21; Micah 6:6; Mal. 1:10.] The most glorious duties and the most splendid performances of those who are under a covenant of works, are loathsome to God, for the least mistake that does accompany them. The covenant of works deals with men according to the most exact terms of strict justice. It does not make nor allow any favorable or gracious interpretation, as the covenant of grace does; the very least failure exposes the soul to wrath, to great wrath, to everlasting wrath. This covenant is not a covenant of mercy, but of pure justice. But,

**Thirdly**, This covenant admits of no mediator. There was no arbitrator between God and man, none to stand between them, neither was there any need of a mediator; for God and man were at no distance, at no variance. [Hence this covenant is called by some, a covenant of friendship.] Man was then righteous, perfectly righteous. Now the proper work of a mediator is to make peace and reconciliation between God and us. At the first, in the state of innocency, there was peace and friendship between God and man, there was no enmity in God's heart towards man, nor any enmity in man's heart towards God; but upon the fall a breach and separation was made between God and man; so that man flies from God, and hides from God, and trembles at the voice of God, Gen. 3:8-10. Fallen man is now turned rebel, and has become a desperate enemy to God; yes, his heart is full of enmity against God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Romans 8:7; not an "enemy," but "enmity," in the abstract; noting an excess of enmity. [The word signifies the act of a

carnal mind, comprehending thoughts, desire, discourse, etc.] Nothing can be said more; for an "enemy" may be reconciled, but "enmity" can never; a wicked man may become virtuous, but vice cannot.

There are natural antipathies between some creatures, as between the lion and the rooster, the elephant and the boar, the camel and the horse, the eagle and the dragon, etc. But what are all these antipathies to that antipathy and enmity that is in the hearts of all carnal men against God?

Now while men stand under a covenant of works, there is none to interpose by way of mediation, but fallen man lies open to the wrath of God, and to all the curses which are written in this book. When breaches are made between God and man, under the covenant of grace, there is a mediator to interpose and to make up all such breaches; but under the covenant of works there is no mediator to interpose between God and fallen man. These three things I have hinted a little at, on purpose to work my reader, if under a covenant of works, to be restless until he be got from under that covenant, into the covenant of grace, where alone lies man's safety, felicity, happiness, and comfort. Now this consideration leads me by the hand to tell you,

**2. Secondly, That there is a covenant of GRACE, that all believers, all sincere Christians, all real saints are under;** for under these two covenants all mankind fall. The apostle calls this covenant of grace, "the law of faith," Romans 3:17.

Now, **first**, this covenant of grace is sometimes styled an "EVERLASTING covenant." Isaiah 55:3, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." You need not question my security, in respect of the great things that I have propounded and promised in my word, for the encouragement of your faith and hope; for I will give you my bond for all I have spoken, which shall be as surely made good to you as the mercies that I have performed to my servant David, 2 Sam. 23:5. The word *everlasting* has two acceptations; it does denote,

(1.) Sometimes *a long duration*; in which respect the old covenant, clothed with figures and ceremonies, is called everlasting, because it was

to endure, and did endure, a long time, Psalm 105:9-10;

(2.) Sometimes it denotes *a perpetual duration*, a duration which shall last forever, Heb. 13:20, etc. In this respect the covenant of grace is everlasting; it shall never cease, never be broken, nor never be altered.

Now the covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant in a twofold respect.

First, In respect of **God**, who will never break covenant with his people; but is their God, and will be their God, forever and ever, Titus 1:2; Psalm 90:2, and 48:14, "For this God is our God, forever and ever; he will be our God even unto death." Yes, and after death too! For this is not to be taken exclusively. Oh no! for "he will never, never leave them, nor forsake them," Heb. 13:5. There are *five negatives* in the Greek, to assure God's people that he will never forsake them. According to the Greek it may be rendered thus, "I will not, not leave you, neither will I not, not forsake you." [Five times in Scripture is this precious promise renewed: Josh. 1:5; Deut. 31:8; 1 Kings 8:57; Gen. 28:15, that we may be still a-pressing of it until we have pressed all the sweetness out of it, Isaiah 66:11.] Leave us! God may, to our thinking, leave us; but forsake us he will not.

Psalm 89:34, "My covenant will I not break; nor alter the thing that is gone out of my mouth." Though God's people should profane his statutes, ver. 31, yet God will not profane his covenant; though his people often break with him, yet he will never break with them; though they may be inconstant, yet God will be constant to his covenant.

Isaiah 54:10, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord, who has mercy on you." Though huge mountains should depart, which is not probable, yet his covenant shall stand immovable; and his mercy and kindness to his people shall be immutable. This new covenant of grace is like the new heavens and new earth, which will never wax old or vanish away, Isaiah 66:22. But,

Secondly, The covenant of grace is called an everlasting covenant, in respect to **the people of God**, who are brought into covenant, and shall continue in covenant forever and ever, Mal. 3:6; Hosea 2:19; Gen. 17:7.

You have both these expressed in that excellent scripture, Jer. 32:40, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them; that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Seriously dwell upon the place; it shows that the covenant is everlasting on God's part, and also on our part. [God will never cease to pursue and follow his covenant-people with favors and blessings incessantly.] On God's part, "I will never turn away from them to do them good;" and on our part, "they shall never depart from me." How so? "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." That they may continue constant with me, and not constrain me, by their apostasy, to break again with them: I will so deeply rivet a reverent dread of myself in their souls, as shall cause them to cling, and cleave, and keep close to me forever.

In the covenant of grace, God undertakes for both parts; for his own, "that he will be their God"—that is, that all he is, and all he has, shall be employed for their external, internal, and eternal good; and for ours, that we "shall be his people"—that is, that we shall believe, love, fear, repent, obey, serve him, and walk with him, as he requires, Jer. 32:38; Ezek. 36:26-27; and thus the covenant of grace becomes an "everlasting covenant;" yes, such a covenant as has the sure or unfailable mercies of David wrapped up in it.

The covenant of grace is a new compact or agreement, which God has made with sinful man, out of his mere mercy and grace, wherein he undertakes, both for himself and for fallen man, and wherein he engages himself to make fallen man everlastingly happy. "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jeremiah 32:38-40. In the covenant of grace there are two things considerable:

First, the covenant that God makes for himself to us, which consists mainly of **these branches**:

(1.) That he will be our God; that is, as if he said, "You shall have as true

an interest in all my attributes for your good, as they are mine for my own glory, Jer. 31:38; Psalm 144:15; 2 Cor. 6:16-18. My *grace*, says God, shall be yours to pardon you, and my *power* shall be yours to protect you, and my *wisdom* shall be yours to direct you, and my *goodness* shall be yours to relieve you, and my *mercy* shall be yours to supply you, and my *glory* shall be yours to crown you. This is a comprehensive promise, for God to be our God: it includes all.

**(2.)** That he "will give us his Spirit." Hence the Spirit is called "the Holy Spirit of promise." The giving of the Holy Spirit is the great promise which Christ, from the Father, has made unto us. It is the Spirit who reveals the promises, who applies the promises, and who helps the soul to live upon the promises, and to draw marrow and fatness out of the promises. The great promise of the Old Testament was the promise of Christ, Gen. 3:16, and the great promise of the New Testament is the promise of the Spirit, as you may see by these scriptures. [Isaiah 44:3; Jer. 31:33; Joel 2:28; John 14:16, 20; Acts 2:23; Luke 24:49; John 15:26, and 16:7.] That in this last age of the world there may be a more clear and full discovery of Christ, of the great things of the gospel, of Antichrist, and of the glorious conquests that are in the last days to be made upon him, the giving of the Spirit is promised as the most excellent gift.

**(3.)** That he "will take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh," that is, a soft and tender heart, "I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My statutes and carefully observe My ordinances." Ezekiel 36:25-27.

**(4.)** That he "will not turn away his face from us, from doing of us good;" and that "he will put his fear into our hearts," Jer. 32:40.

**(5.)** That he "will cleanse us from all our filthiness, and from all our idols," Ezek. 36:25.

**(6.)** That he "will rejoice over us, to do us good," Jer. 33:9-10, and 32:41.

The second thing considerable in the covenant of grace, is the covenant which God does make for us to himself, which consists mainly in these things:

(1.) That we "shall be his people."

(2.) That we "shall fear him forever."

(3.) That we "shall walk in his statutes, keep his judgments, and do them."

(4.) That we "shall never depart from him."

(5.) That we "shall persevere, and hold out to the end."

(6.) That we "shall grow, and flourish in grace."

(7.) A true right to the creatures.

(8.) That all providences, changes, and conditions shall work for our good.

(9.) Union and communion with Christ.

(10.) That we shall have a kingdom, a crown, and glory at last. And what would we have more? [Jer. 32:38, 40; Ezek. 36:27; Job 17:9; Proverbs 4:18; Psalm 1:3; Hosea 14:6-7; Zech. 12:18; Mal. 4:2; Jer. 24:5; Romans 8:28; Luke 12:32; Rev. 2:10; Psalm 84:11; John 10:28.]

By these short hints it is most evident that the covenant of grace is an entire covenant, an everlasting covenant, made by God both for himself and for us. O sirs! this is the glory of the covenant of grace, that whatever God requires of us, that he stands engaged to give unto us. Whatever in the covenant of grace God requires on man's part, that he undertakes to perform for man.

That this covenant of grace is an "everlasting covenant" may be made further clear,

[1.] **First**, From God's designation, who has often styled it **an EVERLASTING covenant**. In the Old Testament he frequently calls it, in Heb., *a covenant of eternity*. In the New Testament he calls it, in Greek, *the eternal covenant*, or the *everlasting covenant*. And those whom God has taken into covenant with himself, they have frequently acknowledged it to be an everlasting covenant, as is evident up and down the Scripture.

The covenant of *works* was not everlasting, it was soon overthrown by Adam's sin; but the covenant of grace is everlasting. The joy that is wrapped up in the covenant, is an everlasting joy, Isaiah 35:10; and the righteousness that is wrapped up in the covenant, is an everlasting righteousness, Dan. 9:24; and the life that is wrapped up in the covenant, is an everlasting life, John 3:16; and all the happiness, and glory, and salvation which are wrapped up in the covenant is everlasting, John 12:2; Mat. 19:29; 1 Pet. 5:4; Isaiah 45:17. The covenant-relation which is between God and his people is everlasting; and the mediator of the covenant is everlasting—namely, "Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today, and the same forever," Heb. 13:8. Though the covenant, in respect of our own personal entering into it, is made with us now in time, and has a beginning; yet for continuance it is everlasting and without end; it shall remain forever and ever. But,

[2.] **Secondly**, This covenant of grace, under which the saints stand, is sometimes styled **a covenant of LIFE**: Mal. 2:5, "My covenant was with him of life and peace." Life is restored, and life is promised, and life is settled by the covenant. There is no safe life, no comfortable life, no easy life, no happy life, no honorable life, no glorious life—for any sinner who is not under the bond of this covenant. [Philosophers say that a fly is more excellent than the skies, because the fly has life, which the skies have not.] All mankind would have been eternally lost, and God had lost all the glory of his mercy forever, had he not, of his own free grace and mercy, made a covenant of life with poor sinners.

A man, in the covenant of grace, has three degrees of life:

the first in this life, when Christ lives in him;

the second, when his "body returns to the earth, and his soul to God that gave it;"

the third, at the end of the world, when body and soul reunited shall enjoy heaven.

**[3.] Thirdly,** This covenant of grace, under which the saints or faithful people of Christ stand, is sometimes styled a **HOLY covenant**. Daniel, describing the wickedness of Antiochus Epiphanies, says, "His heart shall be against the *holy* covenant," Dan. 11:28, 30. So the psalmist, "For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant," Psalm 105:42-43; [Heb., The word of his holiness, that is, his sacred and gracious covenant that he had made with Abraham and his posterity.] *Promise* is here put for *covenant* by a synecdoche. Luke 1:72, "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant."

The parties interested in this covenant are holy. Here you have a holy God and a holy people in covenant together. Holiness is one of the principal things that is promised in the covenant. The covenant commands holiness, and encourages to holiness, and works souls up to a higher degree of holiness, and fences and arms gracious souls against all external and internal unholiness. The author of this covenant is holy; the mediator of this covenant is holy; the great blessings contained in this covenant are holy blessings; and the people taken into this covenant are sometimes styled holy brethren, holy men, holy women. "A holy temple, a holy priesthood, a holy nation, a holy people," as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Psalm 50: 5; Heb. 3:1; 1 Thes. 5:27; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Peter 3:5; 1 Cor. 3:17; 1 Peter 2:9, etc.] Whenever God brings a poor soul under the bond of the covenant, he makes him holy, and he makes him love holiness, and prize holiness, and delight in holiness, and press and follow hard after holiness. A holy God will not take an unholy person by the hand, as Job speaks, chapter 8; neither will he allow of such to take his covenant into their mouths, as the psalmist speaks, Psalm 20:6.

**[4.] Fourthly,** This covenant of grace, under which the saints stand, is sometimes styled a **covenant of PEACE**: Num. 25:12, "Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace." Peace is the comprehension of all

blessings and prosperity. All sorts of peace, namely, peace with *God*, and peace with *conscience*, and peace with the *creatures*—flows from the covenant of grace, Mal. 2:5. There is—

- (1.) An *external* peace, and that is with men;
- (2.) There is a *supernatural* peace, and that is with God;
- (3.) There is an *internal* peace, and that is with conscience;
- (4.) There is an *eternal* peace, and that is in heaven.

Now all these kinds of peace flow in upon us through the covenant of grace. The Hebrew word for *peace* comes from a root which denotes *perfection*. The end of the upright man is perfection of happiness, Psalm 37:37. [This covenant is styled a *covenant of peace*, because it breeds, settles, quiets, and establishes our hearts in perfect peace, it stills all fears and doubts and thoughts of heart.] Peace is a very comprehensive word. It carries in its womb, all outward blessings. It was the common greeting of the Jews, "Peace be unto you:" and thus David, by his proxy, salutes Nabal, "Peace be to you, and your house." The ancients were accustomed to paint peace in the form of a woman, with a *horn of plenty* in her hand. The covenant of grace is that hand, by which God gives out all sorts of peace unto us: Isaiah 54:10, "Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord, who has mercy on you." The covenant is here called the covenant of peace, because the Lord therein offers us all those things that may make us completely happy; for under this word peace the Hebrews comprehend all happiness and felicity.

Ezek. 34:25, "And I will make with them a covenant of peace;" the Hebrew is, "I will cut with them a covenant of peace." This expression of cutting a covenant is taken from the custom of the Jews in their making of covenants. The manner of this ceremony or solemnity, Jeremiah declares, saying, "I will give the men who have transgressed my covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they had struck before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof," Jer. 34:18. Their manner was to kill sacrifices, to cut these sacrifices in twain, to lay the two parts thus divided in the midst, piece

against piece, exactly one over against another, to answer each other: then the covenanting parties passed between the parts of the sacrifices so slit in twain. The meaning of which ceremonies and solemnities is conceived to be this—namely, as part answered to part, so there was a harmonious correspondency and answerableness of their minds and hearts, who struck the covenant: and as part was severed from part, so the covenanters implied, if not expressed, an imprecation or curse; wishing the like dissection and destruction to the parties covenanting, as most deserved, if they should break the covenant, or deal falsely therein. [This ceremony or solemnity of covenanting, the Romans and other nations used. Some judge the heathens borrowed this custom from the Jews. I have spoken of this before.]

To this custom God alludes, when he says, "I will cut with them a covenant of peace," Isaiah 42:6; and this he did by making Christ a sacrifice, by shedding his blood, and dividing his soul and body, who is said to be given for a covenant of the people, that is, to be the mediator of the covenant between God and his people. So Ezek. 37:26, "Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them," etc. The word for peace is Shalom, by which the Hebrews understand not only outward quietness, but all kind of outward happiness. Others, by the covenant of peace here, do understand the gospel, wherein we see Christ has pacified all things by the blood of his cross. And Lavater says, "it is called a covenant of peace, Not only outward, but inward peace, between God and us, is merited by our Lord Jesus Christ," Col. 1:20. But,

**[5.] Fifthly,** This covenant of grace, under which the saints stand, is sometimes styled a **NEW covenant**: Jer. 31:31, "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a **new** covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." Heb. 12:24, "And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant," etc., Heb. 8:8, 13, and 9:15. Now the covenant of grace is styled a new covenant in several respects.

**(1.) In opposition to the former covenant,** which was old, and being old, vanished away, Heb. 8:13. It is called a new covenant, in opposition to the covenant that was made with Adam in the state of innocency, and in opposition to the covenant that was made with the Jews in the time of

the Old Testament.

**(2.) To show the excellency of the covenant of grace.** New things are rare and excellent things. In the blessed Scriptures excellent things are frequently called "new;" as a "new *testament*," a "new *Jerusalem*," "new *heavens*," and "new *earth*;" a "new *name*," that is, an excellent name; a "new *commandment*," that is, an excellent commandment; "a new *way*," that is, an excellent way; "a new *heart*," is an excellent heart; "a new *spirit*," is an excellent spirit; and "a new *song*," is an excellent song. [Mat. 26:28; Rev. 21:2; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 2:17; John 13:34; Ezek. 36:26, 27; Psalm 40:3.]

**(3.) In regard of the succession of it in the place of the former.**

**(4.) In regard of the dilation and enlargement of it,** it being in the days of old confined to the Jewish nation and state, and some few proselytes who adjoined themselves thereunto; whereas now it is propounded and extended, without respect of persons or places, unto all indiscriminently, of all people and nations who shall embrace the faith of Christ.

**(5.) Sometimes that is styled new, which is different from what it was before:** 2 Cor. 5:17, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature," that is, he is not such a man as he was before; a man must be either a new man—or no man in Christ. [A new creature has a new light, a new judgment, a new will, new affections, new thoughts, new company, new choice, new Lord, new law, new way, new work, etc. A new creature is a changed creature throughout, 1 Thes. 5:23.]

The substance of the soul is not changed, but the qualities and operations of it are altered; in regeneration our natures are changed, not destroyed. This word "new," in Scripture, signifies as much as "another;" not that it is essentially new, but new only in regard of qualities. A new creature is a changed creature: 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory," that is, from grace to grace. In this respect also, is the covenant styled new, not only because it is diverse from the covenant of works, but also because it is diverse from itself in respect of the

administration of it, after that Christ was manifested in the flesh, and died and rose again.

From the different *administration*, it is called old and new. This new covenant has not those seals of circumcision and the Passover; nor those manifold sacrifices, ceremonies, types, and shadows, etc., to the observation whereof the Jews were strictly obliged; but now all these things are taken away upon the coming of Christ, and a service of God, much more spiritual, substituted in the place of them; upon which accounts the covenant of grace is called a "new covenant."

**(6.) It is styled new, because it is fresh, and green, and flourishing.** It is like unto Aaron's rod, which continued new, fresh, and flourishing, Num. 17:8. [Austin, and others, think that the commandment of love is called a new commandment, because it is always fresh, and green, and flourishing; and why may not the covenant of grace be called a new covenant upon the same account?] All the choice blessings, all the great blessings, all the internal and all the eternal blessings of the new covenant, are as new, fresh, and flourishing, as they were when God brought your souls first under the bond of the new covenant. But,

**(7.) Such things are sometimes styled new, which are strange, rare, wonderful, marvelous, and unusual—the like not heard of before.** So Jer. 31:22, "The Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man;" as the nut encloses the kernel, not receiving anything from without, but conceiving and breeding of herself, by the power of the Almighty, from within. That a *virgin* should conceive and bring forth a man-child, this was indeed a new thing, a strange thing, a wonderful thing—a thing that was never thought of, never heard of, never read of, from the creation of the world to that very day.

Just so, Isaiah 43:19, "Behold, I will do a new thing, I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." [The word "new" does intimate some more excellent mercies than God had formerly conferred upon his people.] This was a new work, that is, a wonderful and unusual work; for God to make a plain or free way in the wilderness, where the ways are accustomed to be uneven, with hills and dales, and obstructed with thickets, and overgrown with brambles and briars—is a strange and

marvelous work indeed.

In this respect also, the covenant of grace is styled new, that is, it is a wonderful covenant. O sirs! what a wonder is this, that the great God, who was so transcendently dishonored, despised, provoked, incensed, and injured by poor base sinners, should yet so freely, so readily, so graciously, condescend to vile forlorn sinners, as to treat with them, as to own them, as to love them, and as to enter into a covenant of grace and mercy with them! This may well be the wonder of angels, and the astonishment of men.

**(8.) and lastly, It is called a new covenant, because it is never to be antiquated,** as the apostle explains himself, Heb. 8:13. But,

**[6.] Sixthly,** This covenant of grace, under which the saints stand, is sometimes styled **a covenant of SALT:** Lev. 2:13, "Neither shall you allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from the meat-offering," etc. [Salt they were bound as by a covenant, to use in all sacrifices, or it means a sure and pure covenant. Some, by the salt of the covenant—do mystically understand the grace of the New Testament.] The salt of the covenant signifies that covenant that God has made with us in Christ, who seasons us, and makes all our services savory. The meaning of the words, say some, is this—"The salt shall put you in mind of my covenant, whereby you stand engaged to endeavor always for an untainted and uncorrupted life and conversation."

"By this salting," say others, "was signified the covenant of grace in Christ, which we by faith apprehend unto incorruption, wherefore our unregenerate estate is likened to a child new born and not salted," Ezek. 16:4. Others say it signifies the eternal and perpetual holiness of the covenant between God and man; and some there are, who say that this salt of the covenant signifies the grace of God, whereby they are guided and sanctified that belong unto the covenant of grace. So Num. 18:19, "It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord for both you and your offspring." A covenant of salt is used for an inviolable, incorruptible, and perpetual covenant. This covenant which the Lord made with the priests is called a covenant of salt, because, as salt keeps from corruption, so that covenant was perpetual, authentic, and inviolable ["Of old, amity and

friendship was symbolized by salt, for its consolidating and conserving property," says Pierius.]—as anciently the most solemn ceremony that was used in covenants was to take and eat of the same salt, and it was esteemed more sacred and firm than to eat at the same table and drink of the same cup.

This covenant, in regard of its perpetuity, is here called a "covenant of salt," that is, a sure and stable, a firm and incorruptible covenant. So 2 Chron. 13:5, "Don't you know that the Lord, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants *forever* by a covenant of salt?" That is—perpetual and inviolable, solemn and sure. By this metaphor of salt, a perpetuity is set forth, for salt makes things last. The covenant therefore here intended is by this metaphor declared to be a perpetual covenant, that was not to be abrogated or nullified. In this respect these two phrases, "a covenant of salt," and "forever," are joined together.

Some take this metaphor of salt to be used in relation to their manner of making their covenant with a sacrifice, on which salt was always sprinkled, and thereby is implied that it was a most solemn covenant not to be violated. [Num. 18:19, but now opened, Lev. 2:13.] But,

[7.] Seventhly, The covenant of grace, under which the saints stand, is sometimes styled a **SURE covenant, a FIRM covenant—a covenant that God will punctually and accurately perform.** In this regard, the covenant of grace is in the Old Testament *Shemurah*—that is, kept, observed, performed. The word imports care, diligence, and solicitude lest anything be let go, let slip, etc. God is ever mindful of his covenant, and will have that singular care and that constant and due regard to it, that not the least branch of it shall ever fail, as you may clearly see by consulting these special scriptures. [2 Sam. 23:5; Deut. 7:9; 2 Chron. 6:14; Psalm 19:7, and 89:28; Titus 1:2; Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 54:10.]

Hence it is called the mercy and the truth: Mic. 7:20, "You will be *true* to Jacob, and show *mercy* to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago." The covenant is called *mercy*, because mercy alone, drew this covenant; it was free mercy, it was mere mercy, it was only mercy which moved God to enter into covenant with us. And it is

called *truth*, because the great God who has made this covenant will assuredly make good all that mercy and all that grace, and all that favor which is wrapped up in it. God having made himself a voluntary debtor to his people, he will come off fairly with them, and not be worse than his word. Hence Christ is said to have a *rainbow* upon his head, to show that he is faithful and constant in his covenant, Rev. 10:1. God has hitherto kept promise with nights and days, that one shall follow the other, Isaiah 54:9-10; therefore much more will he keep promise with his people, Jer. 33:20, 25. [The stability of God's covenant is compared to the unvariable course of the day and the night, and to the firmness and unmovableness of the mighty mountains, Isaiah 54:9-10.]

Hence also the covenant is called the *oath*: Luke 1:73, "The oath which he swore unto our father Abraham." You never read of God's oath in a covenant of works. In that first covenant you read not of a mediator nor of an oath; but in the covenant of grace you read both of a mediator and of an oath, the more effectually to confirm us as touching the immutability of his will and purpose, for the accomplishment of all the good and the great things which are promised in the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is incomparably more firm, sure, immutable, and irrevocable than all other covenants in the world. Therefore it is said, Heb. 6:17-18, "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged." That is, a valiant, strong, prevailing consolation, such as swallows up all worldly griefs, as Moses his serpent did, the sorcerers' serpents; or as the fire does, the fuel. God's word, his promise, his covenant, is sufficient to assure us of all the good that he has engaged to bestow upon us; yet God, considering of our infirmity, has bound his word with an oath. [Who shall doubt when God does swear? He cannot possibly deny himself or to recant?]

His word cannot be made more true, but yet it may be made more credible. Now two things make a thing more credible:

(1.) The quality of the person speaking;

(2.) The manner of the speech.

If God does not simply *speak*, but solemnly *swear*—we have the highest cause imaginable to rest assured and abundantly satisfied in the word and oath of God. An oath among men is the strongest, surest, most sacred, and inviolable bond; "Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument," Heb. 6:16. The end of an oath among men is to help the truth in necessity, and to clear men's innocency, Exod. 22:11. O sirs! God does not only make his covenant, but swears his covenant; "I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness--and I will not lie," Psalm 89:34-35. This is as great and deep an oath as God could take; for his holiness is himself, who is most holy, and the foundation of all **holiness**. God is—essentially holy, unmixedly holy, universally holy, transcendently holy, originally holy, independently holy, constantly holy, and exemplarily holy. Now for so holy a God to swear once for all by his holiness that he will keep covenant, that he will keep touch with his people, how abundantly should it settle and satisfy them!

Ah! my friends, has God said it, and will he not do it? Yes, has he sworn it, and will he not bring it to pass? Dare we trust an honest man upon his bare word, much more upon his oath; and shall we not much more trust a holy, wise, and faithful God upon his word, upon his covenant, when confirmed by an oath? The covenant of grace is *sure* in itself; it is a *firm* covenant, an *unalterable* covenant, an *everlasting* covenant, a *ratified* covenant; so that heaven and earth may sooner pass away, than the least branch or word of his covenant should pass away unfulfilled, Mat. 5:18.

## **The Covenant of Grace Proved and Opened (Part 2)**

**(1.) Let us but cast our eyes upon the several springs from whence the covenant of grace flows, and then we cannot but strongly conclude that the covenant of grace is a **sure** covenant. Now if**

you cast your eye aright, you shall see that the covenant of grace flows from these three springs.

**First, From the free grace and favor of God.** There was nothing in fallen man to invite God to enter into covenant with him; yes, there was everything in fallen man that might justly provoke God to abandon man, to abhor man, to revenge himself upon man. It was mere grace that made the covenant, and it is mere grace that makes good the covenant. Now, that which springs from mere grace must needs be unexceptionably sure. The love of God is unchangeable; "whom he loves he loves to the end," John 13:3; whom God loves once he loves forever. He is not as man, soon *on*—and soon *off* again, Mal. 3:6; James 1:17; soon *in*—and as soon *out*, as Joab's dagger was. Oh no! his love is like himself—lasting, yes, everlasting: "I have loved you with an everlasting love," Jer. 31:3. Though we break off with him, yet he abides faithful, 2 Tim. 2:13. Now what can be more sure, than that which springs from free love, from everlasting love? Romans 4:16. Hence the covenant must be sure. The former covenant was not sure, because it was of works; but this covenant is sure, because it is of grace, and rests not on any sufficiency in us, but only on grace.

**Secondly, The covenant of grace springs from the immutable counsel of God.** Heb. 6:17, "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Times are mutable, and all men are mutable, and the love and favor of the creature is mutable. But the counsel of God, from which the covenant of grace flows—is immutable, and therefore it must needs be sure, Isaiah 40:6; Psalm 146:3, 4; Jer. 33:14. The manifestation of the immutability of God's counsel is here brought in, as one end of God's oath. God swears, that it might evidently appear that what he had purposed, counseled, determined, and promised to Abraham and his seed—would assuredly be accomplished; there would be, there could be, no alteration thereof. His counsel was more firm than the laws of the Medea and Persians, which alters not, Dan. 6:13.

Certainly God's counsel is inviolable: "My counsel shall stand." Isaiah 46:10; Psalm 33:11, "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Proverbs 19:21, "Nevertheless the counsel

of the Lord—that shall stand." The immutability of God's counsel springs from the unchangeableness of his essence, the perfection of his wisdom, the infiniteness of his goodness, the absoluteness of his sovereignty, the omnipotency of his power. God in his essence being unchangeable, his counsel also must needs be so. Can darkness flow out of light, or fullness out of emptiness, or heaven out of hell? No! no more can changeable counsels flow from an immutable nature. Now the covenant of grace flows from the immutable counsel of God, which is most firm and inviolable, and therefore it must needs be a sure covenant. But,

**Thirdly, The covenant of grace springs from the purpose of God, resolving and intending everlasting good unto us.** Now this purpose of God is sure; so the apostle, 2 Tim. 2:19, "The foundation of God stands sure." [Our graces are imperfect, our comforts ebb and flow; but God's foundation stands sure.] That foundation of God is his election, which is compared to a foundation; because it is that upon which all our good and happiness is built, and because as a foundation it abides firm and sure. The gracious purpose of God is the fountain-head of all our spiritual blessings. It is the foundational cause of our effectual calling, justification, glorification; it is the highest link in the golden chain of salvation. What is the reason that God has entered into a covenant with fallen man? it is from his eternal purpose. What is the reason that one man is everlastingly saved—and not another? It is from the eternal purpose of God, Ezek. 20:37.

In all the great concerns of the covenant of grace, the purpose of God gives the casting voice. The purpose of God is the sovereign cause of all that good that is in man, and of all that external, internal, and eternal good that comes to man. Not works past, for men are chosen from everlasting; not present works, for Jacob was loved and chosen before he was born; nor foreseen works, for men were all corrupt in Adam. All a believer's present happiness, and all his future happiness, springs from the eternal purpose of God; as you may see, by comparing these scriptures together. [Romans 8:28, and 9:11; Eph. 1:11, and 3:11.] "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." Romans 9:15-16. "God,

who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time." 2 Timothy 1:8-9.

This purpose of God speaks our stability and certainty of salvation by Christ, God's eternal purpose never changes, never alters; "Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass, and as I have purposed," says God, "so shall it stand." God's purposes are immutable, so is his covenant. God's purposes are sure, very sure, so is his covenant. The covenant of grace that flows from the eternal purpose of God, is as sure as God is sure; for God can neither deceive nor be deceived. That covenant that is built upon this rock of God's eternal purpose, must needs be sure; and therefore all that are in covenant with God need never fear falling away. There is no man, no power, no devil, no violent temptation—which shall ever be able to overturn those that God has brought under the bond of the covenant, 1 Pet. 1:5. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." John 10:27-29. But,

**(2.) Secondly, Consider that the covenant of grace is confirmed and made sure by the blood of Jesus Christ,** which is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. 13:20. Christ, by his irrevocable death, has made sure the covenant to us, Heb. 9:16-17. The covenant of grace is to be considered under the notion of a testament; and Christ, as the testator of this will and testament. [The main point which the apostle intended, by setting down the inviolableness of men's last wills after their death, is to prove that Christ's death was very requisite for ratifying of the

New Testament: consult these scriptures; Mat. 16:21; Luke 24:26; Heb. 9:16, 17.]

Now look, as a man's will and testament is irrevocably confirmed by the testator's death—"For where a testament is, there must also, of necessity, be the death of the testator; for a testament is of force, after men are dead; otherwise, it is of no strength at all while the testator lives." Heb. 9:16, 17. These two verses are added as a proof of the necessity of Christ's manner of confirming the new testament as he did, namely, by his death. The argument is taken from the common use and equity of confirming testaments, which is by the death of the testator. A testament is only and wholly at his pleasure of the person who makes it. He may alter it, or disannul it while he live, as he sees good; but when he is dead, he not remaining to alter it, no one else can alter it. In the seventeenth verse, the apostle declares the inviolableness of a man's last will, being ratified as before by the testator's death. This he shows two ways:

(1.) Affirmatively; in these words, "A testament is of force after men are dead."

(2.) Negatively, in these words, "Otherwise it is of no strength."

Now from the affirmative and the negative, it plainly appears that a testament is made inviolable by the testator's death; so Jesus Christ has unalterably confirmed this will and testament—namely, the new covenant, by his blood and death, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." Heb. 9:15. Christ died to purchase an eternal inheritance; and on this ground eternal life is called an eternal inheritance; for we come to it as heirs, through the goodwill, grace, and favor of this purchaser thereof, manifested by the last will and testament.

Hence you read, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins," Mat. 26:28. Again, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you," Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25. The covenant is called both a covenant and a testament, because his

covenant and testament is founded, established, ratified, and immutably sealed up—in and by his blood.

Christ is the faithful and true witness, yes, truth itself; his word shall not pass away, Rev. 3:14; John 14:6; Mark 13:31. If the word of Christ is sure, if his promise be sure, if his covenant be sure—then surely his last will and testament, which is ratified and confirmed by his death, must needs be very sure. **Christ's blood is too precious a thing to be spilt in vain**; but in vain is it spilt if his testament, his covenant, ratified thereby, be altered. If the covenant of grace is not a sure covenant, 1 Cor. 15:14, then Christ died in vain, and our preaching is in vain, and your hearing, and receiving, and believing is all in vain. Christ's death is a declaration and evidence of the eternal counsel of his Father, which is most stable and immutable in itself. But how much more it is so, when it is ratified by the death of his dearest Son, "In whom all the promises are yes and amen," 2 Cor. 1:20; that is, in Christ they are made, performed, and ratified.

By all this we may safely conclude that the covenant of grace is a most sure covenant. There can be no addition to it, detraction from it, or alteration of it—unless the death of Jesus Christ, whereby it is confirmed—is frustrated and overthrown. Certainly the covenant is as sure as Christ's death is sure. The sureness and certainty of the covenant is the ground and bottom of bottoms for our faith, hope, joy, patience, peace, etc. Take this corner, this foundation-stone away—and all will tumble. Were the covenant uncertain, a Christian could never have a good day all his days; his whole life would be filled up with tears, doubts, disputes, distractions, etc.; and he would be still a-crying out, "Oh, I can never be sure that God will be mine, or that Christ will be mine, or that mercy will be mine, or that pardon of sin will be mine, or that heaven will be mine! Oh, I can never be sure that I shall escape the great damnation, the worm which never dies, the fire that never goes out, or an eternal separation from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power!" 2 Thes. 1:9. The great glory of the covenant is the certainty of the covenant; and this is the top of God's glory, and of a Christian's comfort, that all the mercies that are in the covenant of grace are "the sure mercies of David," and that all the grace that is in the covenant is sure grace, and that all the

glory that is in the covenant is sure glory, and that all the external, internal, and eternal blessings of the covenant are sure blessings.

I might further argue the sureness of the covenant of grace, from all the **attributes of God**, which are deeply engaged to make it good, as his wisdom, love, power, justice, holiness, faithfulness, righteousness, etc. And I might further argue the certainty of the covenant of grace, from the seals which God has annexed to it. You know what was sealed by the king's ring could not be altered, Esther 8:8. God has set his seals to this covenant: his broad seal in the sacraments, and his privy seal in the witness of his Spirit; and therefore the covenant of grace is sure, and can never be reversed. But upon several accounts I may not now insist on these things. And therefore,

**[8.] Eighthly and lastly, The covenant of grace is styled a WELL-ORDERED covenant.** 2 Samuel 23:5, "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?" Oh, the admirable counsel, wisdom, love, care, and tenderness of the blessed God, which sparkles and shines in the well-ordering of the covenant of grace! [Romans 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:8, and 3:10; Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; Rev. 7:12.] Oh, how lovely and beautiful, with what symmetry and proportion, are all things in this covenant ordered and prepared! Oh, what head can conceive, or what tongue can express—that infinite wisdom which God has manifested in ordering the covenant of grace, so as it may most and best suit to all the wants, and straits, and necessities, and miseries, and desires, and longings of poor sinners' souls! Here are fit and full supplies for all our spiritual needs—so excellently and orderly has God composed and constituted the covenant of grace. In the covenant of grace every poor sinner may find a suitable *help*, a suitable *remedy*, a suitable *support*, a suitable *supply*, Jer. 33:8; Ezek. 36:25; Psalm 94:19.

The covenant of grace, is so well ordered by the unsearchable wisdom of God, that you may find in it remedies to cure all your spiritual diseases, and cordials to comfort you under all your soul-faintings, and a spiritual armory to arm you against all sorts of sins, and all sorts of snares, and all sorts of temptations, and all sorts of oppositions, and all sorts of enemies,

whether inward or outward, open or secret, subtle or silly, Eph. 6:10-18. Do you, O distressed sinner—need a loving **God**, a compassionate God, a reconciled God, a sin-pardoning God, a tender-hearted God? Here you may find him in the covenant of grace, Exod. 34:5-7. Do you, O sinner—need a **Christ**, to counsel you by his wisdom, and to clothe you with his righteousness, and to enrich you with his grace, and to enlighten you with his eye salve, and to justify you from your sins, and to reconcile you to God, and to secure you from wrath to come, and after all, to bring you to heaven? Rev. 3:17-18; Acts 13:39; 1 Thes. 1:10; John 10:28-31. Here you may find him in a covenant of grace. Do you, O sinner! want the **Holy Spirit** to awaken you, and to convince you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment? or to enlighten you, and teach you, and lead you, and guide you in the way everlasting? or to cleanse you, or comfort you, or to seal you up to the day of redemption? Ezek. 36:25-27; Luke 11:13; Eph. 1:13. Here you may find him in the covenant of grace.

O sinner! Do you need grace, all grace, great grace, abundance of grace, multiplied grace? Here you may find it in the covenant of grace! O sinner! Do you need peace, or ease, or rest, or quiet in your conscience? Here you may find it in the covenant of grace! O sinner! Do you need joy, or comfort, or content, or satisfaction? Here you may have it in a covenant of grace. O sinner, sinner! whatever your soul needs are—they may all be supplied out of the covenant of grace! God, in his infinite wisdom and love, has laid into the covenant of grace, as into a common storehouse, all those *good* things, and all those *great* things, and all those *suitable* things—that either sinners or saints can either desire or need! Now the adequate suitableness of the covenant of grace to all a sinner's wants, straits, necessities, miseries, and desires—does sufficiently demonstrate the covenant of grace to be a well-ordered covenant.

Look, in a well-ordered commonwealth—there are wholesome *laws* to govern the people; and wholesome *remedies* to relieve the people; and strong *defences* to secure the people. Just so, that must needs be a well-ordered covenant, where there is nothing lacking to govern poor souls, or to secure poor souls, or to save poor souls. And such a covenant, is the covenant of grace. I might easily lay down other arguments to evince the covenant of grace to be a well-ordered covenant.

As for the right placing of all persons and things in the covenant of grace, and from the outward dispensation of it—God revealed it but gradually. First, he revealed it more darkly, remotely, and imperfectly—as we see things a great way off. But afterwards the Lord did more clearly, fully, immediately, frequently, and completely reveal it—as we discern things close at hand. God did not at once open all the riches and rarities of the covenant to his people, but in the opening of those treasures that were there laid up, God had a respect to the *childhood* and *full-age* of his people. And from God's dispensing and giving out all the good and all the great things of the covenant in their fittest time, in a right and proper season, when his people most need them, and when they can live no longer without them. But I must hasten to a closing up of this particular.

Thus you see in these eight particulars, how gloriously the covenant of grace, under which the saints stand, is set out in the blessed Scriptures.

Concerning the covenant of grace, or the new covenant, that all sincere Christians are under, and by which at last they shall be judged, let me further say—All mankind would have been eternally lost, and God had lost all the glory of his mercy forever, had he not, of his own free grace and mercy, made a new covenant with sinful man.

The **fountain** from whence this new covenant flows, is the grace of God: Gen. 17:22, "I will make my covenant." This covenant is called a covenant of grace, because it flows from the mere grace and mercy of God. There was nothing outside of God, nor anything in God, but his mere mercy and grace, which moved him to enter into covenant with poor sinners, who were miserable, who were loathsome, and polluted in their blood, and who had broken the covenant of their God, and were actually in arms against him! [Isaiah 41:1-2; Eph. 1:5-7, and 2:5, 7-8; 2 Sam. 7:21; Romans 9:18, 23; Jer. 32:38-41; Ezek. 36:25-27, and 16:1-10. Surely if a woman commit adultery, it is a mere act of favor if her husband accept of her again, Jer. 3:7. The application is easy.] This must needs be of mere favor and love, for God to enter into covenant with man, when he lay wallowing in his blood, and no eye pitied him, no, not even his own. As there was nothing in fallen man to draw God's favor or affection towards him; just so—there was everything in fallen man which might justly provoke God's wrath and indignation against him; and therefore it must be a very high

act of favor and grace, for the great, the glorious, the holy, the wise, and the all-sufficient God, to enter into covenant with such a forlorn creature as fallen man was. Nothing but free grace was the foundation of the covenant of grace with poor sinners. Now let us seriously mind how this covenant of grace, or this new covenant, runs both in the Old and in the New Testament:

"The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."  
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Now let us see how Paul explains this new covenant. "But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete

and aging will soon disappear." Hebrews 8:6-13.

This is the substance of the new covenant; and thus the Lord did forepromise it by Jeremiah, and afterwards expounded it by Paul. Some small difference there is in their words, but the sense is one and the same. Now this covenant is styled the **new** covenant, because it is to continue new, and never to wax old or wear away, so long as this world shall continue. Neither do the Holy Scriptures anywhere reveal another covenant, which shall follow this covenant. [Where then is the fire of purgatory, and that popish distinction of the fault and the punishment? As for the fiction of purgatory, it deserves rather to be hissed at, than by arguments refuted. And to punish sin in purgatory, as popish doctors teach, what is this, but to call sin to mind and memory, to view and sight, to reckoning and account? which is contrary to the doctrine of the new covenant.]

If any covenant should follow this, it must be either a covenant of works, or a covenant of grace. It cannot be a covenant of works, for that would bring us all under a curse, and make our condition utterly desperate. Nor can it be a covenant of grace, because more grace cannot be shown in any other covenant than in this. Here is all grace and all mercy, here is Jesus Christ with all his righteousness, mediatorship, merits, purchase. This covenant is so full, so ample, so large, so perfect, so complete, and is every way so accommodated to the condition of lost sinners—that nothing can be altered, nor added, nor mended. Therefore it must needs be the last covenant, that ever God will make with man. "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." Hebrews 10:16-17.

Romans 11:26, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." The person delivering is Christ, described here by his office and by his original; his office, the deliverer; the original word which Paul uses, signifies delivering by a strong hand, to rescue by force, as David delivered the lamb out of the lion's paw; ver. 27, "For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sin." This covenant concerning the pardon of believers' sins, and their deliverance by Christ, God will certainly make good to his people.

Now from the covenant of grace, or the new covenant that God has made with sincere Christians, a believer may form up this eighth plea to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] which refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account, namely, O blessed God, you have, in the covenant of grace, by which I must be tried, freely and fully engaged yourself that you will pardon my iniquities, and remember my sins no more; so runs the new covenant: Jer. 31:34, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Heb. 8:12, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. 10:17, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." Ezek. 18:22, "All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him." Jer. 50:20, "In those days, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Now, O holy God, I cannot but observe that in the new covenant you have made such necessary, choice, absolute, and blessed provision for your poor people, that no sin can disannul the covenant, or make a final separation between you and your covenant-people. [The new covenant can never be broken. 2 Chron. 13:5; Psalm 89:34; Isaiah 50:7; 2 Sam. 23:5; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2; Isaiah 54:10.] Breaches made in the first covenant were irreparable, but breaches made in the new covenant are not so, because this new covenant is established in Christ. Christ lies at the bottom of the covenant. The new covenant is an everlasting covenant; and all the breaches that we make upon that covenant are repaired and made up by the blood and intercession of dear Jesus. Every jar does not break the marriage covenant between husband and wife; no more does every sin break the new covenant that is between God and our souls. Every breach of peace with God, is not a breach of covenant with God. That free, that rich, that infinite, that sovereign, and that glorious grace of God, which shines in the covenant of grace, tells us that our eternal estates shall never be judged by a covenant of works; and that the lack of an absolute perfection shall never damn a believing soul; and that the

obedience that God requires at our hands is not a legal obedience, but an evangelical obedience.

So long as a Christian does not renounce his covenant with God, so long as he does not willfully, wickedly, and habitually break the bond of the covenant; the main, the substance, of the covenant is not yet broken, though some articles of the covenant may be violated. Just as among men, there be some trespasses against some particular clauses in covenants, which, though they be violated, yet the whole covenant is not forfeited; it is so here between God and his people.

And, O blessed God, I cannot but observe that in the new covenant you have engaged yourself to pardon all my sins: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," Heb. 8:12; Jer. 31:34. [He is a forgiving God, Neh. 9:31. None like him for that, Micah 7:18. He forgives naturally, Exod. 2:2; abundantly, Isaiah 55:7, 3; constantly, Psalm 130:4; Mal. 3:6.]

Here are two things worthy of our notice:

(1.) The reconciliation of God with his people, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness;" he will be merciful or propitious, appeased and pacified towards them; which has respect to the ransom and satisfaction of Christ.

(2.) That God will pardon the sins of his people fully, completely, perfectly. Here are three words, "unrighteousness," "sins," and "iniquities," to show that he will forgive all sorts, kinds, and degrees of sins. The three original words here expressed are all in the plural number:

1. *Unrighteousnesses*. This word is by some appropriated to the wrongs and injuries that are done against men.

2. *Sins*. This is a general word, and according to the notation of the Greek, may imply *a not following of that which is set before us*; for he sins, who follows not the rule that is set before him by God.

3. The third word, *iniquities*, according to the notation of the Greek, signifies in general, transgressions of the law. This word is by some appropriated to sins against God. The Greek word that is frequently translated "iniquity," is a general word, which signifies a transgression of the law, and so it is translated, 1 John 3:4. The word iniquity is of as large an extent as the word unrighteousness, and implies an unequal dealing, which is contrary to the rule or law of God.

All this *heap of words* is to plainly teach us, that it is neither the many kinds of sins, nor degrees of sin, nor aggravations of sin, nor even the multitude of sins—which shall ever harm those souls who are in covenant with God. God has mercy enough, and pardons enough, for all his covenant-people's sins, whether original or actual, whether against the law or against the gospel, whether against the light of nature or the rule of grace, whether against mercies or judgments, whether against great means of grace or small means of grace. The covenant remedy against all sorts and degrees of sin—infinately transcends and surpasses all our infirmities and enormities, our weaknesses and wickednesses, our follies and unworthinesses, etc. What is our unrighteousness—compared to Christ's righteousness; our debts—compared to Christ's pardons; our unholiness—compared to Christ's holiness; our emptiness—compared to Christ's fullness; our weakness—compared to Christ's strength; our poverty—compared to Christ's riches; our wounds—compared to that healing which is under the wings of the Sun of Righteousness! 1 Cor. 1:30; Psalm 1:3, 9-10; Mal. 4:2.

Parallel to Hebrews 8:12, is that noble description that Moses gives of God in that Book of Exodus: chapter 34, 6-7, "The Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Some, by these three words, do understand such sins as are committed against our neighbor, against God, or against ourselves. A merciful God, a gracious God will pardon all kinds of sinners, and all kinds and degrees of sin, by whatever names or titles they may be styled or distinguished.

Some by *iniquity* do understand sins of infirmity; and by transgression they understand sins of malice; and by sin they understand sins of ignorance. God is said to keep mercy, and to forgive all sorts of sins, as if his mercy were kept on purpose for pardoning all sorts of sinners and all

sorts of sins. The Hebrew word that is here translated *iniquity*, signifies that which is unright, unequal, crooked or perverse; it notes the vitiosity or crookedness of nature; it notes crooked offences, such as flow from malice, hatred, and are committed on purpose.

Secondly, the Hebrew word which is here translated ***transgression***, signifies to deal unfaithfully; it notes such sins as are treacherously committed against God, such sins as flow from pride and contempt of God.

Thirdly, the Hebrew word Chataah, generally signifies ***sin***, but is more especially here taken for sins of ignorance and infirmity. Oh, what astounding mercy, what rich grace is here: that God will not only pardon our light, our small offences, but our great and mighty sins! etc.

And I cannot, O dear Father, but further observe that in the new covenant you have frequently and deeply engaged yourself, that you will remember the sins of your people no more! O my God, you have told me six different times in your word, that you will remember my sins no more. In the new covenant you have engaged yourself not only to forgive but also to forget, and that you will cross off your debt-book, and never question or call me to an account for my sins; that you will pass an eternal act of oblivion upon them, and utterly bury them in the grave of oblivion, as if they had never been.

The sins that are forgiven by God are forgotten by God; the sins that God remits he removes from his remembrance, Heb. 10:13-19, and 1-15. Christ has so fully satisfied the justice of God for the sins of all his seed, by the price of his own blood and death, that there needs no more expiatory sacrifices to be offered for their sins forever. Christ has, by the sacrifice of himself, blotted out the remembrance of his people's sins with God forever. The new covenant runs thus, "And their sinful error I will not remember any more," Jer. 31:34; but the Greek runs thus, "And their sinful errors and their unrighteousnesses, I will not remember again, or any more," Heb. 8:12. Here are two negatives, which do more vehemently deny, according to the propriety of the Greek language; that is, I will never remember them again, I will in no case remember them any more, I will so forgive as to forget: not that in propriety of phrase, God either

remembers or forgets, for all things are present to him; he knows all things, he beholds, he sees, he observes all things, by one eternal and simple act of his knowledge, which is no way capable of change, as now knowing, and at another time forgetting. But it is an allusion to *the manner of men*, who, when they forgive injuries fully and heartily, do also forget them, blot them out of mind; or rather, as some think, it is an allusion to the manner of the old covenant's administration in the sacrifices, where there was a remembrance again of sins every year, there was a fresh indictment and arraignment of the people for sin continually, Heb. 10:1-3, etc.

But under this new covenant our Lord Jesus Christ has, "by one offering, perfected forever those who are sanctified," (see from ver. 5 to ver. 20;) Christ has, forever, taken away the sins of the elect; there needs no more expiatory sacrifice for them; they that are sprinkled with the blood of this sacrifice shall never have their sins remembered any more against them. God's not remembering or forgetting a thing is not simply to be taken of his *essential* knowledge, but respectively of his *judicial* knowledge, to bring the same into judgment. Not to remember a thing that was once known, and was in mind and memory, is to forget it; but this properly is not incident to God, it is an infirmity. To him all things past and future are as present. What he once knows he always knows. His memory is his very essence, neither can anything that has once been in, it slip out of it. For God to remit sin is not to remember it; and not to remember it is to remit it. These are two reciprocal propositions, therefore they are thus joined together. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember your sins," Jer. 31:34; Isaiah 43:25.

To remember implies a fourfold act;

(1.) To lay up in the mind what is conceived thereby;

(2.) To hold it fast;

(3.) To call it to mind again;

(4.) Oft to think of it. Now in that God says, "I will remember their

iniquities no more;" he implies that he will neither lay them up in his mind, nor there hold them, nor call them again to mind, nor think on them, but that they shall be to him as if they had never been committed.

God's discharge of their sins shall be a full discharge. Such sinners shall never be called to account for them. Both the guilt and the punishment of them shall be fully and everlastingly removed. Let the sins of a believer be what they will for nature, and be ever so many for number, they shall all be blotted out, they shall more never be mentioned; [Mat. 12:31; Isaiah 55:7; Jer. 31:12; Ezek. 18:22; Psalm 32:2; Romans 4:8. Now if God will not remember nor mention his people's sins, then we may safely and soundly infer that either there is no purgatory, or else that God severely punishes those sins in purgatory which he remembers not.]

(1.) God will never remember, he will never mention their sins, so as to impute them or charge them upon his people.

(2.) God will never remember, he will never mention their sins any more, so as to upbraid his people with their follies or miscarriages. He will never hit them in the teeth with their sins, he will never hold their weaknesses against them. When persons are justified, their sins shall be as if they had not been; God will bid them welcome into his presence, and embrace them in his arms, and will never object to them their former unkindness, unfruitfulness, unthankfulness, vileness, stubbornness, wickedness, as you may plainly see in the return of the prodigal, and his father's deportment towards him.

Luke 15:20-23, "When he was a great way off." The prodigal was but conceiving a purpose to return, and God met him. The very intention, and secret motions, and close purposes of our hearts, are known to God. The old father sees a great way off. Dim eyes can see a great way, when the son is the object.

"His father saw him, and had compassion." His affections roll within him. The father not only sees, but commiserates and compassionates the returning prodigal, as he did Ephraim of old, "My affections are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy on him;" or, as the Hebrew runs, "I will, having mercy, have mercy, have mercy on him, or I will abundantly have

mercy on him," Jer. 31:20. "Look," says God, "here is a poor prodigal returning to me, the poor child has come back, he has smarted enough, he has suffered enough. I will bid him welcome, I will forgive him all his high offences, and will never hit him in the teeth with his former vanities."

"And ran." The feet of mercy are swift to meet a returning sinner. It had been sufficient for him to have stood, being old, and a father; but the father runs to the son.

"And fell on his neck." He does not take him by the hand; but he falls upon him, and incorporates himself into him. How open are the arms of mercy to embrace the returning sinner, and lay him in the bosom of love!

"And kissed him." Free, rich, and sovereign mercy has not only *feet* to meet us, and *arms* to clasp us, but also *lips* to kiss us. One would have thought that he should rather have *kicked* him or *killed* him, than have *kissed* him. But God is *Pater miserationum*, he is *all affections*. All this while the father speaks not one word. His joy was too great to be uttered. He ran, he fell on his neck, and kissed him, and so sealed up to him mercy and peace, love and reconciliation, with the kisses of his lips.

And the son said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight." Sincerely confess, and the amends is made; acknowledge but the debt, and he will cross the book.

"I am no more worthy to be called your son." "Lord," said that blessed martyr, "I am hell, but you are heaven; I am soil and a sink of sin, but you are a gracious God," etc.

"But the father said to his servants—Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hands, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry." Here you have,

(1.) The best robe;

(2.) The precious ring; [Among the Romans the ring was an ensign of

virtue, honor, and especially nobility, whereby they were distinguished from the common people.]

(3.) The lovely shoes; and

(4.) The fatted calf.

The returning prodigal has garments, and ornaments, and necessities, and luxuries. Some understand by the *robe*, as the royalty which Adam lost; and by the *ring*, they understand the seal of God's Holy Spirit; and by the *shoes*, the preparation of the gospel of peace; and by the *fatted calf*, they understand Christ, who was slain from the beginning. "Christ is that fatted calf," says Mr. Tyndale the martyr, "and his righteousness is the goodly raiment to cover the naked deformities of their sins."

The great things intended in this parable is to set forth the riches of grace, and God's infinite goodness, and the returning sinner's happiness. When once the sinner returns in good earnest to God, God will supply all his needs, and bestow upon him more than ever he lost, and set him in a safer and happier estate than that from which he fell in Adam; and will never hit him in the teeth with his former enormities, nor ever hold his old wickednesses against him. You see plainly in this parable that the father of the prodigal does not so much as mention or object the former pleasures, lusts, or vanities wherein his prodigal son had formerly lived. All old scores are forgiven, and the returning prodigal embraced and welcomed, as if he had never offended.

"And now, O Lord, I must humbly take leave to tell you further that you have confirmed the new covenant by your word, and by your oath, and by the seals that you have annexed to it, and by the death of your Son, and therefore you can not but make good every tittle, word, branch, and article of it. Now this new covenant is my plea, O holy God, and by this plea I shall stand." Hereupon God declares, "this plea, I accept as holy, just, and good. I have nothing to say against you—enter you into the joy of your Lord."

IX. The ninth plea that a believer may form up as to these ten scriptures,

[Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] which refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account, may be drawn up from the consideration of that **evangelical obedience** which God requires, and that the believer yields to God.

There is a *legal* account, and there is an *evangelical* account. Now the saints, in the great day, shall not be put to give up a legal account; the account they shall have to give up, is an evangelical account. In the covenant of works, God required perfect obedience in our own persons; but in the covenant of grace God will be content if there be but uprightness in us, if there be but sincere desires to obey, if there be faithful endeavors to obey, if there be a hearty willingness to obey. "Well," says God, "though I stood upon perfect obedience in the covenant of works, 2 Cor. 8:12; yet now I will be satisfied with the *will* for the *deed*; if there be but uprightness of heart, though that be attended with many weaknesses and infirmities, yet I will be satisfied and contented with that."

God, under the covenant of grace, will for Christ's sake accept of less than he requires in the covenant of works. He requires us to live without sin, but he will accept of our sincere endeavors to do it. Though a believer, in his own person, cannot perform all that God commands, yet Jesus Christ, as his surety and in his stead, has fulfilled the law for him. So that Christ's perfect righteousness is a complete cover for a believer's imperfect righteousness. Hence the believer flies from the covenant of works—to the covenant of grace; from his own unrighteousness—to the righteousness of Christ. [Luke 1:5-6; Mat. 28:20; Acts 24:16; 1 Pet. 1:14-15; Heb. 13:18.]

If we consider the law in a high and rigid notion—no believer can fulfill it; but if we consider the law in a soft and mild notion—every believer does fulfill it: Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will;" that is, "All my wills," to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience. David had many slips and falls, he often transgressed the royal law; but being sincere in the main bent and frame of his heart, and in the course of his life, God looked upon his *sincere* obedience as *perfect* obedience.

A sincere Christian's obedience is an entire obedience to all the commands of God, though not in respect of *practice*, which is impossible, but in *disposition* and *affection*. [Psalm 119:6. "When my eye is to all your commandments."] A sincere obedience is a universal obedience. It is universal in respect of the subject, the whole man; it is universal in respect of the object, the whole law; and it is universal in respect of duration, the whole life; he who obeys sincerely obeys universally. There is no man who serves God truly, who does not endeavor to serve God fully; sincerity turns upon the hinges of universality; he who obeys *sincerely* endeavors to obey *thoroughly*, Num. 14:24. A sincere Christian does not only love the law, and like the law, and approve of the law, and delight in the law, and consent to the law, that it is holy, just, and good, but he obeys it in part, Romans 7:12, 16, 22; which, though it be but in part, yet he being sincere therein, pressing towards the mark, and desiring and endeavoring to arrive at what is perfect, Phil. 3:13-14, God accepts of such a soul, and is as well pleased with such a soul, as if he had perfectly fulfilled the law.

Where the heart is sincerely resolved to obey, there it does obey. A heart to obey, is our obeying; a heart to do, is our doing; a heart to believe, is our believing; a heart to repent, is our repenting; a heart to wait, is our waiting; a heart to suffer, is our suffering; a heart to pray, is our praying; a heart to hear, is our hearing; a heart to give, feed, clothe, visit, is our giving, feeding, clothing, visiting; a heart to walk holily, is our walking holily; a heart to work righteousness, is our working righteousness; a heart to show mercy, is our showing mercy; a heart to sympathize with others, is our sympathizing with others. He who sincerely desires and resolves to keep the commandments of God—he does keep the commandments of God; and he who truly desires and resolves to walk in the statutes of God—he does walk in the statutes of God.

In God's account and God's acceptance, every believer, every sincere Christian, is as wise, holy, humble, heavenly, spiritual, watchful, faithful, fruitful, useful, thankful, joyful, etc., as he *desires* to be, as he *resolves* to be, and as he *endeavors* to be; and this is the glory of the new covenant, and the happiness that we gain by dear Jesus. And, my friends, it is remarkable that our feeble, partial and very imperfect obedience is

frequently set forth in the blessed Scriptures, as our fulfilling of the law, Luke 10:25-27. Take a few places for a taste: Romans 2:27, "uncircumcised Gentiles who *keep* God's law." Romans 13:8, "He who loves another, has *fulfilled* the law;" ver. 10, "Love is the *fulfilling* of the law." Not to love is to do ill and to break the law, but love is the fulfilling of it; we cannot do ill by that which is the perfection and the fulfilling of the law. Love is the sum of the law, love is the perfection of the law; and were love perfect in us, it would make us perfect keepers of the law. Love works the saints to keep the law in *desires* and *endeavors*, with care and study to observe it in perfection of parts, though not in perfection of degrees: Gal. 5:14, "All the law is *fulfilled* in one word, even in this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself;" Gal. 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so *fulfill* the law of Christ." Now in this sense that is under consideration, the saints in themselves, even in this life, do keep the royal law.

Now, from what has been said, a believer may form up this plea—"O blessed God, in Christ my head I have *perfectly* and completely kept your royal law; and in my own person I have *evangelically* kept your royal law, in respect of my sincere desires, purposes, resolutions, and endeavors to keep it. And this evangelical keeping in Christ, and in the new covenant, you are pleased to accept of, and are well satisfied with it. I know that breaches made in the first covenant were irreparable, but breaches made in the covenant of grace are not so; because this covenant is established in Christ; who is still a-making up all breaches. Now this is my plea, O holy God, and by this plea I shall stand." "Well," says God, "I cannot in honor or justice but accept of this plea, and therefore enter into the joy of your Lord!"

**The covenant of REDEMPTION** is that blessed compact between God the Father and Jesus Christ; concerning the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of the elect, through the death, satisfaction, and obedience of Jesus Christ; to the eternal honor, and unspeakable praise, of the glorious grace of God.

X. The tenth plea that a believer may form up, as to these ten scriptures, [Eccles 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5.] which refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account, may be drawn up from the consideration of that compact, covenant, and agreement, that was solemnly made between God and Christ, touching the whole business of man's salvation or redemption. We may present it to our understanding in this form: **God the Father says to Christ the mediator**, "I look upon Adam and his posterity as a degenerate seed, a generation of vipers, of apostates and backsliders, yes, traitors and rebels; liable to all temporal, spiritual, and eternal judgments; yet I cannot find in my heart to damn them all. *My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy* (Hosea 11:8-9), and therefore I have determined to show mercy upon many millions of them, and save them from wrath to come, and to bring them to glory. But this I must do, while still upholding my law, justice, and honor. If, therefore, you will undertake for them, and become a curse for their sakes, Gal. 3:10, 13, and so make satisfaction to my justice for their sins; I will give them unto you, John 17:2, 6, 11, to take care of them, and to bring them up to my kingdom, for the manifestation of the glory of my grace.

"Well," says **Christ**, "I am content, I will do all you require with all my heart, and so the agreement is made between you and me." This may be gathered from these scriptures. [Psalm 2:7-9, and 40:6-8.] Christ the Son speaks in both places. In the first he publishes the decree or ordinance of heaven, concerning himself, and brings in the Father, installing him into the priesthood or office of mediator; for so the apostle applies that text, Heb. 5:5, "You are my son," etc., and also states this covenant and agreement in the two main parts of it.

**1. First, What CHRIST must do, as mediator**, "He must ask of God;" that is, not only verbally, by prayers and supplications, beg mercy, pardon, righteousness, and salvation for poor lost sinners; but also really, by fulfilling the righteousness of the law, both in doing and suffering; and

so by satisfaction and merit, purchasing acceptance for them at his hands. [Consider Christ in the capacity of a mediator, for so only he covenanted with the Father, for the salvation of mankind.] The Father engaged so and so to Christ, and Christ reciprocally engaged so and so to the Father; a considerable part of the terms and matter of which covenant is set down: Isaiah 53:10, "When you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed," etc. The Father covenants to do thus and thus for fallen man; but first in order thereunto, the Son must covenant to take man's nature, therein to satisfy offended justice, to repair and vindicate his Father's honor, etc. Well, he submits, assents to these demands, and covenants to make all good; and this was the substance of the covenant of redemption. But,

**2. Secondly, Let us consider the promise which the FATHER engages to perform on his part;** the Son must ask, and the Father will give: "He will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," Psalm 2:8. An allusion to great princes, when they would show great affection to their favorites, they bid them ask what they will, as Ahasuerus did, and as Herod did; that is, he shall both be the Lord's salvation to the ends of the earth, and "have all power given him in heaven and earth; so that all knees shall bow to him, and every tongue shall confess him to be Lord." [Esther 5:3; Mark 6:23; Isaiah 49:6; Mat. 28:18; Phil. 2:10, 11; Psalm 40:6-8.]

In the other text before mentioned, Psalm 40:6-8, Christ declares his compliance to the agreement, and his subscribing the covenant on his part, when he came into the world, as the apostle explains it, Heb. 10:5, etc.; "Look, I have come to do your will, O God;" as if he had said, "O Father, you engage me to be your servant in this great work of saving sinners. Lo, I come to do the work, I here covenant and agree to yield up myself to your disposing, and to serve you forever."

Psalm 40:6. "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but *my ears you have pierced*; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require." It seems to be an allusion to the master's "boring through the servant's ear," Exod. 21:6. Among the Jews only one ear was bored, but here are ears in the plural number, a token of that perfect and desirable subjection, which Christ, as mediator, was in to his Father.

But for a more clear, distinct, and full opening of the covenant of redemption, or that blessed compact between God the Father and Jesus Christ, which is a matter of grand importance to all our souls; and considering that it is a point that I have never yet treated of in pulpit or press, I shall therefore take the liberty at this time to open myself as clearly and as fully as I can. And therefore thus—

**QUESTION.** If you ask me, **What is this covenant of redemption?**

**Answer 1.** I answer, in the general, that a *covenant* is a mutual agreement between parties, upon articles or propositions on both sides, so that each party is tied and bound to perform his own conditions. This description holds the general nature of a covenant, and is common to all covenants, public and private, divine or human. But,

**Answer 2.** Secondly, and more particularly, I answer, the covenant of redemption is that federal transaction or mutual stipulation that was between God and Christ from everlasting, for the accomplishment of the work of our redemption, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, to the eternal honor, and unspeakable praise, of the glorious grace of God. Or, if you please, take it in another form of words, thus—

It is a compact, bargain, and agreement between God the Father and God the Son, designed mediator, concerning the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of the elect, through the death, satisfaction, and obedience of Jesus Christ, which in due time was to be given to the Father. But for the making good the definition I have laid down, I must tell you that there are many choice scriptures which give clear intimation of such a federal transaction between God the Father and Jesus Christ, in order to the recovery, and everlasting happiness, and salvation of his elect. I shall instance the most considerable of them—

(1.) The first is this, **Genesis 3:15**, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Here begins the book of the Lord's wars, God's battles. ["The Scriptures are called the Book of the Battles of the Lord." Num. 21, Rupertas.] This is spoken of that holy enmity that is

between Christ and the devil, and of Christ's destroying the kingdom and power of Satan: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. 2:14.

God, by way of threatening, told Satan that the seed of the deceived woman should overmatch him at last, and should break in pieces his power and crafty plots. He gives Satan permission to do his worst, and proclaims an open and an utter enmity between Christ and him. From this scripture some conclude that Christ covenanted from eternity to take upon him the seed of the woman, and the sinless infirmities of our true human nature; and under those infirmities to enter the lists with Satan, and to continue obedient through all his afflictions, temptations, and trials, to the death, even to the death of the cross, Phil. 2:8-9. And that God the Father had covenanted with Christ, that in case Christ did continue obedient through all his sufferings, temptations, and trials—that then his obedience to the death should be accounted as full satisfaction to divine justice for all those wrongs and injuries which were done to God by the sins of man. Christ must die, or else he could not have been the mediator of the new covenant through death, Heb. 9:15-16. But,

(2.) The second scripture is that, **Isaiah 42:6**, "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles." Thus God speaks of Christ. In this chapter we have a glorious prophecy of Christ our Redeemer. Here are four things prophesied of him:

(1.) The divine call, whereby he was appointed to the work of our redemption: verse 1, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations." Jesus Christ would not, yes, he could not, he dared not, thrust himself upon this great work, or engage in this great work, until he had a clear call from heaven.

(2.) Here you have the gracious deportment of Christ, in the work to which he was called; this is fully set down, vers. 2-4, "He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets." He shall come clothed with

majesty and glory, and yet full of meekness: "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice." "He will not break," that is, he will bind up the bruised reed, he will comfort the bruised reed, he will strengthen the bruised reed. Christ will acknowledge and encourage the least degrees of grace; he will turn a spark of grace into a flame, a drop into a sea, etc. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged." These words show his kingly courage and magnanimity. Though he should meet with opposition from all hands, yet nothing should daunt him, nothing should dismay him; no afflictions, no temptations, no sufferings should in the least abate his courage and valor.

(3.) The divine assistance he should have from him that called him. This is set down in two expressions: verse 6, "I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you." Divine assistance does usually concur with a divine call. When God sets his servants on work, he defends and upholds them in the work.

(4.) The work itself to which Christ was called. This is expressed under divers phrases: verse 6-7, "To be a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and to be a covenant to the people." In these last words you have two things observable; the first is one special part of Christ's office: "He was given for a covenant." Second, The persons in reference to whom this office was designed: "a covenant of the people." One end why God the Father gave Christ out of his bosom, was, that he might be a covenant to his people. Christ is given for a covenant both to the believing Jews and Gentiles.

As he is "the glory of the people of Israel," so he is "a light to enlighten the Gentiles." In this scripture last cited, you have the Father's designation and sealing of Christ to the mediatorial employment, promising him much upon his undertaking it, and his acceptance of this office, and voluntary submission to the will of the Father in it: "Behold, I come to do your will," Heb. 5:4-5; Psalm 40:7-8; John 10:17-18. And these together amount to the making up of a covenant between God the Father and his Son; for what more can be necessary to the making up of a covenant than is here expressed? But,

(3.) The third scripture is that, **Isaiah 49:1**, " Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations—Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name." [This prophecy is applied to Christ, Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 5:4-5. And many of the Jews do confess that this place is to be understood of Christ only, Mat. 1:21-22; Luke 2:10-11; Heb. 1:6.] These words are spoken in the person of Christ; he tells us how he is called by his Father to be a mediator and Savior of his people. Jesus Christ would not take one step in the work of our redemption until he was called and commissioned by his Father to that work. God the Father, who from eternity had fore-assigned Christ to this office of a mediator, a Redeemer—did, both while he was in the womb, and as soon as he was come out of it, manifest and make known this his purpose concerning Christ both to men and angels. Christ did not thrust himself, he did not intrude himself at random into the office of a Redeemer: "No man takes this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," Heb. 5:4-5. So Christ took not upon himself the office of a mediator, a Savior, but upon a call and a commission from God. The sum is, that Christ took up the office of a Redeemer by the ordinance of his Father, that he might fulfill the work of our redemption unto which he was destined.

Verse 2, "He made my mouth like a sharpened *sword*, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished *arrow* and concealed me in his quiver." Christ having agreed to his Father's calling of him to the work of man's redemption, he gives you a picture in this verse, of God's fitting and furnishing of him with abilities sufficient for so important a work, together with his sustaining and supporting of him in the performance of the same. Here are two similitudes or comparisons:

(1.) That of a "sharp sword;" that of a bright and "sharp arrow," to show the efficacy of Christ's doctrine. [See Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16, and 6:2.] The word of Christ is a sword of great power and efficacy for the subduing of the souls of men to the obedience of it, and for the cutting off of whoever or whatever shall oppose or withstand it. Christ was not sent of the Father to conquer by force of weapons, as earthly princes do; but he conquers all sorts of sinners, even the proudest and stoutest of them, by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, as you may see by

comparing these scriptures together. [Acts 2:37, 41, 4:1-4, and 16:29-35; 2 Cor. 10:4, 6.]

Having spoken of the efficacy of Christ's doctrine, he tells us that he will take care of the security of his person: "In the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver." God the Father undertakes to protect the Lord Jesus Christ against all sorts of adversaries that should band themselves against him, and to maintain his doctrine against all enemies that should conspire to suppress it. [John 7:30, 44; Luke 22:53; Mat. 27:62-66, and 2-6; Acts 2:23-24.] God so protected his dear Son against all the might and malice of his most capital enemies that they neither could lay hold on him, or do anything, before the time by God fore-designed was come. Christ was sheltered under the wing of God's protection until he voluntarily went to his passion; neither could they keep him in death, when that time was once over, though they endeavored with all their might to do it.

Now in the third verse, God the Father tells Jesus Christ what a glorious reward he should have for undertaking the great work of redemption: "And said unto me, You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." [Or, as some render the words, You are my servant *to* Israel, or *for* Israel; that is, for Israel's good, for my people's behalf. "Few," says Sasbont, "to this day do consider Christ's labor in preaching, prayer, fasting, and suffering a cruel death for us; for if they did, they would be more affected with love towards him that loved them so dearly."]

God having called Christ, set him apart, sanctified him, and sent him into the world for the execution of the office of a Redeemer, he does in this third verse encourage him to set upon it, and to go on cheerfully, resolutely, and constantly in it, with assurance of good and comfortable success, notwithstanding all the plots, designs, and oppositions that Satan and his imps might make against him.

Verse 4, "Then I said—I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand, and my reward is with my God." In these words Jesus Christ complains to his Father of the incredulity, wickedness, and obstinate rebellion of the greatest part of the Jews against that blessed word which he had clearly

and faithfully made known to them. When Christ looked upon the paucity and small number of those whom his ministry had any saving and powerful work upon, he pours out his complaints before the Father. Not that Christ's pains in his ministry among the Jews were wholly in vain, either in regard of God who sent him, or in regard of the persons unto whom he was sent, as if not any at all were converted. Oh no! for *some* were called, converted, and sanctified, as you may see by these scriptures. [Isaiah 6:13, and 8:18, etc.] Or in regard of himself, as if any loss or harm should thereby redound unto him. Oh no! but in regard of the small, the slender effect, that his great labors had hitherto found.

"Yet surely my reward is with my God." Christ, for the better support and re-encouraging of himself to persist in his employment, opposes unto the lack of the chiefly desired success of his labors with men—the gracious acceptance of them with God. It is as if Christ had said, "Although my labor has not produced such fruits and effects as I indeed desired, yet I do comfort and bear up my heart with this, that my heavenly Father knows that in the office and place wherein he has set me, I have faithfully done all that could be done for the salvation of poor sinners' souls, and for the securing of them from wrath to come." "Yet surely my reward is with my God;" that is, the reward of my work, or my wages for my work, which God will render unto me, not according to the outcome or success of my labors, but according to my pains therein taken, and the faithful discharge of my office and duty therein.

"What," says Christ, "though the Jews believe not, repent not, return not to the Most High; yet my labor is not lost, for my God will really, he will signally reward me." Upon this, God the Father comes off more freely and roundly, and opens his heart more abundantly to Jesus Christ, and tells him in the fifth and sixth verses following, that he will give him full, complete, and honorable satisfaction for all his pains and labors in preaching, in doing, in suffering, in dying, that he might bring many sons to glory.

Verse 5, "And now the Lord says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength." In this verse you have a further encouragement to our Lord Jesus Christ,

God the Father engaging himself not only to support him and protect him in the work of his ministry, but of making him glorious in it and by it also; and that though his work should not prove so successful among his own people as he desired, yet his ministry should become very glorious and efficacious upon the Gentiles, far and near, throughout the whole world. [John 5:20, 23, 10:15, 17, and 17:1, 5; Phil. 2:9.]

Jesus Christ is very confident of his being high in the esteem of his Father for the faithful discharge of his duty; and that, notwithstanding all the hard measure that he met with from the most of the Jews, that yet his Father would crown him with honor and glory, and that he would enable him to go through the work that is incumbent upon him, and that he would protect him and defend him in his work, against all might and malice, all power and policy, that would make headway against him.

Verse 6, "And he said—It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Thus you see that God the Father still goes on to show that the labors of Christ should be very glorious, not only in the eyes of God, but in the eyes of all the world. You know elsewhere Christ is called "the way, the truth, and the life," John 14:6; and here he is called the light and salvation of the Gentiles. God the Father, speaking to Jesus Christ, tells him that it was but a small matter, a light thing—for him to have such happy and ample success as to reduce and win the Jews, in comparison of that further work that he intended to effect by him, even the salvation of the Gentiles unto the ends of the earth. God the Father seems to say thus to Jesus Christ, "The dignity and worthiness of your person, you being the eternal and only Son of God, as also the high office whereunto I have called you, requires more excellent things than that you should only raise up and restore the people of Israel. I have also appointed and ordained you for a Savior to the Gentiles, even to the ends of the earth; therefore though the greatest part among the Jews will not receive you nor submit unto you, yet the Gentiles shall own you and honor you, they shall embrace you and give themselves up unto you." I shall be briefer in the remaining proofs; and therefore,

(4.) The fourth scripture is, **Isaiah 52:13-14**, "Behold, my servant will

act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." [Isaiah 42:1, and 53:11, etc.] The three last verses of this chapter, with the next chapter, do jointly make up an entire prophecy concerning Christ's person, parentage, condition, manner of life, sufferings, humiliation, exaltation, etc., with the noble benefits which redound to us, and the great honor which redounds to himself. In these two verses you have—

(1.) The two parties contracting, namely, God the Father, and Jesus Christ: "Behold my servant," says God the Father. This title is several times given by the Father to Jesus Christ, because he did the Father great service in the work of man's redemption, freeing fallen man from the thralldom of sin and Satan.

(2.) Both parties are very sure and confident of the event, and of the accomplishment of the whole work of redemption: "Behold, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." Here are several terms heaped up to express in part the transcendent and unexpressible advancement of Jesus Christ. When men are raised from a base and low estate, to some honorable condition; when men are furnished with such parts and endowments of prudence, wisdom, and understanding as makes them admirable in the eyes of others; and when they are enabled to do and suffer great things whereby they become famous and renowned far and near—then we say they are *highly exalted*. Now in all these respects our Lord Jesus Christ was most eminently exalted above all creatures in heaven and earth, as is most evident throughout the Scriptures.

(3.) He tells you of the price which Jesus Christ should pay for the redemption of his people, agreed upon by covenant, namely, the humbling of himself to the death of the cross, as you may see in verse 14: "there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness." This is the speech of the Father to Jesus Christ; his appearance was so marred that the Jews were ashamed to own him for their King and Messiah. The astonishment here spoken of is such an astonishment as arises from the contemplation of some strange, uncouth, and rueful spectacle of desolation, deformity, and misery. And no wonder if many were astonished at the sight of our Savior's condition, in regard of that

base, disgraceful, and despiteful treatments which were done to him in the time of his humiliation here on earth, when his own followers were so amazed at the foretelling of them, Mat. 10:32-34. O sirs! the words last cited are not so to be understood as if our blessed Savior had, in regard of his bodily person or presence, been some strange, deformed, or misshapen creature, Isaiah 53:3, but in regard of his outward estate, coming of poor and obscure parents, living in a low, despicable condition, exposed to scorn and contempt, and to much affliction, through the whole course of his life; and more especially yet, in regard of what he was also in his personal appearance, through the base and scornful treatment which he sustained at the hands of his malicious and mischievous adversaries, when they had gotten him into their power; besides his watchings, draggings to and fro from place to place, buffetings, scourgings, carrying his cross, and other base treatment—could not but much alter the state of his body, and deface all the sightliness of it. And yet all this he suffered, to make good the compact and agreement that he had made with his Father about the redemption of his elect! But,

(5.) The fifth scripture is **Isaiah 53**. This scripture, among many others, gives us very clear intimations of a federal transaction between God the Father and Jesus Christ, in order to the recovery and everlasting happiness of poor sinners. The glorious gospel seems to be epitomized in this chapter. The subject-matter of it is the grievous sufferings and dolorous death of Christ, and the happy and glorious outcome thereof. Of all the prophets, this prophet Isaiah was the most evangelical prophet; and of all the prophecies of this prophet, that which you have in this chapter is the most evangelical prophecy. [Jerome calls him Isaiah *the evangelist*.] In this chapter you have a most plain, lively, and full description and representation of the humiliation, death, and passion of Jesus Christ; which indeed is so exact, and so consonant to what has actually occurred to Jesus, that Isaiah seems here rather to pen a *history* than a *prophecy*. [In this chapter you have the compact and agreement between God the Father and Jesus Christ plainly asserted and proved.] The matter contained in this chapter is so convicting, from that clear light that goes along with it—that several of the Jews, in reading of this chapter, have been converted, as not being able to stand out any longer against the shining light and evidence of it. Out of this chapter, which is

more worth than all the gold of Ophir, yes, than ten thousand worlds, observe with me these eight things:

[1.] First, **Observe that God and Christ are sweetly agreed**, and infinitely pleased in the conversion of the elect: verse 10, "He shall see his seed," that is, he shall see them called, converted, changed, and sanctified; "he shall see his seed," that is, an innumerable company shall be converted to him by his word and Spirit, in all countries and nations, through the mighty workings of the Spirit, and the incorruptible seed of the word, Psalm 110:3; 1 Pet. 1:23. Infinite numbers of poor souls would be brought in to Jesus Christ—which he would see to his full contentment and infinite satisfaction, Rev. 7:9; Heb. 10, 13. "He shall see his seed," that is, he shall see them increase and multiply; he shall see believers brought in to him from all corners and quarters, and he shall see them greatly increase and grow by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, especially after his ascension into heaven, and a more glorious pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon his apostles and others, Acts 2:37, 41, 4:1-4, and 8. No accountants on earth can count or reckon up Christ's spiritual seed. But,

[2.] Secondly, Observe with me, that **in the persons redeemed by Jesus Christ, there was neither weight nor worth, neither portion nor proportion, neither inward nor outward excellencies or beauties, for which the punishment due to them should be transferred upon dear Jesus**, Ezek. 16:1-10; for if you look upon them in their sins, in their guilt, you shall find them despisers and rejecters of Christ.

Verse 4, "Surely he has borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Christ took upon him, not our nature alone—but the infirmities also of it; and became liable to such sorrows, and afflictions, and pains, and griefs, as man's sinful nature is exposed and subject unto. They are called *ours* because they were procured to him by our sins, and sustained by him for the discharge of our sins; unto the guilt whereof, out of love to us undertaken by him, they were deservedly due, Romans 8:3; Heb. 4:15.

Christ, for our sakes, has taken all our spiritual maladies, that is, all our

sins, upon him—to make satisfaction for them; and as our surety, to pay the debt that we had run into. Christ, in the quality of a pledge for his elect, has given full satisfaction for all their sins, bearing all the punishments due for them, in torments and extreme griefs, both of body and soul. [You know they traduced him as a notorious deceiver, a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners, and one who wrought miracles by the power of the devil.] The reason why they so much disesteemed Christ was, because they made no other account, but that all those afflictions which befell him, were inflicted by God upon him for his own evil deserts. They accounted him to be one out of grace and favor with God, yes, to be one pursued by him with all those evils, for his sins. When the Jews saw what grievous things Christ suffered, they wickedly and impiously judged that he was thus handled by God, in way of vengeance for his sins. By all which, you may see, that in the persons redeemed by Christ, there was nothing of worth or honor to be found, for which the punishment, due to them, should be transferred upon our Lord Jesus Christ. But,

[3.] Thirdly, Observe with me, that **no sin, nor meritorious cause of punishment, is found in Jesus Christ, our blessed Redeemer, for which he should be stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God:** verse 5, 9, "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." Sin had cast God and us at infinite distance. Now Christ is punished—that our sins may be pardoned; he is chastised that God—that we may be reconciled. Guilt stuck close upon us, but Christ, by the price of his blood, has discharged that guilt, pacified divine wrath, and made God and us friends. [1 Pet. 1:18-19; Romans 3:25, and 5:1, 10; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Col. 1:19-20.] God the Father laid upon dear Jesus all the punishments that were due to the elect, for whom he was a pledge; and by this means they come to be acquitted, and to obtain peace with God.

"Christ was holy, harmless, and undefiled." No man could convict him of sin; yes, the devil himself could find nothing amiss in him, either as to word or deed. Christ was without original blemish—or actual blot. [Heb. 7:26; John 8:46, and 14:30; 1 John 3:5.] All Christ's words and works

were upright, just, and sincere. Christ's innocency is sufficiently vindicated, verse 9. It is true, Christ suffered great and grievous things—but not for his *own* sins—but for ours! "For he had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in his mouth." Christ had now put himself in the sinner's stead, and became his surety, and so liable to whatever the sinner had deserved in his own person; and upon this account, and no other, was he wounded, bruised, and chastised. The Lord Jesus had no sin in him by *inhesion*; but he had a great deal of sin upon him by *imputation*: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God," 2 Cor. 5:21. It pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to put himself under our guilt, and therefore it pleased the Father to wound him, bruise him, and chastise him. But,

[4.] Fourthly, Observe with me, that **peace and reconciliation with God, and the healing of all our sinful maladies, and our deliverance from wrath to come—are all such noble favors as are purchased for us by the blood of Christ:** [Thes. 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Romans 3:25, and 5:1, 16; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21.] verse 5, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Christ was chastised to procure our peace, by removal of our sins, which had set God and us asunder; the guilt thereof being discharged with the price of his blood, and we reconciled to God by the same price. Christ was punished, that we by him might obtain perfect peace with God—who was at enmity with us by reason of our sins.

By Christ's stripes, we are freed both from sin and punishment. Now because some produce this scripture to justify that corrupt doctrine of universal redemption, give me permission to argue thus from it. That chastisement for sin, which was laid upon the person of Jesus Christ procured peace—for those for whom he was so chastised, Isaiah 57:21; Eph. 2:14; but there was no peace procured for the reprobates, or those who would never believe. Further, "By his stripes we are healed." Whence I reason thus: the stripes inflicted upon Christ are intended, and do become healing medicines for those for whom they are inflicted; but they never become healing medicines for reprobates or unbelievers: Nahum 3:9, "There is no healing of their bruise." But,

[5.] Fifthly, Observe with me, that **the great and the grievous**

**sufferings which were inflicted upon Jesus Christ—he did endure freely, willingly, meekly, patiently; according to the covenant and agreement that was made between the Father and himself:** verse 7, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." This is a very pregnant place to prove the atonement and satisfaction made by Christ's sufferings for our sins; if we look upon the words as they run in the original, for thus they run; "It was exacted, and he answered;" that is, the penalty due to God's justice for our sins was exacted of Christ, and he sustained the penalty for us. The prophet does not speak of one and the same party or parties, both sinning and suffering or sustaining penalties for their own defaults; but as one suffering, *for* the sins of another, and sustaining grievous penalties for faults made and faults committed by other persons. The words, rightly read and understood, do sufficiently confirm the doctrine of atonement and satisfaction, made to God's justice by Christ's sufferings, for our sins. The penalty due to *us* was, in rigor of justice, exacted of *him*; and he became a sponsor or surety for us, by undertaking in our behalf the discharge of it. Christ did voluntarily undertake and engage himself unto God his Father in our behalf, as a surety for the payment of all our debts. They were exacted of him, and he answered for them all; that is, he not only *undertook* them, but he also *discharged* us of them! Just so, we use the word commonly in our English tongue; to answer a debt, for to discharge it; and this is most true of our dear Lord Jesus, for he answered our debt, and caused our bond to be cancelled, that it might never come to be put in suit against us, either in this or the eternal world, John 19:30; Romans 4:25; Col. 2:14.

"Yet he did not open his mouth." This has respect to his patience; for the oppressions and afflictions that he sustained for others, and that in regard of those by whom he suffered them unjustly—yet was he silent. He neither murmured or repined at God's disposal of things in that manner, nor used any railing or reviling speeches against those who dealt so despitefully with him, but behaved calmly and quietly under them; Christ having an eye to his voluntary obedience and submission to the will of his Father, and agreement thereunto, Mat. 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; John 18:23; 1 Pet. 2:23. He undertook willingly what his Father required of

him, and as willingly, when the time came, he underwent it; neither hanging back or opposing anything in way of contradiction thereunto, when it was by his Father propounded to him at first; nor afterward seeking to shift it off, when he was to actually perform what he had engaged himself unto, by pleading anything for himself, for a release from their most unjust proceedings, in whose hands he then was.

"Yet he did not open his mouth" to confute the slanders and false accusations of his enemies; neither did he utter anything to the harm of those who put him to death, but prayed for those who crucified him, Luke 23:34; Mat. 26:63, and 27:12, 14. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter," properly, as a ewe-lamb, or she-lamb. The ewe is mentioned as the quieter of that species, because the rams are sometimes more unruly. "And as a sheep before her shearers is silent." A lamb does not bite or push him, who is going about to kill it, but goes as quietly to the slaughter-house, as if it were going to the fold wherein it is usually lodged, or the field where it is accustomed to feed. But,

[6.] Sixthly, Observe with me, that **the original cause of this compact or covenant between the Father and the Son, by virtue of which God the Father demands a price, and Jesus Christ pays the price according to God's demands—is only from the free grace and favor of God!** verse 10, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he has put him to grief." God the Father looks upon Jesus Christ as sustaining our person and cause; he looks upon all our sins as laid upon him, and to be punished in him. Sin could not be abolished, the justice of God could not be satisfied, the wrath of God could not be appeased, the terrible curse could not be removed—but by the death of Christ! Therefore, God the Father took a pleasure to bruise him, and to put him to grief, according to the agreement between him and his Son.

It must be readily granted that God did not incite or instigate the wicked Jews, to those vile and cruel treatments to Jesus Christ. But yet that his sufferings were by God predetermined for the salvation of mankind is most evident by these scriptures; [Acts 2:23, and 4:28.] And, accordingly, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief. The singular pleasure that God the Father takes in the work of our redemption, is a wonderful demonstration of his love and affection to us!

[7.] Seventhly, Observe with me, that **it is agreed between the Father and the Son—that our sins should be imputed unto him, and that his righteousness should be imputed unto us, and that all the redeemed should believe in him, and so be justified!** Verse 11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge (or faith in him) shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities;" or, as some render it, "He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul—and shall be satisfied." That is, Jesus Christ shall receive and enjoy that, as the effect and outcome of all the great pains that he has taken, and of all the grievous things which he has suffered, as shall give him full contentment and satisfaction. When Christ has accomplished the work of redemption, he shall receive a full reward for all his sufferings. Christ takes a singular pleasure in the work of our redemption, and does herein, as it were, refresh himself, as with the *fruits* of his own labors. God the Father engages to Jesus Christ that he should not travail in vain, but that he should survive to see with great joy, a numerous family of souls begotten unto God.

You know when women, after sore, sharp, hard labor, have delivered, they are so greatly refreshed, delighted, gladdened, and satisfied, that they forget their former pains and sorrow, "for joy that a child is born into the world," John 16:21. God the Father undertakes, that Jesus Christ should have such a holy seed, such a blessed outcome, as the main fruit and effect of his passion, as should joy him, please him, and as he should rest satisfied in. Certainly there could be no such joy and satisfaction to Christ—as for him to see poor souls reconciled, justified, and saved by his sufferings and satisfaction; as it is the highest joy of a faithful minister to see souls won over to Christ, and to see souls built up in Christ, 1 Thes. 2:19-20; Gal. 4:19.

Christ did bear the guilt of his people's sins, and thereby he made full satisfaction and atonement; and therefore he is said here "to justify *many*;" not *all* promiscuously, but those only whose sins he undertook to discharge, and for whom he laid down his life. [Besides the elect, he *intercedes* for none, John 17:9-10.] Christ's justifying of many is his discharging of many from the guilt of sin, by making satisfaction to God for the same. But,

[8.] Eighthly, Observe with me, that it **is agreed between the Father and the Son, that for those persons for whom Jesus Christ should lay down his life—that he should stand *intercessor* for them also, that so they may be brought to the possession of all those noble favors and blessings that he has purchased with his dearest blood.** Verse 12, "He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors," saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," Luke 23:34. For those very transgressors, by whom he suffered, he does intercede; for the article here is emphatic, and seems to point unto that special act, and those particular persons. Not but that these words have relation also to Christ's intercession for all those sinners who belong to him, and who have a saving interest in him; which intercession continues still, and shall continue—to the end of the world, Heb. 7:25. But,

(6.) The sixth scripture is that, **Isaiah 59:20-21**, "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the Lord. "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the Lord. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the Lord." Out of this blessed scripture you may observe these following things:

**First**, The parties covenanting and agreeing—and they are God the Father and Jesus Christ. God the Father in those words, "Says the Lord;" and Jesus Christ in those words, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion."

**Secondly**, You have God the Father, first covenanting with Jesus Christ, and then with his seed, as is evident in the 21st verse.

**Thirdly**, You have the persons described, who shall be sharers in redemption mercies, and they are the Zionites, the people of God, the citizens of Zion. But lest any should think that *all* Zion should be saved, it is added by way of explication, that only such of Zion "as turn from transgression in Jacob," shall have benefit by the Redeemer. The true citizens of Zion, the right Jacobs, the sincere Israelites, in whom there is no guile, Romans 11:26, are they and only they—who turn from their sins. None have a saving interest in Christ, none have redemption by Christ—but converts—but such as cast away their transgressions, as Ephraim did his idols, saying, "What have I any more to do with you?" Hosea 14:8.

**Fourthly**, You have the way and manner of the elect's delivery, and that is, not only by paying down upon the nail, the price agreed on; but also by a strong and powerful hand, as the original imports in these scriptures. [Romans 11:26; Isaiah 59:20.] The Greek word which is used by Paul, and the Hebrew word which is used by Isaiah, both signify delivering "by strong hand," to rescue by force, as David delivered the lamb out of the lion's paw.

**Fifthly**, You have the special blessings that are to be conferred upon the elect—namely, redemption, conversion, faith, repentance, reconciliation,

turning from their iniquity; all comprehended under that term "the redeemed."

**Sixthly**, You have the Lord Jesus Christ considered as the head of the church, from whom all spiritual gifts—sanctification, salvation, and perseverance do flow and run, as a precious balsam, upon the members of his body: "My Spirit," says God the Father, to Christ the Redeemer, "and my word which I have put into your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth; nor out of the mouth of your seed," etc. In these words, God the Father engages, that his Spirit and word should continue with his church to direct and instruct it, in all necessities, throughout all ages successively, even unto the world's end. But,

(7.) The seventh scripture is, **Zechariah 6:12-13**, "Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says—Here is the **man** whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Now that the business of man's redemption was transacted between the Father and the Son, is very clear from this text, "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both," that is, the two persons spoken of—namely, the Lord Jehovah, who speaks, and the man, whose name is the Branch, Jesus Christ. This counsel was primarily about the reconciliation of the riches of God's grace, and the glory of his justice. The design and counsel, both of the Father and the Son, was our peace. [Whatever Socinians say, it is most certain that reconciliation is not only on the sinner's part, but on God's also.] The counsel of reconciliation, is how man, who is now an enemy to God, may be reconciled to God, and God to him. This counsel or consultation shall be "between them both," that is Jehovah and the Branch. There were blessed transactions between the Father and the Son, in order to the making of peace between an angry God and sinful men. I know several learned men interpret it of Christ's offices—namely, of his kingly and priestly office; for both conspire to make peace between God and man. Now if you will thus understand the text, yet it will roundly follow, that there was a consultation at the council-board in heaven, concerning the reconciliation of fallen man to God; which reconciliation

Christ, as king and priest, was to bring about.

Look, as there was a counsel taken, concerning the creation of mankind, between the persons in the blessed Trinity, "Let us make man after our image," Gen. 1:26; Col. 3:19; Eph. 4:24; so there was a consultation held concerning the restoration of mankind out of their lapsed condition: "The counsel of peace shall be between them both." Certainly there was a covenant of redemption made with Christ; upon the terms whereof he is constituted to be a reconciler and a redeemer, to say to the prisoners, "Go forth, to bring deliverance to the captives, and to proclaim the year of release or jubilee, the acceptable year of the Lord," as it is, Isaiah 61:1-2. But,

(8.) The eighth scripture is that, **Psalm 40:6-8**, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, "Here I am, I have come-- it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." Compared with that, Heb. 10:5-7, "Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said—Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said—Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God."

In these two scriptures, two things are concluded:

- (1.) The impotency of legal sacrifices, verse 5-6;
- (2.) The all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, verse 7.

There is some difference in words and phrases between the *apostle* and the *prophet*, but both agree in sense, as we shall endeavor to demonstrate. Penmen of the New Testament were not translators of the Old Testament, but only quoted them for proof of the point in hand, so as they were not tied to *syllables* and *letters*—but to the *sense* of the text alone. That which the prophet speaks of himself, the apostle applies to Christ, say some. This may be readily granted; for David being a special type of Christ, that may in history and type be spoken of David, which, in mystery and truth, is understood of Christ. But, that which David uttered

in the aforesaid text, is without question, uttered by the way of prophecy, concerning Christ, as is evident by these reasons.

**First**, In David's time, God required sacrifices and burnt-offerings, and took delight therein, 1 Chron. 21:26; 1 Sam. 26:19; for God answered David from heaven by fire, upon the altar of burnt-offering; and David himself advised Saul to offer a burnt-offering that God might accept of it.

**Secondly**, David was not able so "to do the will of God," as by doing it, to make all sacrifices void; therefore this must be taken as a prophecy of Christ.

**Thirdly**, In the verse before, namely, Psalm 40:5, such an admiration of God's goodness is premised, as cannot fitly be applied to any other evidence, than of his goodness in giving Christ; in reference to whom, it may be truly said, "That eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man—the things which God has prepared for those who love him," 1 Cor. 2:9.

**Fourthly**, These words used by the apostle, "when he comes into the world, he says," are meant of Christ; which argue that that which follows was an express prophecy of Christ. These things being premised, out of the texts last cited we may observe these following particulars that contribute to our purpose.

[1.] **FIRST**, That the Holy Spirit opens and expounds the covenant of redemption, bringing in the Father and the Son, as conferring and agreeing together about the terms of it; and the first thing agreed on between them is the **price**; and the price that God the Father stands upon is "blood;" and that not "the blood of bulls and goats, but the blood of his Son;" which was the best, the purest, and the noblest blood, which ever ran in veins. [Heb. 10:4, and 9:22; John 10:11, 15, 17, 18, and 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18-19.]

Now Christ, to bring about the redemption of fallen man, is willing to come up to the demands of his Father, and to lay down his blood. The scripture calls the blood of Christ, precious blood. Oh, the virtue in it, the value of it! Through this red sea, we must pass to heaven; Christ's blood is

heaven's key. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the blood of the saints," Psalm 116:15, and truly "precious in the sight of the saints is the blood of Christ." One little drop is of more worth, than heaven and earth, [Luther.]

Christ's blood is "precious blood," in regard of the dignity of his person. It is "the blood of God himself," Acts 20:28, it is the blood of that person, who is very God as well as very man. Christ's blood was noble blood, and therefore precious. He came from the race of kings, as touching his manhood; but being always the Son of God. This renders his nobility matchless and peerless. It was Pharaoh's brag, that he was the son of ancient kings, Isaiah 19:11. Who can lay claim to this more than Christ? Who can challenge this honor before him? He is the Son of the ancientest king in the world, he was begotten as a king from all eternity, Dan. 7:9, 13, 27.

The blood of good kings is precious; "You are worth ten thousand of us," said David's subjects to him, 2 Sam. 18:3; and therefore they would not allow him to hazard himself in the battle. The nobleness of his person did set a high rate upon his blood. And whom does this argument more commend unto us, than Christ?

The blood of Christ is precious blood in regard of the virtues of it. By this blood, God and man are reconciled; by this blood, the chosen of God are redeemed. It was an excellent saying of Leo, "The effusion of Christ's blood is so rich and available, that if the whole multitude of captive sinners would believe in their Redeemer, not one of them should be detained in the tyrant's chains." This precious blood justifies our persons in the sight of God, it frees us from the guilt of sin, and it frees us from the reign and dominion of sin, and it frees us from the punishments that are due to sin, it saves us, "from that wrath to come," Acts 13:38-39; Romans 3:24-25; 1 John 1:7; 1 Thes. 1:10.

Now, were not Christ's blood of infinite value and virtue, it could never have produced such glorious effects. The blood of Christ is precious, beyond all account; and yet our Lord Jesus did not think it too dear a price to pay down for his saints. God the Father would be satisfied with no other price; and therefore God the Son comes up to his Father's price, that our redemption might be sure. But,

[2.] **SECONDLY**, Observe that God rejects all ways of satisfaction by men. Could men make as many prayers as there are stars in heaven and drops in the sea; and could they weep as much blood as there is water in the ocean; and should they "give all their goods to the poor, and their bodies to be burned," 1 Cor. 13:3, as some have done—yet all this would not satisfy for the least sin, not for an idle word, not for a vain thought! Heb. 10:5, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire;" that is, you will not accept of them for an expiation and satisfaction for sin, as the Jews imagined.

The apostle shows the impotency and insufficiency of *legal* sacrifices, by God's rejecting of them. The things here set down, as not regarded by God—as sacrifices, offerings, burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin, together with other legal ordinances comprised under them—do evidently demonstrate that God regards none of those things in a way of satisfaction; they are no current price, they are no such pay that will be accepted of in the court of heaven. Remission of sin could never be obtained by sacrifices and offerings, nor by prayers, tears, humblings, meltings, watchings, fastings, penances, pilgrimages, etc. Remission of sins cost Christ dear, though it cost us nothing! **Remission of sins drops down from God to us, through Christ's wounds, and swims to us in Christ's blood.** It was well said by one of the ancients: "I have nothing I may boast in my own works; I have nothing whence I may boast myself; and therefore I will glory in Christ! I will not glory that I am righteous, but I will glory that I am redeemed! I will glory, not because I am without sin, but because my sins are forgiven! I will not glory because I have profited, or because any has profited me, but because Christ is an advocate with the Father for me, but because the blood of Christ is shed for me!"

Certainly the popish doctrine of man's own satisfaction in part, for his sins is most derogatory to the precious blood of Jesus; and to the plenary and complete satisfaction of Jesus Christ. But,

[3.] **THIRDLY**, Observe that nothing below the obedience and sufferings of Christ, our mediator, could satisfy divine justice. Heb. 10:5, "But a body have you prepared me." Christ having declared what his Father does not delight in, he further shows affirmatively what it was wherein he

rested well pleased, in these words, "But a body have you prepared me." In this phrase, "A body have you prepared me," Christ is brought in, speaking to his Father. By *body* is meant the *human nature* of Christ. Body is a *synecdoche*, put for the whole human nature, consisting of body and soul; the body was the visible part of Christ's human nature. A body is fit for a sacrifice, fit to be slain, fit to have blood shed out of it, fit to be offered up, fit to be made a price, and a ransom for our sins, and fit to answer the types under the law. Applicable therefore, to this purpose, is it said of Christ, "He himself bore our sins in his own body," 1 Pet. 2:24; and those infirmities wherein he was "made like unto us," Heb. 2:9, 14, 17, were most conspicuously evidenced in his body; and hereby Christ was manifested to be a true man. He had a body like ours, a body subject to manifold infirmities, yes, to death itself.

That body which Christ had is said to be "prepared by God;" the Greek word, which is translated prepared, is a metaphor from mechanics, who do artificially fit one part of their work to another, and so finish the whole. God fitted his Son's body to be joined with the deity, and to be an expiatory sacrifice for sin. The word "prepared" implies that God the Father ordained, formed, and made fit and able, Christ's human nature—to undergo, suffer, and fulfill that purpose for which he was sent into the world. God the Father is here said to have prepared Christ a body; because Christ having received from his Father the human nature out of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mat. 1:20; Luke 1:31, 35, here gives up the same unto the service of his Father—to do, to suffer, to die—that he might be a sacrifice of expiation for our sins.

As for the words of the psalmist, Psalm 40:6, "My ear have you opened,"—Heb., "dug open," it is a proverbial manner of speech, whereby there is implied the qualifying or fitting a man unto obedience in service—the ear, or the opening of the ear, being an emblem, or symbol, or a metaphorical sign of obedience, Isaiah 55:5; Job 33:16. Now Paul, following the translation of the Septuagint, and being directed by the Spirit of God, expounds this of God's sanctifying and fitting a body unto Christ, wherein he was obedient, even unto the shameful death of the cross. These words, "You have bored through my ears," import that

Christ, now becoming man, gives up himself to be a willing servant of his Father, to obey him unto the death of the cross. And it is a similitude taken from the servants of the Hebrews, who, after that they had served their masters six years, would not depart out of their masters' service the seventh year, but abide in it continually until death; for a testimony whereof their ear was bored through, on the posts of the door, as may be seen, Exod. 21:6. It is therefore as much as if he should say, You have given me a body that is willing and ready in your service, even unto death.

But to conclude this head, the apostle speaking of disannulling the sacrifice of the law, he uses this word body to set out a sacrifice which would come instead of the legal sacrifices, to effect that which the legal sacrifices could not effect. But,

[4.] **FOURTHLY**, Observe that Christ, our mediator, freely and readily offers himself to be our pledge and surety. "Then said I, Lo, I come," namely, as surety, to pay the ransom, and to do your will, O God. Every word carries a special emphasis as,

(1.) The time, "then," even so soon as he perceived that his Father had prepared his body for such an end—*then*, without delay. This speed implies forwardness and readiness; he would lose no opportunity.

(2.) His profession in this word, "said I;" he did not come secretly, timorously, as being ashamed thereof, but he makes profession beforehand.

(3.) This note of observation, "Lo;" this is a kind of calling angels and men to witness, and a desire that all might know his inward intention, and the disposition of his heart; wherein was as great a willingness as any could have to anything.

(4.) An offering of himself without any force or compulsion; this he manifests in this word, "I come."

(5.) That very instant set out in the present tense, "I come;" he puts it not off to a future and uncertain time, but even in that moment, he says, "I come."

(6.) The first person twice expressed, thus, "I said," "I come." He sends not another person, nor substitutes any in his place; but he, even he himself in his own person, comes. All which do abundantly evidence Christ's singular readiness and willingness, as our surety, to do his Father's will, though it were by suffering, and by being made a sacrifice for our sins.

God's will was the rule of Christ's active and passive obedience. Jesus Christ, our only mediator and surety, by free and ready obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice for the sins of all the elect. Christ has, by his death and blood, as an invaluable price of our redemption, made sure—the favor of God, the pardon of our sins, and the salvation of our souls! Christ has freed his chosen people from all temporal, spiritual, and eternal punishments, properly so called; so that now the mercy of God may embrace the sinner without the least of wrong to his truth or justice. But,

[5.] **FIFTHLY**, Observe that Jesus Christ, our surety, does not only agree with his Father about the **price** that he was to lay down for our redemption, but also agrees with his Father about the **persons** who were to be redeemed; and their sanctification: Heb. 10:10, "By that will"—that is, by the execution of that will, by the obedience of Christ to his heavenly Father—"we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." Jesus Christ agrees with the Father that all those shall be *sanctified*, for whom he has suffered and *satisfied*. The virtue, efficacy, and benefit of that which arises from the aforesaid will of the Father and of the Son, is expressed under this word, "sanctified." To pass by the many acceptations of this word "sanctified," let it suffice to tell you it is not here to be taken, as distinguished from justification or glorification, as it is elsewhere taken, 1 Cor. 1:30, and 6:11; but so as comprising under it all the benefits of Christ's sacrifice, Heb. 10:14, and 2:11; Acts 26:18. In this general and large extent it is sometimes taken; only this word, sanctified, here gives us to understand that perfection consists especially in holiness; for he expresses the perfection of Christ's sacrifice under the word "sanctified," which implies "a making holy." This was that special part of perfection wherein man was made at first, Eccles. 7:31; and whereunto the apostle alludes, where he exhorts, "To put on

that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. 4:24; for this end, Christ gave himself even unto death, for his church, "that he might sanctify it," Eph. 5:25.

The principal thing under this word "sanctified" in this place is, that Christ's sacrifice makes perfect. In this respect, Christ's sacrifice is here opposed to the legal sacrifices, which could not make perfect; so that Christ's sacrifice was offered up to do that which they could not do; for this end was Christ's sacrifice surrogated in the place of the legal sacrifices. Now this substitution had been in vain, if Christ's sacrifice had not made us perfect.

If the dignity of his person that was offered up, and his almighty power, and unsearchable wisdom, and other divine excellencies of his, be duly weighed, we cannot but acknowledge, that as his sacrifice is perfect in itself, so it is sufficient to make us perfect also. Christ's body was given up as a price and ransom, and offered up as a sacrifice for our sins; and that we might be sanctified and made holy, Christ, by the offering of his body once for all, has purchased from his Father, grace and holiness for all his redeemed ones. Christ agrees with his Father that he will lay down an incomparable price for his chosen ones; and then he further agrees with his Father that **all those shall be sanctified, for whom he has laid down an invaluable price.**

The will of God the Father was, that Jesus Christ should have a body, and that that body of his should be offered up, that his elect might be sanctified and saved. Now to this Christ readily answers, "Lo, I come to do your will." From what has been said from Psalm 40, compared with Heb. 10, we may very safely and roundly conclude that it is most clear and evident, that there was a covenant, compact, or agreement, between God the Father and Jesus Christ, concerning the redemption of fallen man. This I shall more abundantly clear up before I have said all I have to say about the covenant of redemption, which is under our present consideration. But,

(9.) The ninth scripture is **Psalm 89:28**, "My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him." With whom? why, with our dear Lord Jesus, of whom David was a singular type. There

are many passages in this psalm which do clearly evidence that it is to be interpreted of Christ; yes, there are many things in this psalm that can never be clearly, pertinently, and appropriately applied to any but Jesus Christ. For a taste, see verse 19, "I have laid help upon one who is mighty," mighty to pardon, to reconcile, to justify, to save, to bring to glory; suitable to that of the apostle, Heb. 7:25, "He is able to save unto the uttermost"—that is, to all ends and purposes, perfectly, completely, fully, continually, perpetually. Christ is a thorough Savior, a mighty Savior: Isaiah 63:1, "Mighty to save." There needs none to come after him to finish the work which he has begun. Verse 19, "I have exalted one, chosen out of the people," which is the very title given to our Lord Jesus. Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, my elect," or chosen one, "in whom my soul delights." Verse 20, "I have found David my servant." Christ is very frequently called by that name, as being most dearly beloved of God, and most highly esteemed and valued by God, and as being typified by him both as king and prophet of his church. Verse 10, "With my holy oil have I anointed him;" suitable to that of Christ. Luke 4:18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;" and therefore we need not doubt of the excellency, authority, certainty, and sufficiency of the gospel. Verse 27, "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." [See Jer. 30:9; Hosea 3:5; Ezek. 34:23.] Christ is the firstborn of every creature, and in all things has the pre-eminence: verse 29, "His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven." [This cannot be understood of David's seed, for Solomon's throne was overthrown.] This is chiefly spoken of Christ and his kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is eternal; and such shall be Christ's seed, throne and kingdom. Verse 36, "His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me." "Christ shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands," Isaiah 53:10. "And his throne as the sun before me;" that is, perpetual and glorious, as the Chaldee explains it, "shall shine as the sun." Other kingdoms and thrones have their times and their turns, their rise and their ruins, but so has not the kingdom and throne of Jesus Christ. Christ's dominion is "an everlasting dominion," which shall not pass away; "and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. 7:13-14.

I might give further instances out of this Psalm, but enough is as good as a feast. Now says God, "I have made a covenant with him;" so then there is a covenant that God the Father has made with Christ the mediator; which covenant, the Father engages to the Son, shall stand fast, there shall be no cancelling or disannulling of it. God the Father has not only made a covenant of grace with the saints in Christ, of which before; but he has also made a covenant of redemption, as we call it for distinction sake, with Jesus Christ himself, "My covenant shall stand fast with him;" that is, with Christ, as we have fully and clearly demonstrated. But,

(10.) The tenth scripture is **Zechariah 9:11**, "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant," or whose covenant is by blood, "I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water." Here God the Father speaks to Christ, with relation to some covenant between them both; and what covenant can that be but the covenant of redemption? All the temporal, spiritual, and eternal deliverances which we enjoy, they swim to us through the blood of that covenant which is passed between the Father and the Son. By virtue of the same blood of the covenant, wherewith we are reconciled, justified, and saved, were the Jews delivered from their Babylonish captivity. The Babylonish captivity, thralldom, and dispersion, was that waterless pit, that dirty dungeon, that uncomfortable and forlorn condition, out of which they were delivered by virtue of the blood of the covenant; that is, by virtue of the blood of Christ, figured by the blood that was sprinkled upon the people, and by virtue of the covenant confirmed thereby, Exod. 24:8; Psalm 74:20; Heb. 13:20. Look, as all the choice mercies, the high favors, the noble blessings that the saints enjoy, are purchased by the blood of Christ; so they are made sure to the saints by the same blood; by the blood of your covenant "I have sent forth your prisoners." Whatever desperate distresses, and deadly dangers, the people of God may fall into, yet they are "prisoners of hope," and may look for deliverance by the blood of the covenant.

By these ten scriptures it is most clear and evident that there was a covenant, a compact, and agreement between God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, concerning the work of our redemption. Christ's being called "the surety of the better covenant," Heb. 7:21, shows that there was a covenant between God the Father and him, as there is between a creditor and a surety. Christ gave bonds, as it were, to God the Father, and paid down the debt upon the nail—that breaches might be made up between God and us, and we restored to divine favor forever. **But for the further clearing up of the covenant of redemption, I shall, in the second place, lay down these eight propositions.**

**(1.) The first is this—That the covenant of redemption differs from the covenant of grace.** It is true, the covenant of redemption is a covenant of grace, but it is not properly that covenant of grace which the Scripture holds out in opposition to the covenant of works; which I shall thus evidence—

**[1.]** The covenant of redemption differs from the covenant of grace in regard of the parties. In the covenant of redemption, it is God the Father and Jesus Christ who mutually covenant. But in the covenant of grace the parties are God and believers.

**[2.]** In the covenant of redemption, God the Father requires of Jesus Christ that he should suffer, shed his blood, die, and make himself an offering for our sins. In the covenant of grace, God requires of us that we should believe and embrace the Lord Jesus.

**[3.]** In the covenant of redemption, God the Father has made many great, precious, and glorious promises to Jesus Christ. As, "Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool," Heb. 1:13; and, "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands," Isaiah 53; and, "Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession," Psalm 2:8; and, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son," Heb. 1:5. But in the covenant of grace, God promises to us grace and glory, holiness and happiness, both the upper and the lower springs, Psalm 84:11; Ezek. 36:26-27.

[4.] The covenant of redemption between God and Christ secures the covenant of grace between God and believers; for what God promises to us, he did, before the foundation of the world, promise to Jesus Christ, Titus 1:2. And therefore, if God the Father should not make good his promises to his saints, he would not make good his promises to his dearest Son, which for any to imagine would be high blasphemy. God will be sure to keep touch with Jesus Christ; and therefore we may rest fully assured that he will not fail to keep touch with us.

[5.] The covenant of redemption is the very basis or bottom of the covenant of grace. God made a covenant with Christ, the spiritual David, that he might make a covenant with all his elect in him, Psalm 89:3-4; Romans 11:26-27. He made this agreement with Christ, as the head, and on this is reared up the whole frame of precious promises comprised in the covenant of grace, as a goodly building upon a sure foundation. But,

**(2.) The second proposition is this—God the Father, in order to man's redemption and salvation, stands stiffly and peremptorily upon complete satisfaction.** Without full satisfaction, there is no remission, no salvation. God will have satisfaction to the utmost, though it cost Christ his life and blood. Man is fallen from his primitive purity, glory, and excellency; and by his fall he has provoked divine justice, transgressed God's righteous law, and cast a deep dishonor upon his name, Romans 8:32. The case standing thus, God is resolved to have ample satisfaction in the reparation of his honor, in the manifestation of his truth, and in the vindication of his holiness and justice. All the attributes of God are alike dear to him, and he stands as much upon the advance of his *justice* as he does upon the glory of his *grace*; and therefore he will not remit one sin, yes, not the least sin, without entire satisfaction. In this, God the Father is fixed, that he will have "an offering for sin," in an expiatory and propitiatory way; "a price and a ransom" he will have paid down upon the nail, or else the captive sinner shall never be released, pardoned, saved, Isaiah 53:10; 1 Tim. 2:6.

Now, lost man being wholly incapable of giving such a satisfaction to divine justice, Christ must give it—or fallen man must perish forever. **Sin and sorrow, iniquity and misery—always go hand in hand.** "The wages of sin is death," Romans 6:23. Every sinner is worthy of death.

"Those who commit such things are worthy of death," Romans 1:32. If God is a just and righteous God, then sin cannot absolutely escape unpunished; for it is but "a just and righteous thing with God" to punish the sinner, who is worthy of punishment. "It is a righteous thing with God," says the apostle, "to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you," 2 Thes. 1:6. As God must be *just*--so He must be

*faithful*. And if He must be faithful--then He must carry out His threatenings against sin and sinners. The word has gone out of his mouth, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die; and the soul which sins shall die," Gen. 2:17.

Look, as there is not a *promise* of God but shall surely take place; just so, there is not a *threatening* of God but shall surely take place, Ezek. 18:4. The faithfulness of God, and the honor of God, is as much concerned in making good of his dreadful threatenings, as they are concerned in making good of his precious promises, 2 Pet. 1:4. God has given it in his own hand, that "he will by no means clear the guilty;" and that "the soul that sins, shall surely die;" and that "the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him;" and that "he will render to every man according to his deeds," Exod. 34:7; Ezek. 18:20; Romans 2:6. And will God abrogate his own laws, or will he dare men to sport and play with his threatenings? Will not every wise and prudent prince look to the execution of their own laws? and shall not that God, who is wonderful in wisdom, and whose understanding is infinite, see all his laws put in execution against offenders? Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 147:5. Surely yes!

Thus you see that God stands upon full satisfaction, and will admit of no treaty of peace with fallen man without it. Now sorry man is never able, either by doing or suffering, to compensate and make God amends for the wrong and injury that he has done to God by his sin; and therefore one who is able, by doing and suffering, to give complete satisfaction, must undertake it, or else we are lost, cast out, and undone in both worlds. Concerning that full and complete satisfaction that Jesus Christ has given to God's enraged justice, I have in part discovered already, and shall say no more to it before I close up the covenant of redemption. But,

**(3.) The third proposition is this—The business transacted**

between those two great and glorious persons, God the Father, "whose greatness is unsearchable," Psalm 145:3, and Jesus Christ, "who is the prince of the kings of the earth," Rev. 1:5, was the redemption and salvation of the elect. Our everlasting blessedness was now fresh in their eyes, and warm upon their hearts. How lost man might be found, and how fallen man might be restored, and how miserable man might be made happy, how slaves might be made sons, and how enemies might be made friends, Luke 15:30, and how those who "were afar off might be made near," Eph. 2:12-17, without the least harm to the honor, holiness, justice, wisdom, and truth of God—was the grand business, the thing of things—which lay before them. Upon the account of the covenant, compact, and agreement that was between the Father and the Son, it is that Christ is called "the second Adam," 1 Cor. 15:25; for as with the first Adam God pledged a covenant concerning him and his posterity, so also he agreed with Jesus Christ, concerning that eternal redemption, that he was to obtain and secure for his seed, Heb. 9:12. For the clearing of this, let us a little consider of **the excellent properties of that redemption which we have by Jesus Christ.**

[1.] **First, It is a GREAT redemption.** The work of redemption was a great work. The greatness of the **PERSON** employed in this work, speaks out the work to be a great work. This was a work too high, too hard, too great for all the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth to undertake. None but that Jesus who is "mighty to save," Isaiah 63:1, was ever able to bring about the redemption of man. Hence Christ is called *the Redeemer*, Romans 11:26: "And their redeemer is mighty," Proverbs 23:11; Isaiah 44:6, "And his redeemer, the Lord Almighty;" Isaiah 47:4, "As for our redeemer, the Lord Almighty is his name;" Isaiah 49:26, "And your redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob;" Jer. 50:34, "Their redeemer is strong, the Lord Almighty is his name."

Again, the great and invaluable **price** that was paid down for our redemption speaks it out to be a great redemption. The price that we are bought with is a price beyond all computation. 1 Pet. 1:18-19, "Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Cor. 6:19-20,

and 7:23. Christ was a **lamb**:

- (1.) for harmlessness;
- (2.) for patience and silence in afflictions;
- (3.) for meekness and humility;
- (4.) for sacrifice.

This lamb was "without blemish," Isaiah 53:7, that is, free from actual sin, and "without spot," that is, free from original sin, Jer. 11:19, (Aquinas.) That the most absolute and perfect purity of Christ—prefigured in the lambs of the Old Testament, which were to be sacrificed—might be better expressed, the apostle calls him "a lamb without blemish, and without spot," Eph. 5:27. The price that this lamb without a spot has laid down is sufficient to pay all our debts; it is a price beyond all computation. All the silver, gold, pearls, jewels in the world, are of no value—compared with this price; a price in itself infinite, and of infinite value. [Neither God nor Christ could lay down a greater price. All things in heaven and earth are not to be compared to this blood, to this price.]

Among the Romans, the goods and estates which men had gotten in the wars, with hazard of their lives, were called *peculium castrense*, or a field-purchase. Oh how well then may the elect be called Christ's *peculium castrense*, his purchase, gotten not only by the jeopardy of his life, but with the loss of his life and blood, John 10:11, 15, 17-18, and Acts 20:28.

Again, if you **compare the work of redemption with other great works**, you must necessarily conclude that the work of redemption is a great work.

The **CREATION** of the world was a great work of God, but yet that did but cost him a *word* of his mouth, a "let it be;" he spoke the word, and it was done; "He said, Let there be light, and there was light," etc., Gen. 1:3-6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24. But the work of redemption cost Christ's dearest blood. Much matter of admiration does the work of redemption afford us.

The work of creation is many ways admirable, yet not to be compared with the work of redemption, wherein the power, wisdom, justice, mercy, and other divine attributes of God do much more shine forth; and wherein the redeemed reap much more good than Adam did by his creation, which will evidently appear by observing these particular differences:

**First**, In the creation God brought something out of *nothing*. But in the work of redemption, out of one *contrary* he brought another; out of death he brought life. This was a work of far greater power, wisdom, mercy. Death must first be destroyed, and then life brought forth.

**Secondly**, In creation there was but a word; and thereupon the work followed; in redemption there was doing and dying. But the work of redemption could be brought about by none but God. God must come down from heaven, God must be made man, God must be made sin, God must be made a curse, 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13.

**Thirdly**, In the creation God arrayed himself with majesty, power, and other like properties, fit for a great work. But in the work of redemption he put on weakness, he assumed a nature subject to infirmities, and the infirmities of that nature. He did as David did when he fought against Goliath, he "put off all armor, and took his staff in his hand, and drew near to the Philistine," 1 Sam. 17:39-40.

**Fourthly**, In the work of creation there was nothing to withstand God, to make opposition against God. But in the work of redemption there was justice against mercy, wrath against pity. Death, and he who had the power of death, was vanquished, Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15.

**Fifthly**, By creation man was made after God's image, like him, Gen. 1:26-27. But by redemption, man was made a member of the same mystical body "whereof Christ is the head," Eph. 1:22, 23.

**Sixthly**, By creation man received a natural being. But by redemption man received a spiritual being.

**Seventhly**, By creation man received a possibility to stand. But by

redemption man received a certainty of standing and impossibility of falling, John 10:28-31; 1 Pet. 1:5; Jer. 32:40-41.

**Eighthly**, By creation man was placed in an earthly paradise. But by redemption he is advanced to a heavenly paradise.

Thus you see how the work of redemption transcends the work of creation.

Again, the works of **PROVIDENCE** are great, very great, in the eye of God, of angels, of men; but what are the works of providence, compared to the works of redemption? For in order to the accomplishment of that great work, Christ must put off his royal robes, take a journey from heaven to earth, assume our nature, do and die, etc.

Again, the work of redemption by Christ will be found a great work, if you will but compare it with those **redemptions** that were but **types** of this. Israel's redemption from their Egyptian bondage, and from their Babylonish bondage, were very great redemptions, which were brought about by a strong hand, a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, as the Scripture speaks. But, alas! what were those redemptions, compared to our being redeemed from the love of sin, the guilt of sin, the dominion of sin, the damnatory power of sin, and to our being redeemed from the power of Satan, the curse of the law, hell and wrath to come? 1 Thes. 1:10.

Lastly, the great things that are wrapped up in the womb, in the belly, of redemption, speak out our redemption by Christ to be a very great redemption. In the womb of this redemption you shall find reconciliation, justification, adoption, eternal salvation, etc. Are not these great, very great, things? Surely yes! But,

**[2.]** A second excellent property of that redemption that we have by Christ is this, that **it is a FREE and GRACIOUS redemption**. All the rounds in this ladder of redemption are made up of free, rich, and sovereign grace. Though our redemption cost Christ dearly, as has been before hinted, yet as to us it is most free: Eph. 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" that is, according to his exceeding great and

abundant grace: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." [This word properly signifies a deliverance, which is brought to pass by paying of a ransom and price. See Mat. 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18.] Our redemption is from the free love and favor of God. It was free grace which put God the Father upon finding out a way for the redemption of lost sinners. It was free grace that put God upon providing of such a surety, as should undertake the work of redemption, as should carry on the work of redemption, and as should accomplish and complete the work of redemption; and it was free grace that moved God the Father to accept of what Christ did and suffered, in order to the bringing about of our redemption; and it is free grace that moves God to make an application of this redemption to the souls of his people. Ah, poor souls! the Lord looks not, neither for money nor money's worth from you, towards the purchase of your redemption, and therefore always look upon your redemption as the mere fruit of rich grace, Isaiah 52:3. But,

**[3.]** The third excellent property of that redemption that we have by Jesus Christ is this, it is a **FULL and PLENTEOUS redemption**: Psalm 130:7, "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." Christ redeems us from all sin, and from all the consequences of sin. He redeems from death, and from the power of the grave; he redeems us from the law, and from the malediction of the law. Christ took that off; he was made a curse for all that believe on him. [Hosea 13:14; Titus 2:14; Romans 7:6; Gal. 4:6, and 3:18.] He did not only stand in the place of eminent believers, but he stood in the place of all believers, and endured the wrath of God to the uttermost for everyone who believes on him. Every believer is freed from a cursed estate by the least faith. Every degree of true faith makes the condition to be a state of life, and passes us from death and condemnation: "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

And Christ redeems us from this present evil world, and from the earth, and from among men, and from wrath to come, and from "the hands of all our enemies." [Romans 8:1; Gal. 1:4; Rev. 14:3, 4; 1 Thes. 1:10; Luke 1:71, 74.] Jesus Christ has completely done the work of our redemption.

Christ does not his work by halves; all his works are perfect; there is no defect or flaw in them at all. Christ does not redeem us from some of our sins, and leave us to grapple with the rest; he does not work out some part of our redemption, and leave us to work out the rest; he does not bear the heat and burden of divine wrath in part, and leave us to wrestle with other parts of divine wrath. Oh, no! Christ makes most complete work of it. He redeems us from "all our iniquities; he delivers us out of the hands of all our enemies," Heb. 7:25. He pays all debts, he cuts all scores, he delivers from all wrath, he takes off the whole curse, he saves to the uttermost, and will settle us in a state of full and perfect freedom, when grace shall be turned into glory. In heaven our redemption shall be entire and perfect.

[4.] The fourth excellent property of that redemption which we have by Jesus Christ, is this, **it is an ETERNAL, a permanent, a lasting, yes, an everlasting redemption!** Heb. 9:12, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Redemption is in general a freeing one out of thralldom, Exod. 6:6. Now this is done three ways—

(1.) By interceding and pacifying wrath. Thus the prophet Oded, 2 Chron. 28:9, etc., procured redemption for the captives of Judah by his intercession.

(2.) By force and might. Thus Abraham redeemed his brother Lot, and the people that were captives with him, by overcoming their enemies, Gen. 14:16.

(3.) By ransom, or paying a price. Thus a Hebrew that was sold a slave to a stranger might be redeemed by one of his brethren, Lev. 25:48-49. The last of these is most agreeable to the notation of the several words, which in the three learned languages do signify to redeem, though the last be especially intended. In that, mention is made of a price, namely, Christ's blood; yet the other two are not altogether exempted, for Christ has all those three ways redeemed his people. This will more clearly appear if we duly weigh the distinct kinds of bondage in which we were by reason of sin—

(1.) We were debtors to divine justice, Mat 6:12;

(2.) We were children of wrath, Eph. 2:3;

(3.) We were slaves to Satan, Heb. 2:14-15.

(1.) As debtors, Christ has paid a ransom for us;

(2.) As children of wrath, Christ makes intercession for us;

(3.) But though divine justice be satisfied and divine wrath pacified, yet the devil will not let his captives go; therefore Christ by a strong hand wrests us out of Satan's power, "and destroys him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. 2:14-15.

The ransom which Christ paid was the ground of man's full and eternal redemption, for by satisfaction of justice way was made to pacify wrath; both which being accomplished, the devil lost his right and power over such as he held in bondage. This redemption is a full freedom from all misery, and comprises under it— reconciliation, justification, sanctification, and salvation. By this redemption divine justice is satisfied, wrath pacified, grace procured, and all spiritual enemies vanquished. The perfection of this redemption is hinted in this word eternal. The eternity here meant has a special respect to the continual duration thereof without end, yet also it respects the time past, so as it looks backward and forward. It implies a virtue and efficacy from the beginning of the world, for Christ was "a lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. 13:8.

Christ himself is, Rev. 1:8, "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending—who is, and who was, and who is to come." Now that which is spoken of the person of Christ may very well be applied to our redemption by Christ. This epithet eternal is here added to redemption, in opposition to the legal purifications, which were momentary and temporary. They had a day, and endured no longer than the "time of reformation." On this ground, by just and necessary consequence, it follows that the redemption wrought by Christ is absolutely perfect, and that there is no need for any other. Redemption being eternal—all who

have been, all who shall be redeemed, have been and shall be redeemed by it; and they who are redeemed by it need no other means. The liberty whereinto Christ Jesus brings the elect, is permanent and lasting, it abides unmoveable and unchangeable to all eternity. The Jews which had sold themselves to be servants were to be set free at the jubilee, yet the jubilee lasted but for one year; therefore the same persons might afterwards become bondmen again, Lev. 25. But this "acceptable year of the Lord's redeemed," Isaiah 61:2, and 63:4, is an everlasting year, it shall never end; therefore they shall never be subject to bondage any more.

It is observable that when the Lord would comfort the Jews with hopes of a return from Babylon, he usually annexed evangelical promises respecting the deliverance of poor sinners from the slavery of Satan, whereof that captivity was a type, some of which promises do plainly express the perpetuity of that spiritual freedom which they shall enjoy. Take a taste: [See also Jer. 32:39; Ezek. 37:25-28, and 39:29.] Isaiah 35:10, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah 51:6, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and those who dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." Isaiah 60:19-20, "The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended." Jer. 31:11-12, "For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." But,

[5.] The fifth excellent property of that redemption that we have by Jesus Christ is this—namely, **it is an ENRICHING redemption**; it is a redemption which makes men rich in "spiritual blessings in heavenly places," Eph. 1:3. There are many choice and rare spiritual benefits which

attend on redemption, which go hand in hand with redemption: as reconciliation, remission of our sins, justification of our persons, adoption, sanctification, full glorification, Romans 5:1, and 3:24-25. We have some foretastes of it in this life. Here we have the "first-fruits of the Spirit," Romans 8:23, 30; but in the morning of the resurrection, we shall reap the whole harvest of glory. It is called, by way of eminency, the salvation of our souls, 1 Pet. 1:9. Redemption, and the noble benefits attending on it, are salvation begun; but in heaven this shall be salvation consummate. Redemption is a rich mine, containing a mass of treasure which cannot be valued. Could we dig into it, could we pry into it, we might find a variety of the choicest jewels and pearls, in comparison whereof all the riches of the Indies, all the gold of Ophir, and all the precious jewels and most orient pearls that are in the world, are no better than dross.

I have read of Tiberius the emperor, that passing by a place where he saw a cross lying in the ground upon a marble stone, and causing the stone to be dug up, he found *a great treasure under the cross*. But what was this treasure, but a great nothing—compared to that treasure which is wrapped up in our redemption by Christ! What the Lord said once to his anointed Cyrus, a temporal deliverer of his people, the same he has spoken, and much more, to his anointed Jesus, the greater Savior and Redeemer of his church: "I will give you the treasures of darkness, the hidden riches of secret places," Isaiah 43:3. There are "unsearchable riches" in Jesus Christ. In him are riches of grace, of all grace; in him are riches of justification, and riches of sanctification, and riches of consolation, and riches of glorification. Would you share in the best of riches, would you share in the most durable riches, would you share in soul riches, would you share in heavenly riches? Oh, then, secure your interest in the redemption that is by Jesus Christ. But,

[6.] The sixth, and last, excellent property of that redemption that we have by Jesus Christ is this—namely, it is **a redemption- sweetening redemption**; it is such a redemption as sweetens all other redemptions. It is redemption by Christ, which sweetens our redemption out of this *trouble* and that, out of this *affliction* and that, out of this *danger* and that, out of this *sickness* and that, out of this *bondage* and that.

Redemption by Christ is like that tree which Moses cast into the bitter waters of Marah, which made them sweet, Exod. 15:23. This water became sweet for the use and service of the Israelites for a time only, and remained not always sweet after, as appears by Pliny's Natural History, who makes mention of those bitter waters in his time. But the redemption that we have by Jesus Christ does forever sweeten all the bitter trials and afflictions that we meet with in this world. The Jewish doctors say that this tree was bitter, and they give us this note upon it, "that it is the manner of the blessed God to sweeten that which is bitter by that which is bitter." I shall not dispute about the truth of their notion; but this I may safely say, that it is the manner of the blessed God to sweeten our greatest troubles, and our sharpest trials, by that redemption that we have by Jesus Christ.

And thus you see the excellent properties of that redemption that Jesus Christ, by covenant or compact with his Father, was engaged to work for us. But,

**(4.) The fourth proposition is this—That the blessed and glorious titles which are given to Jesus Christ, in the Holy Scriptures, do clearly and strongly evidence that there was a covenant of redemption passed between God the Father and Jesus Christ.** He is called a "**mediator of the covenant**" of reconciliation, interceding for and procuring of it; and that not by a simple entreaty, but by giving himself over to the Father, calling for satisfaction to justice, that reconciliation might go on, for paying a compensatory price sufficient to satisfy divine justice for the elect. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men"—namely, God incarnate—"the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all"—that is, all his elect children—"to be testified in due time," 1 Tim. 2:5-6.

Let me glance a little upon the words, "one mediator between God and men." In the Greek, it is one mediator of God and men; which may refer either to the two parties between which he deals, pleading for God to men and for men to God, or to the two natures, mediator of God, having the divine nature, and of men, having the human nature upon him. One mediator, not of redemption only, as the papists grant, but of intercession too. We need no other master of requests in heaven, but the man Christ

Jesus, who being so near us, in the matter of his incarnation, will never be strange to us in the business of intercession.

"A ransom," the Greek *antilutron*, is a counter-price such as we could never have paid, but must have remained and even rotted in prison, but for our all-sufficient surety and Savior. The ransom that Christ paid was a real testimony of his mediatorship between God and men, whereby he reconciled both. "The man Christ Jesus." Paul speaks this, not to exclude his divinity from this office of mediatorship, for he is "God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. 3:16, and "God has purchased his church by his own blood," Acts 20:28; but to show that, in his human nature, he paid the ransom for us, and that, as man, he is like unto us, Heb. 2:10; and therefore all sorts and ranks of men have a free access by faith unto him, and to his sacrifice. He is also called a Redeemer, "I know that my Redeemer lives," Job 19:25. The word redeemer in the Hebrew is very emphatic, *Goel*; for it signifies a kinsman, near allied unto him; one that was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. [Some read the words thus, "I know that my kinsman, or he who is near to me, lives."]

Christ is of our kindred by incarnation, and redeems us by his passion. The words are an allusion to the ceremonial law, where the nearest kinsman was to take the wife and buy the land, Ruth 3:9, 12-13, and 4:4-5. We were Satan's by nature, but Christ our brother, our kinsman, has redeemed us by the price of his own blood, and will deliver us from hell, and bring us "to the inheritance of the saints in light," John 20:17; and therefore deserves the name of a redeemer, 1 Pet. 1:3-4; Col. 1:12. Jesus Christ is near, very near, yes, nearest of kin to us, Eph. 5:30; he is flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, and blood of our blood: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same," Heb. 14.

Now it is evident, by the old law of redemption, that the nearest kinsman was under a special obligation to redeem; as you may see by comparing Ruth 3:12-13 with 4:4-5. Boaz was a kinsman, and had right to redeem; yet because there was a nearer kinsman, he would not engage himself, but upon his refusal: "If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it besides you, and I am after you." Now Jesus Christ is nearest of kin to us,

and therefore, upon the strictest terms and laws of redemption, he is *Goel*, our Redeemer. If we consider Jesus Christ as a kinsman, a brother, we must say, that he had not only a right to redeem us; but that he was also under the highest obligation to redeem us. There is a double way of redeeming people:

(1.) By force and *power*: thus when Lot was taken prisoner by those four kings that came against Sodom, "Abraham armed his servants," and by force and power redeemed them, Gen. 14:14, 16. We were all Satan's prisoners, Satan's captives, but Christ our nearest kinsman, our brother, "by spoiling principalities and powers," Col. 2:15, rescues us out of that tyrant's hand.

(2.) There is a redemption by *price* or ransom; to redeem is to buy again, 1 Cor. 6:20, "You are bought with a price;" 7:23, "You are bought with a price." The word price is added, to intimate the excellency and dignity of the price wherewith they were bought, which was not "silver or gold; but the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot," 1 Pet. 1:18-19. "You are bought with a price;" that is, you are dearly bought, by a price of inestimable value; but of this before.

Again, sometimes Christ is called "**the surety of a better covenant.**" Heb. 7:22, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant," so called from the manner of the confirmation of it—namely, by the death of Christ. Look, as Christ was our surety to God, for the discharge of our debt—the surety and debtor, in law, are reputed as one person—so he is God's surety to us, for the performance of his promises. The office of a surety being applied to Christ shows that he has so far engaged himself for us, as that he neither can, nor will, desist from his engagement. You shall as soon remove the earth, stop the sun in his course, empty the sea with a cockle-shell, make a world, and unmake yourselves—as any power on earth, or in hell, shall ever be able to hinder Christ from the performance of the office of a surety.

A perfect fulfilling of all righteousness, according to the tenor of the law, is required of man. Now Christ our surety, by a voluntary subjection of himself to the law, and by being made under the law, he has fulfilled all righteousness, Gal. 4:4; Mat. 3:15; and that he did this for us is evident by

that phrase of the apostle, Romans 5:19, "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The contents of the law must be accomplished by our surety, or else we can never escape the curse of the law, Gal. 3:10, 13; there must be a translation of the law from us in our persons, unto the person of our surety, or we are undone, and that forever. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and has made us just by his obedience; "We are made the righteousness of God in him," Romans 10:4. Our surety became subject to the law, that he might redeem us, who were obnoxious to the law, 2 Cor. 5:21.

Again, full satisfaction for every transgression is required of man. Now Christ our surety has made satisfaction for all our sins, "he was made a curse for us," Gal. 3:13; and by that means he has redeemed us from the curse of the law. To exact a debt which is fully satisfied, is a point of injustice. Now Christ our surety having made full satisfaction for all our sins, we need not fear to stand before the face of God's justice. A debtor who has a surety that is *able* and willing to pay his debt, yes, who *has* fully paid it, need fear no charge. This title, "a surety of a better covenant," does necessarily import a blessed covenant between Jesus Christ and his dear Father, to whom he freely and readily becomes surety for us; for what is suretyship but a voluntary transferring of another's debt upon the surety, he obliging to pay the debt for which he engages as surety? Thus you see, by the blessed and glorious titles which are given to Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, that there was a covenant of redemption passed between God the Father and Jesus Christ. But,

**(5.) The fifth proposition is this—That the work of our redemption and salvation, was transacted between God the Father and Jesus Christ, before the foundation of the world.**

This federal transaction between the Father and the Son was from eternity. Upon this account the Lord Jesus is said to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. 13:8, because it was then agreed and covenanted between God the Father and Jesus Christ, that he should, in the fullness of time, be made flesh and die for sinners; and therefore it was said to be done from the foundation of the world. [God loved his people and provided for them, and contrived all their happiness before they were, yes, before the world was.] Though Christ was not actually

slain, but when he suffered for us upon the cross, yet he was slain from the beginning, *in God's purpose, in God's decrees, in God's promises*, in the sacrifices, in the faith of the elect, and in the martyrs; for Abel, the first that ever died, died a martyr, he died for religion.

This compact between the Father and the Son bears date from eternity. This the apostle asserts: 2 Tim. 1:9, "Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." [The grace here spoken of cannot be understood of infused grace, unless we will say that it could be infused into us before either the world was, or we were in it.] Here is grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. But what grace was it, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began? Doubtless it was the grace of redemption, which God, in his purpose and decree, had given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began. The scripture last cited does clearly show that God the Father and Jesus Christ dealt together about the redemption of souls, before the world began; and that all our everlasting concernments were agreed on and made sure between them.

Titus 1:2 gives the same sound, "In hope of eternal life; which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." How was this life promised before the world began, but in this covenant of redemption, wherein God the Father promised and engaged to Jesus Christ that he would give eternal life to all his seed? So the apostle tells us, "He has chosen us in him," that is, in Christ, "before the foundation of the world." There was an eternal contrivance, compact, covenant, or agreement between God the Father and Jesus Christ, concerning the sanctification, holiness, and salvation of the elect. God agrees with Christ about the everlasting happiness of his chosen people, before the world began. [The whole business of our salvation was first transacted between the Father and Christ before it was revealed to us, John 6:27. The Apostle Peter, speaking of our redemption by the precious blood of Christ, says that Christ was foreordained, thereunto, before the foundation of the world," 1 Pet. 1:20.]

John 10:16, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I *must* bring." Why *must* he bring them home? how was he bound, how

was he engaged to bring home his other sheep, that he puts a *must* upon it? "Them also I *must* bring." Doubtless it was from this covenant and agreement which he had made with God the Father, wherein he had engaged himself to bring home all his elect. Christ takes a great deal of pains to bring home his sheep; being bound in the covenant of redemption, to present all who are given him by charter, blameless before the Father; therefore, says he, I bring them, and "I must bring them;" the matter not being left arbitrary, even in respect of his obligation to God the Father, Col. 1:22.

Certainly the decree, covenant, and agreement between God the Father and Jesus Christ about the whole way of redemption, about all things belonging to the salvation of the elect, to be brought about in due time, was fixed and settled before the world began. [Psalm 2:7; Acts 15:18, and 2:23; Eph. 1:9; Proverbs 8:22-32.] Ponder seriously on this, it may be a loadstone to draw out your hearts more than ever, to love the Father and the Son, and to delight in the Father and the Son, and to act faith upon the Father and the Son, and to long to be with the Father and the Son, and all your days to admire at the love of the Father and the Son—who have from eternity, by compact and agreement, secured your souls and your everlasting concernments. But,

**(6.) The sixth proposition is this—That God the Father had the first and chief hand in this great work of saving sinners, by virtue of this covenant of redemption, wherein he and his Son had agreed to bring "many sons to glory." Heb. 2:10.** Weak Christians many times have their thoughts and apprehensions more busied and taken up with the love of the Son, than with the love of the Father; but they must remember, that in the great and glorious work of redemption, God the Father had a great hand, an eminent hand, yes, the first and chief hand. God the Father first laid the foundation-stone of all our happiness and blessedness. His head and heart was first taken up about that heaven-born project, the salvation of sinners: Isaiah 28:16, "Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation;" Heb., "I am he who founds a stone in Zion." It is God the Father, who has long since laid Christ as a sure foundation, for all his people to build their

hopes of happiness upon; it is he who first laid Christ, the true cornerstone, whereby Zion is forever secured against death, hell, and wrath.

Hence it is said, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," that is, God's eternal decree about the work of our redemption and salvation, shall be powerfully, faithfully, and completely executed by Jesus Christ; who, by his word and Spirit, shall communicate unto all his elect the fruit of his atoning death—to life and salvation, Romans 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6; 53:10.

Again: Job 33:24, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom!" The Hebrew word signifies a price paid to redeem a man's life or liberty, "I have found a ransom," or an atonement, a cover for man's sin. "Angels and men could never have found a ransom, but by my deep, infinite, and unsearchable wisdom," says God the Father, "I have found a ransom! I have found out a way, a means for the redeeming of mankind, from going down to the infernal pit, namely, the death and passion of my dearest Son!" But where, O blessed God, did you find a ransom? "Not in angels, not in men, not in legal sacrifices, not in gold or silver, not in tears, humblings, and meltings of my people; but in my own bosom. That Jesus, that Son of my love, who has lain in my bosom from all eternity, John 1:18, he is that ransom, that by my own matchless wisdom and singular goodness, I have found. I have not called a council to inquire where to find a ransom, that fallen man might be preserved from falling into the fatal pit of destruction; but I have found a ransom in my own heart, my own bosom; without advising or consulting with others, I have found out a way how to save sinners without injuring my honor, justice, holiness, and truth!"

Had all the angels in heaven, from the first day of their creation, to this very day, sat in serious council—to invent, contrive, or find out a way, a means, whereby lost man might be secured against the curse of the law, hell, condemnation, and wrath to come, and whereby he might have been made happy, and blessed forever; and all this without the least wrong or harm to the justice and righteousness of God, they could never have found out any way or means to have effected those great things. Our redemption, by a ransom, is God's *own* invention, and God's *only* invention. The blessed ransom which the Lord has found out for poor

sinner, is the blood of his own dearest Son—a ransom which never entered into the thoughts or hearts of angels and men, until God had revealed it—which is called "the blood of the covenant," Heb. 10:29, because thereby the covenant is confirmed, and all covenant-mercies assured to us.

Again, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," John 3:16; Hosea 14:4. This signifies the *firstness* of the Father's love, and the *freeness* of the Father's love, and the *vehemency* of the Father's love, and the *admirableness* of the Father's love, and the *matchlessness* of the Father's love. Oh! what kind of love is this, for God to give his Son—not his servant; his *begotten* Son—not his *adopted* Son; his *only* Son—and not one son of many; his only Son by eternal generation, and communication of the same essence; to be a ransom and mediator for sinners!

God the Father loving lost man, sent his Son to suffer and to do the office of a mediator, that through his mediation, he might communicate the effects of his love, in a way agreeable to his justice! for God loved the world, and that antecedently to his giving Christ, and as a cause of it. The design, the project of saving sinners, was first contrived and laid by God the Father; therefore Christ says, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do."

God the Father sent his Son, and God the Father sealed his Son a commission to give life to lost sinners. "Him has God the Father sealed;" that is, made his commission authentic, as men do their deeds by their seals. It is a metaphor taken from those who ratify their authority, whom they send; that is, approve of them, as it were, by setting to their seal. Christ is to be acknowledged to be he whom the Father has authorised and furnished to be the Savior and Redeemer of lost sinners, and the storehouse from whence they are to expect all spiritual supplies.

Look! As kings give sealed warrants and commissions to their ministers of state, who are sent out or employed in great affairs, 1 Kings 21:8; Eph. 3:12, and 8:8, so Christ is the Father's great ambassador, authorised and sent out by him to bring about the redemption and salvation of lost man. And look, as a seal represents in wax, that which is engraved on it, so the

Father has communicated to him his divine essence and properties, and stamped upon him all divine perfection, for carrying on the work of redemption. And look, as a seal annexed to a commission is a public evidence of the person's authority, so Christ's endowments are visible marks whereby to know him, and clear evidences that he was the true Messiah, and of the Father's installing him into that office of a Redeemer.

John 6:38, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." [See John 10:17, and 16:27.] In this verse Christ declares in the general, that his errand into the world is to do his Father's will who sent him, and not his own; which is not to be understood that, as God, he has a different and contrary will to the Father's, though, as man, he has a distinct and subordinate will to his; but the meaning is, he came not to do his own will only, as the Jews alleged against him, but the Father's also; and that in this work he was the Father's commissioner, sent to do what he had entrusted him with, and not, as the Jews gave out, that he was one who did that for which he had no warrant. Christ, in entertaining those who come to him, as in verse 37, is not only led thereunto by his own mercy, and bounty, and love towards them, as the reward of all his sufferings; but does also stand obliged thereunto by virtue of a commission and trust laid upon him by the Father, and accepted and undertaken by him. Therefore he mentions "the will of him who sent him" as a reason of his fidelity in this matter.

By what has been said, it is most evident that God the Father had the first and chief hand in the great work of our redemption. It is good to look upon God the Father as the first projector of our happiness and blessedness, that we may *honor* the Father as we honor the Son, and *love* the Father as we love the Son, and *value* the Father as we value the Son, and *admire* the Father as we admire the Son, and *exalt* the Father as we exalt the Son, and *cleave* to the Father as we cleave to the Son, etc.

I have a little the longer insisted on this proposition, because commonly we more easily understand the love of the Son, than we do of the love of the Father; and that I may the more heighten your appreciation of the Father's love in the great work of redemption. Ah! what amazing love is this, that the thoughts of the Father, that the eye of the Father, that the heart of the Father, should be first fixed upon us, that he should begin the

treaty with his Son, that he should make the first motion of love, that he should first propose the covenant of redemption, and thereby lay such a sure foundation for man's recovery out of his slavery and misery.

To speak after the manner of men, the business from eternity lay thus: "Here is man," says God the Father to his Son, "fallen from his primitive purity, glory, and excellency, into a most woeful gulf of sin and misery! He who was once a son—has now become a slave; he who was once our friend—has now become our enemy, Eph. 2:12-13; he who was once near us—is now afar off; he who was once in our favor—is now cast off; he who was once made in our image—has now the image of Satan stamped upon him, Gen. 1:26-27; he who had once sweet communion with us—has now fellowship with the devil and his demons. Now out of this forlorn estate he can never deliver himself, neither can all the angels in heaven deliver him. Now this being his present case and state, I make this offer to you, O my Son: If, in the fullness of time, Phil. 2:7-8, you will assume the nature of man, "tread the winepress of my wrath alone," Isaiah 63:3, bear the curse, Gal. 3:13, shed your blood, die, suffer, satisfy my justice, fulfill my royal law—then I can, upon the most honorable terms imaginable, save fallen man, and put him into a safer and happier condition than he ever was--and give you a noble reward for all your sufferings.

Upon this Jesus Christ replies: "O my Father! I am very ready and willing to do, to suffer, to die, to satisfy your justice, to comply with you in all your noble motions, and in all your gracious and favorable inclinations, that poor sinners may be sanctified and saved, made gracious and glorious, holy and happy; that poor sinners may never perish, that poor sinners may be secured from wrath to come, and be brought into a state of light, life, and love, 1 Thes. 1:10; Heb. 10:10, 14; I am willing to make myself an offering; and, "Lo, I am come to do your will, O God," Psalm 40:6-7. Thus you see how firstly, and greatly, and graciously, the thoughts of God have been set at work, that poor sinners may be forever secured and saved. But,

**(7.) The seventh proposition is this—It was agreed between the Father and the Son that Jesus Christ should be incarnate, that he should take on him the nature of those whom he was to save, and for whom he was to satisfy, and to bring to glory.**

[Gen. 3:15; 1 John 3:8; Acts 2:30, and 3:22; Isaiah 7:14, and 9:6; Deut. 18:15-18; Gal. 4:4; Romans 8:3.] Christ's incarnation was very necessary in respect of that work of redemption, which he, by agreement with the Father, had undertaken. He had engaged himself to his Father that he would redeem lost sinners, and, as their surety, make full satisfaction. By the fall of Adam, God and man became enemies, they were at variance, at enmity, at open hostility, Romans 8:7. Because of this, all fellowship between heaven and earth was stopped, and all communion between God and us ceased. Now to remedy all this, and to make an atonement, a mediator was necessary; now this office belonged unto Jesus Christ, both by his Father's ordination and his own voluntary acquiescence, Heb. 10:5-7; and for discharge of it a human nature was very requisite.

There was an absolute necessity that Christ should suffer, partly because he was pleased to substitute himself in the sinner's stead, and partly because his sufferings alone, could be satisfactory. But now, unless Christ became incarnate, how can he suffer? The whole lies thus: without satisfaction no redemption, without suffering no satisfaction, without flesh no suffering; consequently, Christ must be incarnate. The Word must be made flesh, John 1:14: and so Heb. 2:14, 16, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; for truly he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham:" 1 Tim. 3:16, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." This is only applicable to the person of Christ.

He who by his office is to be Emmanuel, *God with us*, he must, in regard of his person, be Emmanuel also, that is, God-man in one person. He who by office is to make peace between God and man, he must be God-man; he who by office is to stand and minister between God and men, he must be God and man, that so he might not be only zealously faithful towards God's justice, but also tenderly merciful towards men's errors, Heb. 2:17-18, and 4:15-16. Look, as he must be more than man that he may be able so to suffer, that his sufferings may be meritorious, that he may be

consistent with the work of redemption, and triumph over death, devils, difficulties, discouragements, curse, hell, wrath, etc., all which Christ could never have done had he been but a mere man; just so, it was requisite that he should be man, that he might be in a capacity to suffer, die, and obey; for these are not works for one who is God alone. A God only—cannot suffer; a man only—cannot merit. God cannot obey, man is bound to obey. Therefore Christ, that he might obey and suffer, he was man; and that he might merit by his obedience and suffering, he was God-man. Now such a person, and such a person alone—did the work of redemption call for.

That is a mighty scripture, Phil. 2:6-7, "Who being in the form of God thought it no robbery to be equal with God"—here is Christ's preexisting in the nature of the Godhead, and then after comes his manhood—"but emptied himself," as it were, of his divine dignity and majesty; he disrobed himself of his glory, and became a sinner, both by imputation and reputation, for our sakes, for our salvation—"and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men," Isaiah 53:6, 9. All this Christ did upon his Father's prescription, and in pursuit of the great work of redemption.

The blessed Spirit fitted the God-man Christ Jesus, to be a fit mediator and redeemer for poor sinners. The Spirit formed the nature of man, from the substance of the virgin, after an extraordinary manner, Luke 1:35; he sanctified the human nature which Christ assumed, after such a perfect manner, that it was free from all sin, Gal. 4:4; Luke 1:35; in the very moment of conception he united this pure human nature with the divine nature, in the same person—the person of the Son of God, that he might be a fit head, mediator, and redeemer for us, Heb. 10:5. But,

**(8.) The eighth proposition is this—That there were commandments from the Father to the Son which he must obey and submit to.** God the Father put forth his paternal authority, and lay his commands upon his Son, to engage in this great work of redeeming and saving poor sinners' souls.

He had a command from the Father **what to teach his people**, as the prophet of the church: "For I have not spoken of myself," says Christ;

"but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak," John 12:49. Christ declares that he had received a commission from the Father, who sent him, concerning his doctrine, and what to say and speak; and that he was persuaded that this doctrine delivered to him by the Father points out the true way to eternal life; and that he had exactly followed this commission in preaching, both for matter and manner.

The two words of *saying* and *speaking* may be taken comprehensively, pointing out all the ways of delivering his commission, by set and solemn preaching, or occasional conferences, and the whole subject-matter of his preaching, in precepts, promises, and threatenings; and so it will import that his commission from the Father was full, both for matter and manner, and his discharge thereof answerable. [Between saying and speaking there is this difference, says Lapede: "that to *say*, is to teach and publish a thing gravely; to *speak*, is familiarly to utter a thing.] Christ is a true prophet, who speaks neither more or less in the doctrine of the gospel than what was the Father's will should be delivered to us: "For whatever I speak, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." Christ keeps close to his commission, without adding or diminishing; and herein Christ's practice should be every faithful minister's pattern.

Again, Christ had a command **to lay down his life for those who were given him**: "No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this commandment have I received of my Father," John 10:18. The Father is so well pleased with the reconciliation of lost sinners, that he loves Christ for the undertaking thereof, and is fully satisfied with his suffering for attaining that end. In both these respects it holds good: "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life," verse 17. The Father is pleased with him, that he undertook this service, and is satisfied with his death as a sufficient ransom. Christ having laid down his life for the redemption of lost man, did take it up again, as a testimony that the Father was satisfied with his sufferings.

Now the way of the accomplishment of our redemption was agreed on between the Father and the Son before the accomplishment thereof; therefore says he, "This commandment have I received from my Father,"

which makes it clear that he came into the world fully instructed about carrying on the work of redemption, [Psalm 40:6-7 with Heb. 10:6-8.] It pleased Christ to suffer death, not only voluntarily, but in a way of subjection to his Father's command—in order that the merit thereof, might every way be full and acceptable to the Father: "For this commandment have I received."

He was content to be a servant *by agreement*—so that his sufferings might be accepted for his people. And so when Christ was going to die, he says, "That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do: arise, let us go hence," John 14:31. As if he had said, Power is permitted to Satan and his accomplices to persecute me to death, that dying for man's redemption, the world may see the obedience and love I bear to the Father, who has thus determined the plan.

All that Christ suffered for the redemption of sinners was by the order, and at the command, of the Father, who did covenant with him concerning this work: "For as the Father gave me a commandment, even so do I." In this scripture, as in a crystal glass, you may see that Christ entered upon his sufferings—with much willingness and alacrity, with much courage and resolution, that so he might commend his love to us, and encourage us to do the like through him. Therefore, says he, "Arise, and let us go hence." I am very free and ready, by my death and sufferings, to complete the work of man's redemption, according to the covenant and agreement which long since was made between the Father and myself. If Christ should fail in complying with his Father's commands about suffering and dying for us, then not only the breach of articles, but high disobedience too, might be justly charged upon him; but from all such charges Christ has exempted himself.

There was a special law laid upon Christ as he was our mediator, which law he was willing and ready to obey, in order to effect our redemption. That Christ should die was no part of the moral law, but it was a positive special law laid upon Christ. Well, this law he obeys, he complies with: "I lay down my life for my sheep; this commandment have I received of my Father," John 10:11, 15, 17-18. Christ, as mediator, had a command from his Father to die, and he observes it; hence God calls him his servant:

"Behold my servant whom I uphold," Isaiah 42:1. And in pursuance of God's royal law, will, and pleasure—he takes upon him the form of a servant; and frequently proclaims before all the world, that he "came to do the will of him who sent him," Phil. 2:6, 7.

Again, God the Father lays a special command upon Jesus Christ, to preserve and bring to glory all those that come unto him. Jesus Christ has not only *permission* to save the elect, but a *charge* to save the elect: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." **John 6:37-40**. Here you have Christ's commission to save the elect, etc. Christ is to be answerable for all those that are given to him, at the last day, and therefore we need not doubt but that he will certainly employ all the power of his Godhead to secure and save all those whom he must be accountable for. In this blessed scripture there are several special things that we may take notice of, which are put to our present purpose—

**[1.]** As first, that it is the great dignity and happiness of the elect, that they are, from eternity, given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, as the reward of his sufferings, to come to him in due time; and that they are given to him in trust, and that he must be accountable for them, as being given by the Father to him, Psalm 24:1. They were the Father's first, not only by the right of creation, but by particular election also; and being thus the Father's, they are given to Christ from eternity—to be redeemed by him, and as the reward of his sufferings.

Again, such as are elected and given to Christ, will certainly, in due time, come to him. Their being given to Christ from eternity, produces their being given and coming in time; for God is faithful, who will not frustrate Christ of what he has purchased. The power which draws them, is invincible and irresistible; therefore, says he, "All that the Father gives me, shall come to me."

Again, Christ in receiving those who come to him, is not only led thereunto by his own mercy, and bounty, and love towards them as the reward of his sufferings, but does also stand obliged thereunto by virtue of a commission and trust laid upon him by the Father, and accepted and undertaken by him; therefore does he mention "the will of him that sent me," as a reason of his fidelity in this matter.

Further, from verse 39, we may observe that the gospel contains an extract of the deep counsels of God, and of the eternal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning lost man, so far as is for our good; for he brings out and reads in the gospel his very commission, and some articles of the covenant, passed between the Father and him.

Again, the first fountain and cause of the salvation of any of lost mankind, is in the absolute and sovereign will and pleasure of God; for here he mentions the will of him that sent him, as the first original of all; from whence their giving to Christ, their coming and safety, do flow.

Again, these, whose salvation the Father wills, are given over to Christ in his eternal purpose, to be brought to him in due time; for so it is here held out. Again, such as are given to Christ by the Father, and do in time come to him, are put in his keeping, and he has a care of them, not to lose the least of them, "For this is the will of him that sent me, that of all he has given me, I should lose nothing;" herein the Father does so commit the trust to him, as that he still keeps them in his own hand also. Again, Christ's charge and care of these that are given to him, extends even to the very day of their resurrection, that there he may make a good account of them, when all perils and hazards are now over, and that he may not so much as lose their dust, but gather it together again, and raise it up in glory, to be a proof of his fidelity; for, says he, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." John 10:27-29. And so death and dissolution proves no loss.

**[2.]** Again, from verse 40, we may observe, that such as are given to Christ, to be under his charge, and to participate of his benefits, are

drawn to believe on him: and it is the Father's will, and a part of the transaction between him and his Son, that faith is the way to partake of these benefits, and not the fulfilling of the impossible condition of the works of the law; for they who are given to Christ, are expounded to be those who believe on him; and it is the Father's will that such partake of these benefits here mentioned, as of the rest of his purchase. Albeit mortification, holiness, etc., do *prepare* for the possession of these benefits, and do *evidence* a right thereunto, and the begun possession thereof; yet it is only faith in Christ which gives the right and title, that so it may be of grace, Eph. 2:6-8.

Again, it is covenanted between the Father and the Son, that believers shall be made partakers of everlasting life; for it is explained, that not to lose them, verse 39, is "that they may have everlasting life." For the further assurance of believers of their eternal happiness, it is also covenanted that they shall have this life in present possession, in the pledge, and first fruits thereof; for they have everlasting life even here, and before their raising up. The believer stands already on the battlements of heaven, he has one foot in the porch of paradise.

Again, Christ having paid the full price of salvation—he will not allow it to be lost, by any difficulty or impediment in the way, but will carry believers through all difficulties, until he destroys death and the grave, and raises up their very dust, that in body and soul they may partake of that bliss; and that he may make it manifest, that death and rotting in the grave does not make void his interest, nor cause his affection to cease. Therefore it is added, "And I will raise him up at the last day." Thus you see that God the Father did lay his commands upon his Son, to engage in this great work of redeeming and saving poor sinners' souls, etc.

**[3.]** In the third place, I shall show you that the manner or quality of the transaction between God the Father and Jesus Christ, was by *mutual engagements and stipulations*; each person undertaking to perform his part in order to our recovery and eternal felicity. We find each person undertaking for himself by solemn promise.

The **Father** promises that he will hold Christ's hand and keep him, Isaiah 42:6. God the Father engages himself to direct and assist Christ,

and to keep him from miscarrying; and that he will give him all necessary strength and ability for the execution of his mediatorial office, and work wonders by him and with him, according to that word, "My Father hitherto works, and I work," John 5:17.

And the **Son** engages himself that he will obey the Father's call, and not be rebellious: Isaiah 50:5, "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back;" that is, I did not hang back, as Moses once and again did, Exod. 3:11, 13, and 4:1, 10, 13; nor refuse to go when God sent me, as once Jonah did, chapter 1:3; but I offered myself freely and readily to my Father's call. "There was no affliction, no opposition, no persecution, no evil usage that I met with in carrying on the work of redemption, which ever startled me or discouraged me, or made me flinch or shrink back from that great and blessed work that I had undertaken. I was dutiful and obedient to the calls and commands of my Father, in all things that he required of me or set me about."

Now the Father and the Son being thus mutually engaged by promise, one to another in honor and faithfulness—it highly concerned them to keep one another close to the terms of the covenant which was made between them, and accordingly they did; for God the Father peremptorily stands upon that complete and full satisfaction that Christ had promised to give to his justice; and therefore, when the day of payment came, he would not abate Jesus Christ one penny, one farthing of the many ten thousand talents that he was to pay down upon the nail for us, Mat. 18:24: Romans 8:32, "God spared not his own Son;" that is, he abated nothing of that full price that, by agreement with his Father, he was to lay down for us. Other fathers give their all to spare their children; but the heart of God the Father is so fully and strongly set upon full payment, that he will not spare his Son, his own Son, his only Son, but give him up to death, yes, to an accursed death, that we might be spared and saved forever!

To redeem us, God would not spare—no, not his own Son; because no money nor treasure could pay the redemption price—but only the blood, yes, the heart-blood of his dear Son! 1 Pet. 1:18-19.

And as God the Father keeps Christ close to the terms of the covenant, so

Jesus Christ keeps his Father close to the terms of the covenant also: John 17:4, 5, "I have glorified you on the earth," says Christ to his Father, "I have finished the work which you gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me with your own self, with the glory which I had with you before the world was." O my Father, I have finished the work of redemption; but where are the wages, where is the glory, where is the reward that you have promised me? There was nothing committed to Christ by the Father, to be done on earth for the purchasing of our redemption, but he did finish it; so that the debt is paid, justice satisfied, and sin, Satan, and death spoiled; so that nothing remains but that Christ be glorified, according to the promise of the Father to him.

The sum of Christ's petition is this—that since he had finished the work of redemption, that therefore the Father, according to his engagement, would advance him to the possession of that glory that he enjoyed from all eternity. Now for the clearing of this we must consider, that as Christ was from eternity the glorious God, so we are not to conceive of any real change in this glory of his godhead; as if by his estate of humiliation he had suffered any diminution; or by his state of exaltation any real accession were made to his glory as God. But the true meaning is this, that Christ having, according to the covenant passed between the Father and him, obscured the glory of his godhead for a time, under the veil of the form of a servant, and our sinful infirmities, Phil. 2:5-8. He now expects, according to the tenor of the same covenant, after he had done his share of the work, to be exalted and glorified, and "openly declared to be the Son of God," Romans 1:4; the veil of his estate of humiliation, though not of our nature, being taken away.

It is further to be considered that however this eternal glory be proper to him as God, yet he prays to be glorified in his whole person. "Glorify me," because not only his human nature was to be exalted to what glory finite nature was capable of, but the glory of his godhead was to shine in the person of Christ, God-man, and in the man Christ, though without confusion of his natures and properties. Christ did so faithfully discharge his trust, and perfect the work of redemption, as that the Father was engaged by covenant to glorify him; and accordingly Christ, God incarnate, is exalted with the Father in glory and majesty; so that

believers may be as sure that all things necessary for their redemption are done, as it is sure that Christ is glorified. But,

**[4.]** In the fourth place, let us seriously consider of **the articles agreed on between the Father and the Son**. Let us weigh well the promises that God the Father makes to Jesus Christ, and the promises that Jesus Christ makes to the Father, for the bringing about our reconciliation and redemption, that so we may the more clearly see how greatly both the heart of the Father and the heart of the Son is engaged in the salvation of poor sinners' souls. Now there are **seven things which God the Father promises to do for Jesus Christ**, upon his undertaking the work of our redemption.

**First**, That he will give him the Spirit in an abundant measure. "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord," Isaiah 11:2. God the Father fits Jesus Christ for the work of redemption, by a large effusion of the graces and gifts of the Spirit upon him. The Spirit of the Lord shall not only come upon Christ, but rest and abide with him. The Holy Spirit shall take up in a more special, yes, singular, manner his perpetual and never-interrupted or eclipsed residence *with* him, and *in* him. God the Father promises that Christ shall, in his human nature, be filled with all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, that he may be as an everlasting treasury, and as an overflowing fountain, to all his people.

So Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights: I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." So Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." So John 3:34, "God gives not the Spirit by measure unto him." Christ, as mediator, is endued with the Spirit for the discharge of that office; and though Christ as man has not an infinite measure of the Spirit, though indeed in that person the fullness of the Godhead dwells, as being God also, for that were to be no more man, but God; yet the gifts and graces of the Spirit are poured out upon the man Christ in a measure far above all creatures, Col. 2:10; for though every believer is complete in him, yet, for what is inherent in him, they have but some gifts of the Spirit, 1 Cor. 12:4; Eph. 4:7; but Jesus Christ had all sorts of gifts. They

had gifts for some particular uses; but he had gifts for all uses. They have a measure of gifts which are capable of increase, he above measure, so much as the human nature is capable of, which, though it be finite in itself, yet it cannot be measured nor comprehended by us. So much is imported in that, "God gives not the Spirit by measure to him," being understood of his manhood; though, as we said, if we speak of his person, he has the Spirit infinitely and without measure, Col. 1:19, and 2:3, 9.

This fullness befit Christ as man, that he might be a fit temple for the Godhead; and as a mediator, that he might be the universal head of his church and storehouse of his people, that from him, as from a common person, spiritual root or principle, the Holy Spirit with his gifts and graces might be communicated to us. "He received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," Psalm 68:18; "Of his fullness we receive grace for grace," John 1:16; "The first Adam was a living soul, but the second Adam is a quickening spirit," 1 Cor. 15:45. In the man Christ Jesus, there **is a treasury and fullness of grace and glory for us!** He is the lord-keeper of all our lives, of all our souls, of all our comforts, and of all our graces; and he is the lord-treasurer of all our spiritual, durable, and eternal riches, 2 Tim. 1:12. We lost our first stock by the fall of Adam, Proverbs 8:18. God put a stock into our own hands, and we soon proved bankrupts and run out of stock. Now since that fatal fall, God will trust us no more; but he has out of his great love and noble bounty, put a new stock of grace and glory for us into the hands of Jesus Christ, who is mighty, who is able to save to the uttermost, and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Isaiah 9:6; Heb. 7:25; Col. 2:3.

Christ was more capable, by infinite degrees, of the fullness of the Holy Spirit than mere men were or could be; and his employment being also infinitely beyond the employment of men, the measure of the Holy Spirit's fullness in him must needs be accordingly beyond all measure. Hence, by way of emphasis, Christ is called "the *anointed* one of God," John 12:15; Acts 3:22-23. The kings, priests, and prophets among the Jews, who were anointed, were in their unction but types of Christ, who is the great king, priest, and prophet of his church, and anointed above them all, yes, and above all the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and believers under the new testament ministration. In Christ there is all kind of grace, and it is in him in the highest and utmost degree, that he might be able to manage all his offices, and finish "that work which God gave him to do," John 17:4; and God has filled him with his Spirit, that he might successfully bring about the redemption and salvation of sinners. But,

**Secondly**, God the Father promises to invest Jesus Christ with a threefold office, and to anoint him and furnish him with whatever was requisite for the discharge of those three offices—namely, his *prophetic*, *priestly*, and *kingly* offices, Isaiah 61:1-3, and 33:22. Christ never forced himself into any of these offices, he never intruded himself into any one office, he never ran before he was sent, he never assumed any office until his Father had signed and sealed his commission, John 6:17. If Jesus Christ had acted without a commission under his Father's hand, it would have been invalid and lost, and God would one day have said to him, "Who has required this at your hand?" [Melchizedek was a king and a priest; Christ was more—a priest, a prophet, and a king; Samuel was a priest and a prophet; David was a king and a prophet: but never met all three in any but in Christ alone.] Isaiah 1:12.

In order to our spiritual and eternal recovery out of sin and misery, it was absolutely necessary that whatever Christ did act as a priest, prophet, or king, he should act by the authority of his Father, by a commission under the broad seal of heaven: Heb. 5:5, "*So also* Christ glorified not himself to be made a high-priest; but he who said unto him, You are my Son." The high-priesthood was an honor; for Christ to have taken that to himself, without a commission from his Father, had been to glorify himself, by

conferring glory and honor upon himself. This negative, that "Christ glorified not himself," is a clear evidence that Christ arrogated no honor to himself. Christ would not arrogate honor to himself, but rather wait upon his Father, that he might confer upon him what honor he saw fit. Christ glorified not himself to be made a high-priest; but his Father glorified him, in ordaining or commissioning him to be the high-priest. In short, to be made a high-priest is to be deputed or appointed and set apart to that function; and thus was our Lord Jesus Christ made a high-priest. He had never undertaken that office had he not been ordained to it by his Father. But, that you may see Christ's threefold commission to his threefold office, consider,

**[1.] First**, that God the Father promises to Jesus Christ an excellent, royal and eternal **PRIESTHOOD**: Heb. 7:21, "For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord swore and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. 2:17-18; Psalm 110:4. Among the Jews, in the times of the old testament, they had a high-priest, who was in all things to stand between God and them; and in case any sinned, to make an atonement for them. Now look, as the Jews had their high-priest, so the Lord Jesus Christ, he was to be, and he is, the apostle and the high-priest of our Christian profession, as Aaron was of the Jews' profession. The priestly office of Jesus Christ is erected and set up, on purpose for the relief of poor distressed sinners. [Heb. 3:1. By the way, you may take notice that the whole body of Antichristianism is but an invasion upon the priestly office of Christ. What is the popish mass, that unbloody sacrifice, but a derogation from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, once upon the cross; and so a derogation from his priestly office? What are all those popish penances and satisfactions enjoined, but a derogation unto the satisfaction of Christ; and so unto the priestly office of Christ! What is all their praying to saints and angels, but a derogation unto the intercession of Christ; and so unto the priestly office? God deposes Christ to his priestly office, as God and man; yet papists say that Christ is a priest only in his human nature. God says to his Son, "You are a priest;" yet they make many priests. God makes his Son a priest forever; yet they substitute others in his room. God gave Christ to offer up but one sacrifice, and that but once; but they every day offer up many sacrifices in

the mass. God gave Christ to offer up himself; but they offer up bread and wine, upon pretense that it is the body and blood of Christ. Christ's sacrifice was a bloody sacrifice; but they style theirs an unbloody sacrifice.]

The **work** of the high-priest, is to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. In the times of the old testament, the high-priest made an atonement for the people. In case any man had sinned, he brought a sacrifice, and his sins were laid upon the head of the sacrifice. Once every year, the high-priest entered into the Holy of holies, and with the blood of the sacrifice, sprinkled the mercy-seat, and laid the sins of the people upon the head of the scape-goat, and so made an atonement for the people, as is clear in Lev. 16:14, "He shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger, upon the mercy-seat eastward: and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times;" and at verse 21, "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and so he shall make an atonement." This was the work of the high-priest, in case any had sinned, to make an atonement and satisfaction, by the way of type, for the sins of the people. The main scope of the apostle in Heb. 7, is to advance Christ his priesthood above the Levitical priesthood, in order to which he premises this—that those "priests were made without an oath," verse 20.

The apostle's third argument to prove the excellency of Christ's priesthood above the Levitical, is taken from the different manner of instituting the one and the other. Christ's institution was more solemn than the Levites'; their institution was without an oath, Christ's institution was with an oath. The argument may be thus framed: that priesthood which is established by an oath, is more excellent than that which is without an oath; but Christ's priesthood is with an oath, and theirs without an oath. It is here taken for granted that Christ was most solemnly instituted a priest, even by an oath; yes, by the oath of God himself, which is the greatest and most solemn manner of institution that can be. God's oath imports two things:

(1.) An infallible certainty of that which he swears.

(2.) A solemn authority and dignity conferred upon that which he instituted by oath. Great and weighty matters of much concernment use to be established by oath. Hereby it appears that Christ's priesthood is a matter of great importance, and of much concernment. This will appear the more evident, if we consider the *person* who was made priest, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the greatest person that could be; Heb. 7:28; therefore he is fitly called "a *great* high-priest," Heb. 4:14.

Or if we consider the ENDS of Christ's priesthood, which were very weighty, and that in reference both to God and man. To **God**, for the manifestation of his perfect justice, infinite mercy, almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and other divine attributes, which never were, nor ever can be so manifested, as in and by Christ's priesthood. To **man**, that God's wrath might be averted, his favor procured, man's sin purged, and he freed from all evil, and brought to eternal happiness. Or if we consider the benefits of Christ's priesthood, which are answerable to the foresaid ends. Jesus Christ was appointed and made by the Father, "The apostle and high-priest of the church's profession:" Heb. 3:1-2, "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to him who appointed him." Christ had a divine call to the execution of all those offices, which he sustained as our mediator, he did not run before he was sent, he did not act without a commission and warrant, he was lawfully constituted by him who had power to undertake that great charge he has over the church; this we shall find asserted of all his three offices.

As for his priestly office, he was made a priest by an immediate call and ordination from God, Heb. 5:4-6. The scope of the apostle is to set out the excellency of Christ's priesthood, by comparing it with the Levitical. His priesthood had a concurrence of all things necessary to the Levitical; and it had many excellencies above that. Now among other things required in the priesthood of Aaron, this was one—there must be a divine regular call. This was in the priesthood of Christ; "He was called of God, a high-priest, after the order of Melchisedec." [Psalm 110:4. The Hebrew is, "You a priest," etc., that is, "You shall be a priest forever;" it being the manner of the Hebrew tongue, sometimes for brevity sake, to leave out a word,

which is to be understood and supplied.] Psalm 110:4 is God's sure and irrevocable promise to Christ, touching that excellent and eternal priesthood, whereby the recovery of his seed was to be meritoriously obtained. This priestly office of Christ is sure, because it is confirmed by God's oath, of which before as well as his promise. The promise makes it sure, the oath doubly sure, irrevocable; and certainly the Lord neither can nor will ever repent of this promise and oath.

The priesthood of Christ is the most noble part of all his mediation. In the priesthood of Christ, and in that especially, lies the latitude and longitude, the profundity and sublimity of God's love towards us; and in respect of this especially, is the whole mystery of our redemption by Christ called the magnificent works of God. Christ as man, and as mediator between God and man, was, by his Father, deputed unto his priestly office. Concerning the dignity and excellency of Christ's priestly office, above the Levitical priesthood, I have spoken elsewhere. But,

**[2.] Secondly,** God the Father promises to Jesus Christ to make him a **PROPHET**, a great prophet, yes, the prince of prophets. Christ is a prophet, in way of eminency and excellency, above all other prophets; he was the chief, the head of them all. Christ was made a prophet by an immediate call and ordination from God. Christ, in respect of his prophetic office, can plead the authority of his Father; he can show a commission for this office, under his Father's own hand. Deut. 18:18, "I will raise them a prophet from among their brethren like unto you, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command them." [See Acts 3:22, and 7:37; Deut. 18:15; Isaiah 61:1.] Christ does not raise himself up to the prophetic office, but God the Father raises him up to this great office. He was anointed of God to preach glad tidings. Weigh Isaiah 42:6, "I will give you for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from their prison, and those who sit in darkness out of the prison-house." "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me, to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted," etc., Luke 4:18. Thus you see that this prophetic dignity of Christ, that he is the grand teacher of the church, is built upon the authority of his Father, who has authorised and commissioned him to

that great office.

Isaiah 50:4, "The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom, so that I know what to say to all these weary ones." [Christ displaces all Rabbis, by assuming this title to himself, "one is your teacher and master, even Christ," Mat. 23:8-10.] Thus you see that God the Father promises to invest Christ with a prophetic office for the opening the eyes of the blind, etc. This great prophet is richly furnished with all kinds of knowledge; "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." They are hid in him as gold and silver are hid in the veins of the earth. "Treasures of knowledge," that is, precious knowledge, saving knowledge; "Treasures of knowledge," that is, plentiful knowledge, abundance of knowledge; "Treasures," that is, hidden and stored knowledge, was laid up in him. All the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth—do not know all that is in the heart of God; but now Jesus Christ, "who lies in the bosom of the Father," John 1:18, he knows all that is in his Father's heart. All those secret mysteries, that were laid up in the bosom of eternity, are fully known to this great prophet of the church.

John 5:20, "The Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that he himself does," by a divine and unspeakable communication. God the Father shows to Jesus Christ all things that he does. God's love is communicative, and will manifest itself in effects, according to the capacity of the party beloved; so much appears in that unspeakable love of the Father to the Son, "The Father loves the Son, and shows him all things," etc., or communicates his nature, wisdom, and power, for operation with him; which is expressed in terms taken from among men, because of our weakness: and ought to be spiritually, and not carnally conceived of. And therefore these terms of the Father's "showing," and the Son's "seeing," are made use of to prevent all carnal and gross conceptions of this inexpressible communication from the Father, and participation by the Son.

In the blessed Scripture, Jesus Christ is sometimes called "the" prophet, and "that" prophet; because he is one who came from the bosom of the Father, and lives and lies in the bosom of the Father, and understands the whole mind, will, heart, counsels, designs, ways, and workings of the Father. Jesus Christ is anointed by God the Father to be the great prophet

and teacher of his elect; and accordingly Jesus Christ has taken that office upon himself. God the Father has laid a charge upon Jesus Christ, to teach and instruct all those that he has given him, in his whole mind and will, so far as is necessary to their salvation, edification, consolation, etc. "Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a Son," Heb. 3:2, 5-6. Christ cannot be unfaithful in his prophetic office. Those whom God the Father has charged him to teach and instruct, he will teach and instruct, in the great things of their peace; and no wonder, for the knowledge that is communicated to Jesus Christ, the great prophet of his church, is not by dreams, or visions, or revelations of angels, as to the prophets of old—but by a clear, full, intimate view, and beholding of the Godhead, the fountain of all sacred knowledge.

Rev. 5:6, "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven *eyes*, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." [The Lamb *stands*, because (1.) prepared to perfect the work of redemption; (2.) to help; (3.) to judge; (4.) to intercede.] The lamb slain opens the prophecies, and foretells what shall befall the church, to the end of the world. The discovery of the secrets of God in his word, are the fruit of Christ slain, ascended, and anointed as the great prophet of the church. The lamb lacked neither power nor wisdom to open the seven seals, and therefore he is said to have "seven *horns* and seven *eyes*." Seven is a number of perfection. Horns signify power, eyes signify knowledge or wisdom; [Dan. 7:24; Isaiah 35:5; Mat. 28:18; Col. 2:3, 9.] both joined together, argue a fullness and perfection of power and wisdom in Christ; so that we have here a lively representation of the threefold office of Christ: his *priestly* office in the lamb as slain, his royal or *kingly* office in the horns, and his *prophetic* office in the eyes. But,

**[3.] Thirdly,** God the Father promises to make him a **KING**, yes, a mighty king also. The kingly office speaks might and power. Christ is a king above all other kings; he is a king "higher than the kings of the earth; he is the prince of the kings of the earth; he is Lord of lords, and King of kings," Psalm 89:27; Rev. 1:5, and 17:14. Theodosius the emperor and another emperor, used to call themselves the *vassals of Christ*; and it is

most certain that all the emperors, kings, and princes of the world are but the vassals of this great king. Christ is not only "King of saints," but he is also "King of nations." "There was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages should serve him," Rev. 15:3-4, and 12:5; Dan. 7:17. God, by promise, has "given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession," Psalm 2:8. The monarchs of the world have stretched their empires far. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom reached as far as Spain; the Persians reached farther, Alexander farther than they, and the Romans farther than them all; but none of all these has subdued the whole world, as Christ has and will. "All power is given unto him both in heaven and in earth. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand, and the Father also has put all things under his feet," Romans 10:18; Rev. 11:15; Mat. 28:18; John 3:35; 1 Cor. 15:27.

The government of all the world is given to Jesus Christ as God-man. All the nations of the earth are under the government of Christ. He is to govern them, and rule them, and judge them, and make whatever use he pleases of them, as may make most for his own glory, and the good of his chosen people. Now God the Father promises to invest Jesus Christ with his kingly office: Psalm 2:6, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." These words are spoken by God the Father, of his Son Jesus Christ. In a promissory way, God the Father anoints Jesus Christ as Zion's king; and therefore it cannot but be the highest madness, folly, and vanity, for any to seek or attempt to pull that king of saints down, whom God the Father has set up. Christ rules for his Father, and from his Father, and will so rule in despite of all the rage and wrath, malice and madness, of men and devils: "yet have I set my king"—Heb., "I have *anointed*"—where the sign of Christ's inauguration, or entrance into his kingdom, is put for the possession and enjoying thereof. Christ was anointed and appointed by his Father to the office and work of a mediator, and is therefore here called his king. There is an emphasis in the word "I," "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," "I," before whom all the nations of the earth are but as a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance, Isaiah 40:15, 17; I, before whom all nations are as nothing, yes, less than nothing; I, by whom princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth, Proverbs 8:16; I, who rule the kingdoms of men, and give them to

whoever I will, and who set over them the basest of men, Dan. 4:17; I, who change times and seasons, and who removes kings and sets up kings, Dan. 2:21; I, who can kill and make alive, save and damn, bring to heaven and throw down to hell, Deut. 32:39; I am he who has set up Christ as king, and therefore let me see the nation, the council, the princes, the nobles, the judges, the family, the person, that dare oppose or run counter-cross to what I have done.

Again, the Lord, in a promissory way, approves and establishes this king by a firm decree: Psalm 2:7, "I will declare the decree," not the secret decree, but the decree manifested in the word. I, the Son of God, will, by my everlasting gospel, proclaim my Father's counsel, concerning the establishment of my kingdom. I will declare that irrevocable decree of the Father, for the setting up of his Son's scepter, point-blank, opposite to that decree of theirs, verse 3. The decree of God, concerning the kingly office and authority of Christ, is immutable, and in effect as irrevocable.

Again, the Lord, in a promissory way, extends the dominion of Christ to the Gentiles, and to the uttermost parts of the earth, verse 8. So far should the enemies of Christ be from ruining his kingdom, that God the Father promises that all the inhabitants of the earth should be his, and brought into subjection to him, not only the Jews, but all the inhabitants of the earth shall be subjected to Christ's kingdom, the elect he shall save, and the refractory he shall destroy. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

Again, the Lord, in a promissory way, declares the power, prevalency, and victory of Christ over all his enemies: verse 9, "You shall break them with a rod of iron: you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." This signifies their utter destruction, so that there is no hope of recovery. A potter's vessel, when it is once broken, cannot be made up again. This proverb also signifies *ease* in destroying them. As for such that plot, bandy, and combine together against the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall as easily and as irrecoverably by his almighty, eternal, and irresistible power, dash them in pieces, as a potter breaks his vessels in pieces: Jer. 19:11, "I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again." Isaiah 30:14, "It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a

fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern." The Jews, you know, were Christ's obstinate enemies; and he has so dashed them in pieces, that they are scattered abroad all the world over.

The Lord has made another promise, that Christ shall be sovereign king, Psalm 110:1-6. And no wonder, when we consider that God the Father has called Christ to the kingly office. The scepter is given into his hand, and the crown is put upon his head, and the key of government is laid upon his shoulder by God himself. Isaiah 22:22, it is written thus of Eliakim, "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." Now herein was this precious soul a lively figure and type of Christ. The words of the prophecy are applied to Christ, in his letter to Philadelphia, Rev. 3:7; and the sense is this, that look, as Eliakim was made steward or treasurer under Hezekiah, that is, the next under the king in government all over the land, to command, to forbid, to permit, to reward, to punish, to do justice, and to repress all disorder; of which authority the bearing of a key on the shoulder was a badge; so Christ, as mediator under his Father, has regal power and authority over his Church, where he commands in chief, as I may say, and no man may lift up his hand or foot without him; he has the key of the house of David upon his shoulder, to prescribe, to inhibit, to call, to harden, to save, and to destroy—at his pleasure.

Such a monarch and king is Christ, neither has any such rule and sovereignty beside him. And if you look into Dan. 7:13-14, you may observe, that after the abolishing of the four monarchies, Christ's monarchy is established by the Ancient of days, giving to Jesus Christ dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall never pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed. Christ did not thrust himself into the throne, as some have done; neither did he swim to his crown through a sea of blood, as others have done; nor did he swim through a sea of sorrow to this crown, as Queen Elizabeth is said to do; no, he waited until authority was given him by his Father. But,

**Thirdly**, God the Father has promised, that he will give to Jesus Christ—

assistance, support, protection, help, and strength to carry on the great work of redemption. God the Father promises and covenants with Jesus Christ, to carry him through all dangers, difficulties, perplexities, trials, and oppositions, etc., that he would meet with in the accomplishing our redemption; upon which accounts Jesus Christ undertakes to go through a sea of trouble, a sea of sorrow, a sea of blood, and a sea of wrath! Isaiah 42:1, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations;" verse 4, "He will not stop until truth and righteousness prevail throughout the earth." Verse 6, "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you." [Christ is our Lord, but in the work of redemption he was the Father's servant.] What is that? Why, I will support, strengthen, and preserve you with my glorious power; I will so hold your hand, that you shall not be discouraged, but finish that great work of redemption, which, by agreement with me, you have undertaken.

God the Father agreed with Jesus Christ about the power, strength, success, and assistance that he would have to carry on the work of redemption, all which God the Father made good to him until he had sent forth judgment unto victory; as Christ himself acknowledges, saying, "Listen to me, all of you in far-off lands! The Lord called me before my birth; from within the womb he called me by name. He made my words of judgment as sharp as a sword. He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand. I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver. He said to me—You are my servant, Israel, and you will bring me glory." Isaiah 49:1-3. The work of redemption was so high, so hard, so great, so difficult a work—that it would have broken the hearts, backs, and necks of all the glorious angels in heaven, and mighty men on earth, had they engaged in it; and therefore God the Father engages himself to stand close to Jesus Christ, and mightily to assist him, and to be singularly present with him, and wonderfully to strengthen him in all his mediatorial administrations, John 17:2; upon which accounts Jesus Christ despises his enemies, bears up bravely under all his sore temptations and trials, and "triumphs over principalities and powers," Mat. 4:11; Luke 22:43; Col. 2:15.

And certainly if Christ had not had singular support, and an almighty

strength from the Godhead, he could never have been able to bear up under that mighty wrath, and to have drunk up that bloody cup. Now upon the account of God the Father's engaging himself to own Christ, and stand by him in the great work of our redemption, Jesus Christ acts faith against all his deepest discouragements, which he would meet with in the discharge of his mediatorial office, as the prophet tells us: "Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be dismayed. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will triumph. He who gives me justice is near. Who will dare to oppose me now? Where are my enemies? Let them appear!" Isaiah 50:7-8. From the consideration of God's help, Jesus Christ strengthens and encourages himself, in the execution of his office, against all oppositions. God's presence and assistance made Jesus Christ victorious over all wrongs and injuries. Jesus Christ knew that God the Father would clear up his innocency and integrity, and this made him patient and constant to the last. But,

**Fourthly**, God the Father promises to Jesus Christ that he shall not labor in vain, and that the work of redemption shall prosper in his hand, and that he will give a blessed success to all his undertakings, and crown all his endeavors. [See Isaiah 53:10, and 49:6-12; Micah 4:3.] "He shall see his seed, and he shall see the travail of his soul." Another promise of the Father to the Son you have in that, Isaiah 55:5, "Nations that know you not, shall run unto you." The Gentiles, who never heard of Christ, nor ever were acquainted with Christ, nor ever had any notice of Christ; when Christ calls, they shall readily and speedily repair unto him and submit unto him. Christ shall one day see and reap the sweet and happy fruit of his blood, sufferings, and undertakings; "The pleasure of the Lord shall certainly prosper in his hand." Christ's sufferings were as a woman's travail, sharp though short. Now though a woman suffers many grievous pains and pangs, yet, when she sees a child brought into the world, she rejoices and is satisfied. So when nations shall run to Christ, he shall see his seed and be satisfied.

God the Father promises that Jesus Christ shall have a numerous spiritual posterity, begetting and bringing many thousands to the obedience of his Father; "Nations shall run unto you; "and this shall fill

the heart of Jesus Christ with abundance of joy and comfort, contentment and satisfaction, when he shall see the fruit of his bitter sufferings, when he shall see such an abundance of poor, filthy, guilty, condemned sinners—pardoned, justified, and accepted with his Father, "his soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness," Psalm 63:5. The numerous body of believers, past, present, and to come, that God the Father had promised to Jesus Christ, was the life of his life. That is a sweet promise, Psalm 110:2, "You will rule over your enemies." Those who will not bend—must break; those who will not stoop to his government—shall feel his power. "Your people"—the people of God are Christ's five ways:

(1.) By donation;

(2.) By purchase;

(3.) By conquest;

(4.) By covenant;

(5.) By consent. "They shall be willing in the day of your power"— Heb., *willingnesses*, as if the Holy Spirit could not sufficiently set forth their exceeding great willingness to submit to all the royal commands of the Lord; John 17:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Luke 1:57; 1 Cor. 3:23. All Christ's subjects are volunteers, free-hearted, like those isles which wait for God's law, Isaiah 42:4, and 56:6; Zech. 8:21, "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord Almighty: I will go also;" "From the womb of the morning, you have the dew of your youth," Psalm 110:3. Here is the success of Christ's office promised, both in the victorious subduing of his enemies, and in the cheerful willingness of his subjects, and in the wonderful numerousness of his people brought over to him, even like the innumerable drops of the morning dew.

Another promise of that great and complete success that God the Father has made for Jesus Christ in his mediatorial office, you have in Isaiah 49, from the 6th verse to the 14th verse: Christ shall have a people gathered to him, and a seed to serve him, "because he has made his soul an offering for their sins." The multitude of sinners brought over to Jesus

Christ, is the product of the atoning sacrifice which he has made for them, and the trophies of the victory that he has gotten by dying the death of the cross.

Thus you see that God the Father has not only engaged himself by compact to preserve Jesus Christ in his work, but he has also made to him several precious promises of preservation, protection, and success—so that the work of redemption shall be sure to prosper in his hand. And, to make these glorious promises the more valid and binding, God confirms them solemnly by an oath: Heb. 7:21, "This priest," Christ, "was made with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord swore, and will not repent, You are a priest forever." God the Father foresaw from everlasting that Jesus Christ would so infinitely satisfy him and please him by his incarnation, obedience, and death, that thereupon he swears. But,

**Fifthly**, God the Father promises to Jesus Christ— rule, dominion, and sovereignty, Psalm 2:8-9. This sovereignty and rule is promised to Jesus Christ in Isaiah 40:10, "His arm shall rule for him." "He shall sit in judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law," Isaiah 42:4— not the Jews only, but the Gentiles also, the people of divers countries and nations shall willingly and readily receive and embrace his doctrine, and submit to his laws, and give up themselves to his rule. Micah 4:3, "He shall judge among many nations," that is, rule, order, command, and direct as a judge and a ruler among many nations. The conquests that Christ shall gain over the nations shall not be by swords and arms, but he shall bring them to a voluntary obedience and spiritual subjection by his Spirit and Gospel: John 3:35, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand," that is, God the Father has given the rule and power over all things in heaven and earth to Jesus Christ. In carrying on the redemption of sinners, as the matter is accorded between the Father and the Son, so the redeemed are not left to themselves, but are put under Christ's charge and custody, who has "purchased them with his blood," God the Father having given him dominion over all that may contribute to help or hinder his people's happiness, that he may order them so as may be for their good. And this power he has as *God* with the Father, and as *man* and *mediator* by donation and gift from the Father, Mat. 28:18, and 2:3. Thus every believer's happiness is most firm and

sure, all things being wisely and faithfully transacted between the Father and the Son. As long as Jesus Christ has all power to defend his people, and all wisdom and knowledge to guide and govern his people, and all dominion to curb the enemies of his people, and a commission and charge to be answerable for them, we may roundly conclude of their eternal safety, security, and felicity, Col. 1:19, and 2:1. But,

**Sixthly**, God the Father promises to accept of Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial office. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord," Isaiah 49:5; that is as if he had said, notwithstanding the infidelity, obstinacy, and impenitency of the greatest part of the Jews, yet, faithful labor and diligence in the execution of my mediatorial office is, and shall be, greatly accepted, and highly esteemed, by my heavenly Father. Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, lovingly accepted of the poor man's present of water, because his good will was in it, and put it into a golden vessel, and gave him the vessel of gold, accounting it the part of a truly noble and generous spirit to receive small presents offered with a hearty affection. Oh, how much more will God the Father kindly accept of Jesus Christ in his mediatorial office: verse 7, "The Lord, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, says to the one who is despised and rejected by a nation, to the one who is the servant of rulers—Kings will stand at attention when you pass by. Princes will bow low because the Lord has chosen you. He, the faithful Lord, the Holy One of Israel, chooses you." [Jerome says that the Jews cursed Christ in their synagogues three times a day. They so greatly abhorred the name Jesus that they would not pronounce it; but if they did unawares happen to pronounce it, then they would punish themselves with a blow on their faces, etc.] God the Father, comforting of Christ, tells him that though he were contemptible to many, yes, to the nation of the Jews, and basely treated, like a servant, by their princes, Herod, Annas, Caiaphas, and Pontius Pilate, yet other kings and princes should see his dignity and glory, and submit to him, and honor him as the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

God the Father chose Jesus Christ to be his servant, and to be a mediator for his elect; he designed him to that office of being a Savior, both to the Jew and Gentile, and accordingly he accepted of him, "Thus says the

Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you; and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritage." Here you see that God the Father still goes on to speak more and more comfortably and encouragingly to Jesus Christ; for he tells him that he will be at hand to hear, and help, and assist him; and he tells him that he will preserve him, both in his person, and in the execution of his office; and he tells him that he will accept of his person, and of his services, and of his suits and intercession for himself and his people.

Mat. 3:17, "And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The voice from heaven was doubtless the voice of his Father, in that he says, This is my beloved Son," my natural Son, by eternal and incomprehensible generation, and therefore dearest to me, and most acceptable with me; my judgment is satisfied in him, my love is settled upon him, and I have an inestimable value for him; and therefore I cannot but declare my approbation and acceptance both of him and his work. I am *well* pleased in him, I am *infinitely* pleased in him, I am *only* pleased in him, I am *at all times* pleased in him, I am *forever* pleased in him; I am so well pleased in him, that, for his sake, I am fully appeased with all those who "I have given him, and who come unto him," John 6:37-40. [This Jerome applies to the time of Christ's hanging on the cross. He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" for God made it appear that he heard him, and forsook him not, in that he raised him from the dead, etc. See Heb. 5:7.] But,

**Seventhly**, God the Father promises highly to exalt Jesus Christ, and nobly to reward him, and everlastingly to glorify him. "You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:4-6, and 40:10. These are the words of God the Father to his Son, promising of him to set such a crown of glory upon his head as should make the nations of the world run unto him. God the Father made Christ glorious in his *birth*, by the angels' doxology, "Glory be to God on high;" in his *baptism*, by his speaking of him from heaven, "this is my beloved Son;" in his *transfiguration* on the mount, in his *resurrection*, and in his *ascension* into heaven. [Luke 2:13, 14; Mat. 3:17, and 17:1-5; Romans 1:4;

Acts 1:9-11.]

Isaiah 53:12, "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." The meaning is this: "I will impart," says God the Father, "to my Son, such honor, glory, renown, and riches, after his sufferings, as conquerors have; and he shall have them as a glorious reward of all his conflicts with my wrath, with temptations, with persecutions, with reproach, with contempt, with death, yes, and with hell itself!" The words are a plain allusion to conquerors in war, who are commonly exalted and greatly rewarded by their princes, for the venturing of their lives, and obtaining of conquests, as all histories will tell you. And, indeed, should the Father *not* reward Jesus Christ for all his hard services, and his matchless sufferings—he would express less kindness to him, than he has done to heathen princes; for he gave Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as his hire, for his service at Tyre; and to Cyrus he gave hidden treasure, Ezek. 29:18-19; Isaiah 45:1-3. But, alas, what were their services, compared to Christ's services, or their sufferings, compared to Christ's sufferings?

I have read of Cyrus, how that in a great war against his enemies, the better to encourage his soldiers to fight, in an oration that he made at the head of his army, he promised, upon the victory, to make every foot soldier, into a horseman; and every horseman, into a commander; and that no officer who fought valiantly should be unrewarded. And will God the Father let the Son of his dearest love, who has fought against all infernal powers, and conquered them, go without his reward? Surely not! Col. 2:14-15.

Psalm 2:7, "I will declare the decree; the Lord has said unto me, You are my Son, *this day* have I begotten you." David was God's son by adoption and acceptance; but Christ was his Son, Psalm 89:26-27, Proverbs 8, and Heb. 1:5, (1.) By eternal generation; (2.) By hypostatic union of the divine and human natures. And so God had one only Son, as Abraham had one only Isaac, though otherwise he was the father of many nations.

Some by "this day" understand the day of eternity, where there is no time

past nor to come, no beginning nor ending, but always one present day. Others by "this day" understand it of the day of Christ's incarnation, and coming into the world. Some again understand it of the whole time of his manifestation in the world, when he was sent forth as a prophet to teach them, and was declared evidently to be the Son of God, both by his miracles and ministry, John 1:14, and by that voice that was heard from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Others understand it of the day of Christ's resurrection, and with them I close, for this seems to be chiefly intended; partly because it seems to be spoken of some solemn time of Christ's manifestation to be the Son of God, and "he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," Romans 1:4; that is, by the power and force of the Deity, sanctifying and quickening the flesh, he was raised from the dead, and so declared mightily to be the Son of God; but mainly because the apostle does clearly affirm that this was in Christ's resurrection: "He has raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm, You are my Son, *this day* have I begotten you," Acts 13:33.

In the day of Christ's resurrection he seems to tell all the world, that though from the beginning he had been hid in the bosom of his Father, John 1:18, and that though in the law he had been but darkly shadowed out; yet in the day of his resurrection they might plainly see that he had fully satisfied divine justice, finished his sufferings, and completed the redemption of his elect; and that accordingly his Father had arrayed him with that glory that was suitable to him. Before the resurrection the godhead was veiled under the infirmity of the flesh; but in the resurrection, and after the resurrection, the godhead did sparkle and shine forth very gloriously and wonderfully, 2 Cor. 13:4.

Lest the human nature of Christ, upon its assumption, should shrink at the approach of sufferings, God the Father engages himself to give Jesus Christ a full and ample reward, and to exalt him far above all principality and power, and to put all things under his feet, and to make him head over all things to the church: and to "give him a *name* above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow;" and all because, to give satisfaction to his Father, he made himself of no reputation, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" that is, to his dying

day, Eph. 1:21-22; Phil. 2:9. [*Name* is put for person; and *bowing of the knee*, a bodily ceremony, to express inward subjection.—Estius, Beza.]

Jesus went through many a *little death*, all his life long, and at length underwent that cursed and painful death of the cross; upon which account the Father rewards him highly by exalting him to singular glory and transcendent honor. Look, that as the assumption of the human nature is the highest instance of free mercy, so is the rewarding thereof in its state of exaltation the highest instance of remunerative justice. Oh, how highly is the human nature of Christ honored by being exalted to a personal union with the Godhead! Though vain men may dishonor Christ, yet the Father has conferred honor upon him as mediator, that it may be a testimony to us that he is infinitely pleased with the redemption of lost man. Although Christ is, in himself, God all-sufficient, "God blessed forever," and so is not capable of any access of glory; yet it pleased him to condescend so far as to obscure his own glory under the veil of his flesh, and state of humiliation, until he had perfected the work of redemption; and to account of his office of mediator, and the dignity accompanying it, as great honor conferred upon him by the Father, John 8:54.

And it is observable that Christ having finished our redemption on earth, he petitions his Father to advance him to the possession of that glory that he enjoyed from all eternity; "And now, O Father, glorify me with your own self; with the glory which I had with you before the world was," John 17:5. Now for the clearing up of this text we are to consider, that as Christ was from all eternity the glorious God, the God of glory; so we are not to conceive of any real change in this glory of his godhead; as if by his estate of humiliation he had suffered any diminution, or by his state of exaltation any real accession were made to his glory as God. But the meaning is this, that Christ having, according to the covenant passed between the Father and him, *obscured the glory of his godhead for a time*, under the veil of the form of a servant, and our sinless infirmities, does now expect, according to the tenor of the same covenant, that, after he has done his work as mediator, he be highly exalted and glorified in his whole person; that his human nature be exalted to the glory that his finite nature is capable of, and that the glory of his godhead might shine in the

person of Christ, God-man, and in the man Christ Jesus. [Jesus Christ is true God, and was infinitely glorious from all eternity, for he had glory with his Father before the world was; and therefore he was no *upstart God*, and of a later standing, as the Arians and Mohammedans make of him.]

Thus you see the *promises*, the *encouragements*, and *rewards* that God the Father sets before Jesus Christ. And let thus much suffice concerning the articles of the covenant on God's part.

**In the last place, Let us seriously consider of the articles of the covenant on CHRIST'S part.** Let us weigh well the promises that Jesus Christ has made to the Father for the bringing about the great work of our redemption, that so we may see what infinite cause we have to *love* the Son as we love the Father, and to *honor* the Son as we honor the Father, and to *trust* in the Son as we trust in the Father, and to *glorify* the Son as we glorify the Father, etc. Now there are six observable things on Christ's part, on Christ's side, that we are to take special notice of, etc.

**[1.] First, Christ having consented and agreed with the Father about our redemption, accordingly he applies himself to the discharge of that great and glorious work by taking a body, by assuming our nature.** Heb. 2:14, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." He who was equal with God did so far abase himself as to take on him the nature of man, and subjected himself to all manner of human frailties, so far as they are freed from sin, even such as accompany flesh and blood. This is one of the wonders of mercy and love, that Christ our head should stoop so low, who was himself full of glory, as to take part of flesh and blood, that he might suffer for flesh and blood: verse 16, "For truly he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Christ assumed the common nature of man, and not of any particular person. The apostle does here purposely use this word "seed," to show that Christ came out of the loins of man, as Jacob's children and

their children are said to come out of his loins, Gen. 46:26, and as all the Jews are said to come out of the loins of Abraham, Exod. 1:5; Heb. 7:5; and as Solomon is said to come out of the loins of David, 1 Kings 8:19. In a man's loins his seed is, and it is a part of his substance. Thus it shows that Christ's human nature was of the very substance of man, and that Christ was the very same that was promised to be the Redeemer of man; for of old he was foretold under this word seed, as "the seed of the woman," "the seed of Abraham," "the seed of Isaac," "the seed of David." [Gen. 3:15; Romans 9:7; Heb. 11:18; John 8:58.]

This phrase—"he took on him," as it sets out the human nature of Christ, so it gives us a hint of his divine nature; for it presupposes that Christ existed, before he took on him the seed of Abraham. He who takes anything on him must needs be, before he do so. Is it possible for one who does not exist—to take anything on him? Therefore Christ's former being must needs be in regard of his divine nature. In that respect he ever was the eternal God. Being God, he took on him a human nature. Christ's eternal deity shines in this 16th verse, and so does his true humanity; in that he took upon him the seed of man, it is most evident that he was a true man. Seed is the matter of man's nature, and the very substance thereof. The seed of man is the root, out of which Christ assumed his human nature, Isaiah 11:1. The human nature was not created out of nothing, nor was it brought from heaven, but assumed out of the seed of man, Luke 1:35. The human nature of Christ never had an eternal subsistence in itself. At or in the very first framing or making it, it was united to the divine nature; and at or in the first uniting it, it was framed or made. Philosophers say of the uniting of the soul to the body, in creating it, it is infused, and in infusing it, it is created. Much more is this true, concerning the human nature of Christ, united to his divine. Fitly therefore is it here said, that he "took on him the seed of Abraham."

So John 1:14, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The evangelist having proved the divinity of Jesus Christ, comes now to speak of his humanity, incarnation, and manifestation in the flesh, whereby he became God and man in one person. "Flesh" here signifies the whole man in Scripture. You all know that man consists of two parts, which are sometimes called flesh and spirit, and sometimes called soul and body.

Now by a synecdoche, either of these parts may be put for the whole: and so sometimes the soul is put for the whole man, and sometimes the body is put for the whole man, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Acts 27:37; Gen. 46:27; Romans 12:1, and 3:20.] Christ did assume the whole man, he did assume the soul as well as the body, and both under the term flesh. And indeed, unless he had assumed the whole man, the whole man could not have been saved. If Christ had not taken the whole man, he could not have saved the whole man. Christ took the nature of man, that he might be a fit mediator. If he had not been man, he could not have died; and if he had not been God, he could not have satisfied divine justice. So great was the difficulty of restoring the image of God in lost man, and of restoring him to God's favor, and the dignity of sonship, that no less could do it than the natural Son of God his becoming the Son of man, to suffer in our nature; and so great was the Father's love and the Son's love to fallen man, as to lay a foundation of reconciliation between God and man in the personal union of the divine and human nature of Christ. So much is imported in those words, "the Word was made flesh." [Christ put himself into a lousy, leprous suit of ours, to expiate our pride and robbery in reaching after the Deity, and to heal us of our spiritual leprosy; for if he had not assumed our flesh he had not saved us. —Gregory Nazianzen.]

The person of the godhead, who was incarnate, was neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit—but the Son, the second person, for "the Word was made flesh." There being a real distinction of the persons, that one of them is not another; and each of them having their proper manner of subsistence, the one of them might be incarnate, and not the other; and it is the Godhead, not simply considered, but the person of the Son subsisting in that Godhead, who was incarnate. And it was very convenient that the second or middle person, in order of subsistence of the blessed Trinity, should be the reconciler of God and man; and that "he, by whom all things were made," Col. 1:16-17, should be the restorer and maker of the new world; and that he who was "the express image of his Father," Heb. 1:2-3, should be the repairer of the image of God in us.

Oh the admirable love and wisdom of God that shines in this, that the second person in the Trinity is set on work to procure our redemption!

Ah, Christians, how well does it befit you to lose yourselves in the admiration of the wisdom of God in the contrivance of the work of our redemption! For the Son of God to take on him the nature of man, with all the essential properties thereof, and all the sinless infirmities and frailties thereof—is a wonder that may well take up our thoughts to all eternity. And Christ took the infirmities of our nature as well as the nature itself. To show the truth of his *humanity* he had a nature that could hunger and thirst even as ours do, and to sanctify them to us; and that so he might sympathize with us as "a merciful and faithful high priest," Heb. 16-18, and 4:15-16; and that we might confide the more in him, and have access to him with boldness. By reason of the personal union of the two natures in Christ, he is a *fit* mediator between God and man. His sufferings are of infinite value, being the sufferings of one who is God, Acts 20:28, and who is mighty to carry on the work of redemption, and to apply his own purchase, and repair all our losses, Isaiah 63:1; Heb. 7:25.

Oh, what an honor has Jesus Christ put upon fallen man by taking the nature of man on him! What is so near and dear to us as our own nature? and lo, our nature is highly preferred by Jesus Christ to a union in the Godhead. Christ now sits in heaven with our nature, and the same flesh that we have upon us—only glorified, Acts 1:9-11. It is that which all the world cannot give a sufficient reason, why the same word in the Hebrew, *Basher*, should signify both "flesh" and "good tidings." Theology will give you a reason, though grammar cannot. Christ's taking of flesh upon him was good tidings to all the whole world, therefore no wonder if one word signifies both. Abundance of comfort may be taken from hence to poor souls, when they think God has forgotten them, to consider, is it likely that Christ, who is man, should forget man, now he is at the right hand of the Father, clothed in that nature that we have? When we are troubled to think it is impossible God and man should ever be reconciled, let us consider that God and man did meet in Christ, therefore it is possible we may meet. What has been may be again. The two natures met in Christ, therefore God may be reconciled to man; yes, they therefore met, that God might be reconciled to man. He was made Emmanuel, "God with us," that he might bring God and us together.

When a man is troubled to think of the corruptions of his nature, that is so full of defilements, that it cannot be sanctified perfectly, let him also think that his nature is capable of sanctification to the full. Christ received human nature which was not polluted, his nature is the same, therefore that nature is capable of sanctification to the uttermost. O sirs! if Christ, the second person in the Trinity, did put on man, how careful should men be to put on Christ! "Put on the Lord Jesus," says the apostle, Romans 13:14. If Christ assumed our human nature, how should we wrestle with God to be made partakers of the divine nature: 2 Pet. 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these we may be made partakers of the divine nature." If Christ became thus one flesh with us, how zealous should we be to become one spirit with Christ, 1 Cor. 6:17. "Even as man and wife is one flesh, so he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Was the Word made flesh? did Christ take our nature? yes, did he take our nature at the worst, after the fall? What high cause have we to bless his name forever for this condescension of his! Should all the princes of the world have come from their thrones, and have gone a-begging from door to door, it would not amount to as much as for Christ to become man for our sakes. Christ took our nature, not in the *integrity* of it, as in Adam before his fall, but in the *infirmities* of it, which came to it by the fall. What amazing love was this! For Christ to have taken our nature as it was in Adam, while he stood clothed in his integrity, and stood right in the sight of God, had not been as much as when Adam was fallen and proclaimed traitor; as Bernard says, "Lord, you shall be so much the more dear to me, by how much the more you have been vile for me!" Here is condescension indeed—that Christ should stoop so low to take flesh, and flesh with infirmities! But,

**[2.] Secondly, Jesus Christ promises to God the Father that he will freely, readily, and cheerfully accept, undertake, and faithfully discharge his mediatorial office, in order to the redemption and salvation of all his chosen ones.** Consult these scriptures, [Compare Psalm 40:6-11 with Heb. 10:5-11, and Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-20; Acts 13:23, and 7:22.] they having been formerly opened, and in them you will find that Christ did not take the office of mediatorship upon himself, but first the Father calls him to it, and then the Son accepts it: "Christ glorified not himself, to be made a high-priest;

but he who said unto him, You are my Son, this day have I begotten you," Heb. 10:12, 14, he called him, and then the Son answered him, "Lo, I come." God the Father promises that upon the payment of such a price by his Son, such and such souls should be ransomed and set free from the curse, from wrath, from hell, etc. Jesus Christ readily consents to the price, and pays it down upon the nail at once, and so makes good his mediatorial office.

It pleased the glorious Son of God, in obedience to the Father, to humble himself and obscure the glory of his godhead, that he might be like his brethren, and a fit mediator for sympathy and suffering, and that he might engage his life and glory for the redeeming of the elect, and lay aside his robes of majesty, and not be reassumed until he gave a good account of that work, until he was able to say, "I have finished the work that you gave me to do." Christ very freely and cheerfully undertakes to do and suffer whatever was the will of his Father that he should do or suffer, for the bringing about the redemption of mankind. Christ willingly undertakes to be his Father's servant in this great work, and accordingly he looks upon his Father as his Lord, "You are my Lord," Isaiah 50:5-7; Psalm 16:2—that is, you are he to whom I have engaged myself that I will satisfy all your demands, I will fulfill your royal law, I will bear the curse, I will satisfy your justice, I will humble myself to the death of the cross, Phil. 2:8; "I will tread the wine-press of my Father's wrath," Isaiah 63:3; I will fully discharge all the bonds, bills, and obligations which lie in open court against any of those whom by compact you have given me, Col. 2:13-15, let their debts be ever so many or ever so great, or of ever so long continuance—I will pay them all! There is no work so high, nor any work so hard, nor any work so hot, nor any work so bloody, nor any work so low—in which I am not ready to engage upon the account of my chosen people! "Lo, I come, I delight to do your will; yes, your law is in my heart." Christ freely submits, not only to the *duty* of the law, but also to the penalty of the law—not only to do what the law enjoins, but also to suffer what the law threatens; the former he makes good by his active obedience, and the latter by his passive obedience, Gal. 4:4-5.

This was the way wherein the Father, by an eternal agreement with his Son, would have the salvation of lost sinners brought about, and

accordingly, Jesus Christ very readily complies with his Father's will and way, Titus 1:2. Christ, as mediator, had a command from his Father to die, which command he readily closes with: John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep;" verse 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep;" verse 17, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again;" verse 18, "No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself; this commandment have I received from my Father." Christ was content to be a servant by covenant, that so his sufferings might be accepted for his people; and certainly whatever God the Father put Jesus Christ upon in his whole mediatorial work—that Jesus Christ did freely, fully, and heartily comply with: "Lo, I come; and I have finished the work that you gave me to do," John 17:4. And had not Christ been free and voluntary in his active and passive obedience, his active and passive obedience would never have been acceptable, satisfactory, or meritorious. To go further to prove it, would be to light a candle to see the sun at noon. But,

**[3.] Thirdly, Jesus Christ promises and engages himself that he will confide, depend, rely, and trust upon his Father for help and for assistance to go through with his work, notwithstanding all the wrath and rage, all the malice and oppositions, that he would meet with from men and devils.** Heb. 2:13, "And again, I will put my *trust* in him." Christ's confidence in his Father was one great encouragement to him to hold out in the execution of his office; and his confidence in God speaks him out to be a true man, in that, as other men, he stood in need of God's aid and assistance; and thereupon, as others of the sons of men, his brethren, he puts his trust in God. The Greek phrase used by the apostle carries emphasis; it implies trust on a good persuasion that he shall not be disappointed. It is translated "*confidence*," in Phil. 1:6. Word for word it may be here thus translated, "I will be *confident* in him." The "him" has apparent reference to God, so as Christ himself, being man, rested on God to be supported in his works, and to be carried through all his undertakings, until the top-stone was laid, and the work of redemption accomplished.

Christ had many great and potent enemies, and was brought to very great

straits; yet he fainted not, but put his trust in the Lord; yes, his greatest enemies gave him this testimony, that "he trusted in God;" and though they spoke it in scorn and derision, yet it was a real truth, Psalm 18:3-5; Isaiah 8:18; Mat. 27:43. Christ's confidence in his Father was further manifested by the many *prayers* which, time after time, he made to his Father, Heb. 5:7. Another proof of Christ's confidence in God's assistance, even in his greatest plunges and his sharpest sufferings, the prophet Isaiah will furnish us with: "The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me." Isaiah 50:5-9.

Christ, as mediator, trusted God the Father to carry him through all difficulties and oppositions, until he had completed the great work of his mediation. Christ strengthens and encourages himself in the execution of his office against all hardships and oppositions, from his confidence and assurance of God's aid and assistance; and by the same eye of faith, he looks upon all his oppositions as worn out and weathered by him. Christ's faith, patience, and constancy gave him victory over all wrongs and injuries; so Isaiah 49:5, "My God shall be my strength." Christ is very confident of his Father's assistance to carry him through that work that he had assigned him to. Christ, in the lack of comfort, never lacked faith to hang upon God, and to call him his God: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mat. 27:46. Christ was never forsaken in regard of the hypostatic union; the union was not dissolved—only the beams, the influence, was restrained. [As man he cries out, "My God, my God," etc., when as God he promises paradise to the penitent thief. —Hilary.] Nor in regard of his faith; for though now he was sweltering under the wrath of God, as our surety, and left in the hands of his enemies, and deserted by his disciples and dearest friends, and under the loss of the comforting and solacing presence of his Father, yet, in the midst of all, such was the strength and power of his faith, that he could say, "My God, my God."

Christ, before the world began, having promised and engaged to the Father that, in the fullness of time, he would come into the world, assume our nature, be made under the law, tread the winepress of the Father's wrath, bear the curse, and give satisfaction to his justice; [Titus 1:2; Gal. 4:4; Isaiah 63:3; Gal. 3:13; Romans 8:3-4.] now upon the credit of this promise, upon this undertaking of Christ, God the Father takes up the patriarchs and all the old testament believers to glory. God the Father, resting upon the promise and engagement of his Son, admits many thousands into those mansions above, before Christ took flesh upon him, John 14:2-3. Now as the Father of old has rested and relied on the promise and engagement of Christ, so Jesus Christ does, to this very day, rest and stay himself upon the promise of his Father, that he shall, in due time, "see all his seed," Isaiah 53:10, and reap the full benefit of that full ransom that he has paid down upon the nail for all who *have* believed on him, that *do* believe on him, and that *shall* believe on him.

Christ knew God's infinite love, his tender compassions, and his matchless affections, to all those for whom he died; and he knew very well the covenant, the compact, the agreement which passed between the Father and himself; and so trusted the Father fully in the great business of their everlasting happiness and blessedness, relying upon the love and faithfulness of God, his love to the elect, and his faithfulness to keep covenant with him. As the elect are committed to Christ's charge, to give an account of them, so also is the Father engaged for their *conversion*, and for their *preservation*, after being converted; as being not only his own, given to Christ out of his love to them, but as being engaged to Christ, that he shall not be frustrated of the reward of his sufferings, but have a seed to glorify him forever, John 6:37; Isaiah 53:11. Therefore does Christ not only constantly preserve them by his Spirit, but does leave also that burden on the Father: "Father, keep those whom you have given me," John 17:11. But,

**[4.] Fourthly, Jesus Christ promises and engages himself to his Father, that he would bear all and suffer all that should be laid upon him, and that he would ransom poor sinners, and fully satisfy divine justice by his blood and death.** [Isaiah 50:5-6; John 10:17-18, and 15:10; Luke 24:46; Heb. 10:5-7, 10. I have opened these

scriptures already.] The work of redemption could never have been effected by "silver or gold," or by prayers or tears, or by the "blood of bulls or goats," but only by the second Adam's obedience, even to the death of the cross. Remission of sin, the favor of God, the heavenly inheritance, could never have been obtained, but by the precious blood of the Son of God. The innocent Lamb of God was slain in typical prefigurations from the beginning of the world, and slain in real performance in the fullness of time, or else fallen man would have lain under guilt and wrath forever. The heart of Jesus Christ was strongly set upon all those whom his Father had given him, and he was fully resolved to secure them from hell and the curse, whatever it cost him; and seeing no price would satisfy his Father's justice below his blood, he lays down his life at his Father's feet, according to the eternal covenant and agreement, which had passed between his Father and himself. But,

**[5.] Fifthly, The Lord Jesus Christ was very free, ready, willing, and careful to make good all the articles of the covenant on his side, and to discharge all the works agreed on for the redemption and salvation of the elect.** John 17:4, "I have finished the work that you gave me to do," John 12:49-50, and 17:6. There was nothing committed to Christ by the Father to be done on earth, for the purchasing of our redemption, but he did finish it; so that the debt is paid, justice satisfied, and sin, Satan, and death spoiled of all their hurting and destroying power, Col. 2:14-15, and Heb. 2:14. By the covenant of redemption Christ was under an obligation to die, to satisfy to divine justice, to pay our debts, to bring in an everlasting righteousness, Dan. 9:24, to purchase our pardon, and to obtain eternal redemption for us, Heb. 9:12; all which he completed and finished before he ascended up to glory. And without all question, had not Jesus Christ kept touch with his Father, had not he made good the covenant, the compact, the agreement on his part, his Father would never have given him such a welcome to heaven as he did, nor would he ever have admitted him to "sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," as he did, [Heb. 1:3; Romans 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 8:1, and 10:12; 1 Pet. 3:22.] Acts 1:9-11. The right hand is a place of the greatest honor, dignity, and safety that any can be advanced to. But had not Jesus Christ "first purged away our sins," he would never have "sat down on the right hand of his

Father." Christ's advancement is properly of his human nature. That nature wherein Christ was crucified was exalted; for God, being the Most High, needs not be exalted; yet the human nature in this exaltation, is not singly and simply considered in itself, but as united to the deity; so that it is the person, consisting of two natures, even God-man, which is thus dignified, Mat. 26:64; Acts 7:56. For as the human nature of Christ is inferior to God, and is capable of advancement, so also is the person consisting of a divine and human nature.

Christ, as the Son of God, the second person of the sacred Trinity, is, in regard of his deity, no whit inferior to his Father, but every way equal; yet he assumed our nature, and became a mediator between God and man; he humbled himself, and made himself inferior to his Father; his Father therefore has highly exalted him, and set him down on his right hand, Phil. 2:8-9; Eph. 1:20. If Christ had not expiated our sins, and completed the work of our redemption, he could never have sat down on the right hand of God: Heb. 10:12, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." This verse is added in opposition to the former. But in the former verse it was proved that the sacrifices which were offered under the law could not take away sins. This verse proves that there is a sacrifice which has done that which they could not do. The argument is taken from that priest's ceasing to offer any more sacrifices after he had offered one; whereby is implied that there needed no other, because that one had done it to the full. Sin was taken away by Christ's sacrifice, for thereby a ransom and satisfaction were made to the justice of God, for man's sin, and thereupon sin taken away. Now sin being taken away, Christ "sits down on the right hand of his Father."

Look, as the humiliation of Christ was manifested in offering a sacrifice; so his exaltation, in sitting at God's right hand, was manifested after he had offered that sacrifice. This phrase, "sat down," is a note of dignity and authority; and this dignity and authority is amplified by the place where he is said to sit down—namely, on "the right hand of God;" and this honor and dignity is much illustrated by the eternal continuance thereof, "Forever sat down on the right hand of God." It is an eclipse of the luster of any glory to have an end. The very thought that such a glory shall one day cease, will cast a damp upon the spirit of him who enjoys that glory.

Christ's constant sitting at the right hand of his Father is a clear evidence that he has finished and completed the work of our redemption. Christ could never have gone to his Father, nor ever have sat down at the right hand of his Father—if he had not first fulfilled all righteousness, and fully acquitted us of all our iniquities. John 16:10, "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father." The strength of the argument lies in this, Christ took upon him to be our surety, and he must acquit us of all our sins, and satisfy his Father's justice, before he can go to his Father, and be accepted of his Father, and sit down on the right hand of his Father. If God had not been fully satisfied, or if any part of righteousness had been to be fulfilled, Christ would have been still in the grave, and not gone to heaven; his very going to his Father argues all is done, all is finished and completed. But,

**[6.] Sixthly, Christ having performed all the conditions of the covenant on his part, he now peremptorily insists upon it, that his Father should make good to him and his the conditions of the covenant on his part. Christ having finished his work, looks for his reward.** "Father," says he, "I have glorified you on earth, I have finished the work which you gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me with your own self, with the glory which I had with you before the world was," John 17:4-5. There was a most blessed transaction between God the Father and God the Son before the world began, for the everlasting good of the elect; and upon that transaction depends all the good, and all the happiness, and all the salvation of God's chosen; [This transaction between the Father and the Son is worthy of our most deep, serious, and frequent meditation.] and upon this ground, Christ pleads with his Father, that all his members may behold his glory: John 17:24, "Father, I will that those also whom you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory;" "Father, I *will*," not only I pray, I beseech, but "I will;" I ask this as my right, by virtue of the covenant between us; I have done thus and thus, and I have suffered thus and thus, and therefore I cannot but peremptorily insist upon it, that those that I have undertaken for, "be where I am, that they may behold my glory;" for though glory be a gift to us, yet it is a debt due to Christ.

It is a part of Christ's joy that *we* should be where he is. Christ will not be

happy alone. As a tender father, he can enjoy nothing if his children may not have part with him. The greatest part of our happiness, which we shall have in heaven lies in this—that then we shall be with Christ, and have immediate communion with him. O sirs! the great end of our being in heaven is to behold and enjoy the glory of Christ. Christ is very desirous, and much taken up with his people's fellowship and company, so that before he removes his bodily presence from them, his heart is upon meeting and fellowship again, as here we see in his prayer before his departure. This he makes evident from day to day, in that until that time of meeting come, two or three are not gathered in his name but he is in the midst of them, Mat. 18:20, to eye their behavior, to hear their prayers, to guide their way, to protect their persons, to cheer their spirits, and to delight in their presence. He delights to "walk in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," Rev. 2:1. The golden candlesticks are the churches, which are the light of the world, Mat. 5:14, 16, and excel all other societies as much as gold does other metals.

And he desires to dwell in the low and little hill of Zion, Psalm 68:16. Zion is his resting-place, his chosen place, his dwelling-place: Psalm 132:13, "For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his habitation;" verse 14, "This is my rest forever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Christ chose Zion for his love, and loves it for his choice; and accordingly he delights to dwell there. The Lamb *stands* on mount Zion, Rev. 14:1. Christ stands ready for action; and in the midst of all antichrist's persecutions he has always a watchful eye over mount Zion, and will be a sure life-guard to mount Zion, Isaiah 4:5-6; he stands readily prepared to assist mount Zion, to fight for mount Zion, to communicate to mount Zion, and to be a refuge to mount Zion; and no wonder, for he "dwells in mount Zion," Isaiah 8:18. Now if Christ take so much delight to have spiritual communion with his people in this world, it is no wonder that he can never rest satisfied until their gracious communion with him here, issues in their perfect and glorious communion with him in heaven. [2 Cor. 6:16, "I will dwell in them." The words are very significant in the original, "I will in-dwell in them." So the words are. There are two *ins* in the original, as if God could never have enough communion with them, 2 Thes. 1:10.]

And certainly the glory and happiness of heaven to the elect will consist much in being in Christ's company, in whom they delight so much on earth. To follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to enjoy him fully, and to be always in his presence—is the heaven of heaven, the glory of glory; it is the sparkling diamond in the ring of glory! The day is coming wherein believers shall be completely happy in a sight of Christ's glory, when he shall be conspicuously glorified and admired in all his saints, and glorified by them; and when all veils being laid aside, and they fitted for a more full fruition, shall visibly and immediately behold and enjoy him! Therefore is their condition in heaven described, as consisting in this, that they "may behold my glory which you have given me."

Thus I have glanced at Christ's solemn demand on earth for the full accomplishment of that blessed compact, covenant, agreement, and promises which were made to him when he undertook the office of a mediator. Now in heaven he appears "in the presence of God for us," Heb. 9:25, as a lawyer appears in open court for his client, opens the case, pleads the cause, and carries the day. The verb translated "to appear," signifies conspicuously "to manifest." It is sometimes taken in a good sense, namely, to appear for one as a favorite before a prince, or as an advocate or an attorney before a judge, or as the high-priests appeared once a year in the holy of holies, to make atonement for the people, Exod. 30:10. Christ is the great *favorite* in the court of glory, and is always at God's right hand, ready on all occasions to present our petitions to his Father, to pacify his anger, and to obtain all noble and needful favors for us, Romans 8:34. And Christ is our great *advocate* to plead our cause effectually for us, 1 John 2:1. Look, as in human courts there is the guilty, the accuser, the court, the judge, and the advocate; so it is here. Heaven is the court, man is the guilty person, Satan is the accuser, God is the judge, and Christ is the advocate. Now look, as the advocate appears in the court before the judge to plead for the guilty against the accuser, so does Christ appear before God in heaven, to answer all Satan's objections and accusations that he may make in the court of heaven against us.

"He ever lives to make intercession for us," Heb. 7:25. The verb translated "intercession," is a compound, and signifies "to call upon one." It is a judicial word, and imports a calling upon a judge to be heard in this or

that, against another or for another; so here Christ makes intercession for them, Acts 25:24; Romans 11:2, and 8:34. The metaphor is taken from attorneys or advocates who appear for men in courts of justice; from counselors, who plead their client's cause, answer the adversary, supplicate the judge, and procure sentence to pass on their client's side. This act of making intercession may also be taken from kings' favorites, who are much in the king's presence, and ever ready to make request for their friends. But remember, though this be thus attributed to Christ, yet we may not think that in heaven Christ prostrates himself before the father, or makes actual prayers; that was a part of his humiliation which he did in the days of his flesh. But it implies a presenting of himself a sacrifice, a surety, and one who has made satisfaction for all our sins, together with manifesting of his will and desires, that such and such should partake of the virtue and benefit of his sacrifice, Heb. 5:7. So Christ's intercession consists rather in the perpetual vigor of his sacrifice and continual application thereof, than in any actual supplication. The intendment of this phrase applied to Christ, "to make intercession," is to show that Christ, being God's favorite, and our advocate, continually appears before God, to make application of that sacrifice which once he offered up for our sins. Christ appears in the presence of God for us:

- (1.) To present unto his Father himself, who is the price of our redemption;
- (2.) To make application of his sacrifice to his church time after time, according to the need of the several members thereof;
- (3.) To make our persons, prayers, services, and all good things acceptable to God. But,

**[7.] Seventhly and lastly, The whole compact and agreement between God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, about the redemption of poor sinners' souls—was really and solemnly transacted in the high court of justice above;** in the presence of the great public notary of heaven—namely, the Holy Spirit; who being a third person of the glorious Trinity, of the same divine essence, and of equal power and glory, makes up a third legal witness with the Father and the Son. They being, after the manner of kings, [1 John 5:7, is a very clear

proof and testimony of the Trinity of persons; in the unity of the divine essence; they are all one in essence and will. As if three lamps were lighted in one chamber, albeit the lamps are divers, yet the lights cannot be severed; so in the Godhead, as there is a *distinction* of persons, so a *simplicity* of nature.] their own witnesses also: 1 John 5:7, "For there are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one." Three,

- (1.) In the true and real distinction of their persons;
- (2.) In their inward properties, as to beget, to be begotten, and to proceed;
- (3.) In their several offices one to another, as to send and to be sent.

"And these three are one," one in nature and essence, one in power and will, one in the act of producing all such actions as, without themselves, any of them is said to act; and one in their testimony concerning the covenant of redemption which was agreed on between the Father and the Son. Consent of all parties, the allowance of the judge, and public record, is as much as can be desired to make all public contracts authentic in courts of justice; and what can we desire more, to settle, satisfy, and assure our own souls that all the articles of the covenant of redemption shall, on all hands, be certainly made good, than this—that these three heavenly witnesses, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—do all agree to the articles of the covenant, and are all witnesses to the same covenant?

Thus you see that there was a covenant of redemption made with Christ; upon the terms whereof he is constituted to be a Redeemer; "to say to the prisoners, go forth, to bring deliverance to the captives, and to proclaim the year of release, the acceptable year of the Lord," as it is, Isaiah 61:1-2. I have been the longer in opening the covenant of redemption, partly because of its grand importance to all our souls, and partly because others have spoken so little to it, to the best of my observation, and partly because I have never before handled this subject, either in the pulpit or the press, etc.

Now from the serious consideration of this compact, covenant, and agreement, which was solemnly made between God and Christ, touching the whole business of man's salvation or redemption, I may form up this tenth plea as to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 5:6, 8; Gal. 2:20.] which refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular day of account. "O blessed God! I have read over the articles of the covenant of redemption that were agreed on between yourself and your dearest Son; and I find by those articles that dear Jesus has died, and satisfied your justice, and pacified your wrath, and bore the curse, and purchased my pardon, and procured your everlasting favor: and I find by the same articles that whatever Jesus Christ acted or suffered, he acted or suffered as my surety, and in my stead and place. O Lord! when I look upon my manifold weaknesses and imperfections, though under a covenant of grace, yet I am many times not only grieved, but also stumbled and staggered; but when I look up to the covenant of redemption, I am cheered, raised, and quieted; for I am abundantly satisfied that both yourself and your dear Son are infinitely ready, able, willing, and faithful to perform whatever in that covenant is comprised, Isaiah 38:16-17. By these things men live, and in these is the life of my spirit. Men may fail, and friends may fail, and relations may fail, and trade may fail, and natural strength may fail, and my heart may fail—but the covenant of redemption can never fail, nor can the parties, who are mutually engaged in that covenant, ever fail, Psalm 73:24-25; and therefore I am safe and happy forever.

What though my sins have been great and heinous, yet they are not greater than Christ's sacrifice. He bore the curse for great sins as well as small, for sins against the gospel as well as for sins against the law, for omissions as well as for commissions. Assuredly the covenant of redemption is a mighty thing, and there are no mighty sins that can stand before that covenant. If we look upon Manasseh, in those black and ugly colors which the Holy Spirit paints him out in, we must conclude that he was a mighty sinner, a monstrous sinner, 1 Kings 21:1-16; and yet his mighty sins, his monstrous sins, could not stand before the covenant of redemption. The greatest sins are finite, but the merit of Christ's redemption is infinite. All the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea.

There remained not so much as one of them; there was not one of them left alive to carry the news; the high and the low, the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the honorable and the base, were all drowned, Exod. 14:28; Psalm 106:11. The red sea of Christ's blood drowns all our sins, whether they are great or small, high or low, etc., "Though my sins be as scarlet, my Redeemer will make them as white as snow; though they be as red as crimson, they shall be as wool," Isaiah 1:18. There is not one of my sins for which Jesus Christ has not suffered and made atonement for; nor there is any one of my sins for which Jesus Christ has not purchased a pardon, and for which he has not made my peace. Though my sins are innumerable, though they are more than the hairs of my head, Psalm 40:12, or the sands on the sea-shore, yet they are not to be named in comparison with the merits of Christ, the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and the covenant of redemption, is mentioned and pleaded. Be my sins ever so many; yes, though they might fill a scroll which reaches from east to west, from north to south, from earth to heaven—yet they could but bring me under the curse. "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:13-14. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." Ephesians 1:7.

Now Christ my surety, that he might redeem me from the curse, has taken upon him the whole curse, Gal. 3:13. Though my debts are so many as cannot be tallied—yet Christ has paid them all. Woe had been to me forever, had Christ left but one penny upon the record for me to pay. As I have multiplied my sins, so he has multiplied his pardons, Isaiah 55:7. Christ has cancelled all bonds, and therefore it is but justice in God to give me a full acquittance, and to throw down all bonds as cancelled, saying, "Deliver him, I have found a ransom!" Col. 13-15; Job 33:24. O God, though my sins are very many, and very great, yet if you do not pardon them, the innocent blood of your dearest Son will lie upon you, and cry out against you; for he therefore died, that my sins might be pardoned; so that now, in honor and justice, you are obliged to "pardon all my transgressions, and remember my iniquities no more," Isaiah 43:25; Dan. 9:24. Now this is my plea, O holy God, which I make to all those scriptures that respect my last account—and by this plea I shall

stand.

"Well," says God the Father, "I accept of this plea, I am pleased with this plea, your sins shall not be mentioned, Ezek. 18:22; "Enter into the joy of your Lord!"

I shall now make a little **practical improvement** of what has been said as to the covenant of redemption, and so draw to a conclusion.

**(1.) This covenant of redemption, as we have opened it, looks sadly and sourly upon those that make so great a noise about the doctrine of 'universal redemption'.** The covenant of redemption extends itself, not to every man in the world, but only to those that are "given by God the Father to Jesus Christ." [Mat. 24:16; Luke 12:32; Romans 9:11-2, and 11:5-8; Romans 8:39-40.]

This covenant of redemption looks sadly and sourly upon those that make so great a noise about God's choosing or electing of men, upon the account of God's *foreseeing* their faith, good works, obedience, holiness. Scripture everywhere teaches that our election is from God's sovereign grace and favor; and that faith, good works, holiness, sanctification, are the fruits and effects of election, as has been made evident in my opening the gracious terms of the covenant of redemption. But because I have, in another place, treated of these things more largely, a *touch* here may suffice. [Deut. 7:6-8, and 33:11; Romans 9:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:4; Romans 8:29 30; 2 Thes. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2.] But,

**(2.) Secondly, How should this covenant of redemption spirit, animate, and encourage all the redeemed of God—to do anything for Christ, to suffer anything for Christ, to venture anything for Christ, to part with anything for Christ, to give up anything to Christ—**who, according to the covenant of redemption, has done and suffered such great and grievous things, that he might bring us to glory—which are above all apprehensions, and beyond all expressions, Mark 8:34-35, 38; Heb. 10:34. Who can tell me what is fully wrapped up in that one expression—namely, "That he poured out his soul unto death," Heb. 2:10-11. Let us not shrink, nor faint, nor grow weary under

our greatest sufferings for Christ. When sufferings multiply, when they are sharp, when they are more bitter than gall or wormwood, yes, more bitter than death itself—then remember the covenant of redemption, and how punctually Christ made good all the articles of it on his side—and then faint and give out if you can. "Well may I be afraid, but I do not therefore despair, for I think upon and remember the wounds of the Lord," says Austin. "O my God, as long as I see your wounds, I will never live without wound," says Bonaventura. **"The cross of Christ is the golden key which opens paradise to us!"** says Damascene. "I had rather, with the martyrs and confessors, have my Savior's cross, than, with their persecutors, the world's crown. The harder we are put to it, the greater shall be our reward in heaven," says Tertullian. Gordius the martyr hit the nail on the head, when he said, "it is to my loss if you abate me anything in my sufferings." "If you do not suffer not for Christ, you will suffer for a worse thing," says one. "Never did any man serve me better than you serve me," said Vincentius to his persecutors. "We thank you for delivering us from hard task-masters, that we may enjoy more sweetly the bosom of our Lord Jesus," said the martyr. It was a notable saying of Luther, "The church converts the whole world by blood and prayers." "They may kill me," said Socrates of his enemies, but they cannot hurt me." Just so, may the redeemed of the Lord say, "they may take away my head, but they cannot take away my crown of life, my crown of righteousness, my crown of glory, my crown of immortality!" Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4-5.

The Lacedemonians were accustomed to say, "it is a shame for any man to *flee* in time of danger; but for a Lacedemonian, it is a shame for him to *deliberate*." Oh, what a shame is it for Christians, when they look upon the covenant of redemption, so much as to deliberate whether it were best to suffer for Christ or not. Petrus Blesensis has long since observed, that "the courtiers of his time suffered as great trouble, and as many vexations, for vanity—as good Christians did for the truth. The courtiers suffered weariness and painfulness, hunger and thirst, with all the catalogue of Paul's afflictions; and what can the best saints suffer more?" Now shall men who are strangers to the covenant of redemption, suffer such hard and great things for their lusts, for very vanity; and will not you, who are acquainted with the covenant of redemption, and who are

savingly interested in the covenant of redemption, be ready and willing to suffer anything for that Jesus, who, according to the covenant of redemption, has suffered such dreadful things for you, and merited such glorious things for you? But,

**(3.) Thirdly, From this covenant of redemption, as we have opened it—you may see what infinite cause we have to be swallowed up in the admiration of the Father's love in entering into this covenant, and in making good all the articles of this covenant on his side.** When man was fallen from his primitive purity and glory, from his holiness and happiness, from his freedom and liberty, into a most woeful gulf of sin and misery; when angels and men were all at a loss, and knew no way or means, whereby fallen man might be raised, restored and saved; that then God should firstly and freely propose this covenant, and enter into this covenant, that miserable man might be saved from wrath to come, and raised and settled in a more safe, high and happy estate than that was from which he was fallen in Adam,—oh, what wonderful, what amazing love is this! [God so loved his Son, that he gave him all the world for his possession, Psalm 2:8; but he so loved the world that he gave Son and all for its redemption.—Bernard.] Abraham manifested a great deal of love to God in offering up of his only Isaac, Gen. 22:12; but God has showed far greater love to poor sinners, in making his only Son an offering for their sins: for [1.] God loved Christ with a more transcendent love than Abraham could love Isaac; [2.] God was not bound by the commandment of a superior to do it, as Abraham was, John 10:18; [3.] God freely and voluntarily did it, which Abraham would never have done without a commandment, Heb. 10:10, 12; [4.] Isaac was to be offered after the manner of holy sacrifices, but Christ suffered an ignominious death, after the manner of thieves; [5.] Isaac was all along in the hands of a tender father, but Christ was all along in the hands of barbarous enemies; [6.] Isaac was offered but in show, but Christ was offered indeed and in very good earnest. Is not this an excess, yes, a miracle of love? It is good to be always a-musing upon this love, and delighting ourselves in this love. But,

**(4.) Fourthly, From this covenant of redemption, as we have opened it, you may see what signal cause we have to be deeply**

**affected with the love of Jesus Christ, who roundly and readily falls in with this covenant, and who has faithfully performed all the articles of this covenant.** Had not Jesus Christ kept touch with his Father as to every article of the covenant of redemption, he could never have saved us, nor have satisfied divine justice, nor have been admitted into heaven. That Jesus Christ might make full satisfaction for all our sins, "he was made a curse for us, whereby he has redeemed us from the curse of the law," Gal. 3:13. All Christ's sufferings were for his people. All that can be desired of God by man is mercy and truth; mercy in regard of our misery, truth in reference to God's promises. That which moved Christ to engage himself as a surety for us was his respect to God and man: to **God**, for the honor of his name. Neither the mercy nor the truth nor the justice of God, would have been so conspicuously manifested, if Jesus Christ had not been our surety; to **man**, and that to help us in our dreadful and desperate estate. No creature either would or could discharge that debt, wherein man stood obliged to the justice of God. This is a mighty evidence of the endless love of Christ, this is an evidence of the endless and matchless love of Christ. We count it a great evidence of love for a friend to be surety for us—when we intend no damage to him thereupon; but if a man be surety for that which he knows the principal debtor is not able to pay, and thereupon purposes to pay it himself—this we look upon as an extraordinary evidence of love. But what amazing love, what matchless love is this, for a man to sacrifice his life for his friend! where as "skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life," Job 2:4; and yet, according to the covenant of redemption, Jesus Christ has done all this and much more for us, as is evident, if you will but cast your eye back upon the articles of the covenant, or consult these scriptures. [John 10:11, 15, 17, 18, 28; Romans 5:6, etc.; Eph. 5-7, etc.; Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 2:13-15.]

If a friend, to free a captive, or one condemned to death, should put himself into the state and condition of him whom he frees—that would be an evidence of love beyond all comparison. But now, if the dignity of Christ's person and our unworthiness, if the greatness of the debt and kind of payment, and if the benefit which we reap thereby, is duly weighed—we shall find these evidences of love to come as much behind the love of Christ—as the light of a candle comes short of the light of the

sun.

Christ's suretyship, according to the covenant of redemption, is and ought to be a prop of props to our faith. It is as sure a ground of confidence that all is well, and shall be forever well between God and us—as any the Scriptures does afford. By virtue hereof we have a right to appeal to God's justice, for this surety has made full satisfaction; and to exact a debt which is fully satisfied is a point of injustice. Christ knew very well what the redemption of fallen man would cost him; he knew that his life and blood must go for it; he knew that he must lay by his robes of majesty, and be clothed with flesh; he knew that he must encounter men and devils; he knew that he must tread the wine-press of his Father's wrath, bear the curse, and make himself an offering for our sins, for our sakes, for our salvation! Yet, in spite of all this—he is very ready and willing to bind himself by covenant, that he will redeem us, whatever it cost him. Oh, what tongue can express, what heart can conceive, what soul can comprehend, "the heights, depths, breadths, and lengths of this love"? Eph. 3:18-19.

O blessed Jesus, what manner of love is this—that you should wash away my scarlet sins in your own blood! That you should die—that I may live! That you should be cursed—that I might be blessed! That you should undergo the pains of hell—that I might enjoy the joys of heaven! That the face of God should be clouded from you—that his everlasting favor might rest upon me! That you should be an everlasting screen between the wrath of God and my immortal soul! That you should do for me beyond all expression, and suffer for me beyond all conception, and gloriously provide for me beyond all expectation! and all this according to the covenant of redemption! What shall I say, what can I say to all this, but fall down before your grace, and spend my days in wondering at that matchless, bottomless love, which can never be fathomed by angels or men!

"O Lord Jesus," says Bernard, "I love you more than all my goods, and I love you more than all my friends, yes, I love you more than my very self!" It is good to write after this copy.

XI. The eleventh and last plea that a believer may form up as to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 10:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5. 3] which refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account, may be drawn up from the consideration of **the book of life**, out of which all the saints shall be judged in the great day of our Lord. "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:11-15.

In the 11th verse John describes the *judge* with his preparation; in the 12th verse he describes the *people* who will be judged; and then he describes the *process* and *sentence*; and lastly, he describes the *execution* of the sentence, namely—the casting of the reprobates into the lake of fire, and the placing and fixing of the elect in the heavenly Jerusalem, verse 13-15.

In these five verses, you have a clear and full description of the last general judgment, as is evident by the surrounding context and series of this chapter, Rev. 20:1-3. For having spoken of the devil's last judgment, which, by Jude, is called "The judgment of the great day," Jude 6; it is in agreement, therefore, to understand this of such a judgment whereby he is judged. And, indeed, the expressions are so full, and the matter and circumstances so satisfying and convincing, that they leave no place for fears, doubts, or disputes. This scripture runs parallel with that Dan. 12:1-3, and several other places of Scripture where the day of judgment is spoken of; and let him who can, show me at what other judgment all the dead are raised and judged, and all reprobates sent to hell, and all the elect brought to heaven, and death and hell cast into the lake; all which

are plainly expressed here. He shall be an Apollo to me, who can make these things which are here spoken of, to agree with any other judgment than the last judgment. Let me give a little light into this scripture, before I improve it to that purpose for which I have cited it.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him who was seated on it." This is a lively description of the last judgment, "a great throne." "Great," because it is set up for the general judgment of all, for the universal judgment of the whole world. Before this throne all the great ones of the world must stand—popes, emperors, kings, princes, nobles, judges, prelates—without their miters, crowns, scepters, royal robes, gold chains—and before this throne all other sorts and ranks of men must stand. And he who sits upon this throne is a great King, and a great God above all gods; he is "Prince of the kings of the earth, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords," [All the thrones of the kings of the earth, with Solomon's golden throne, are but *petty thrones*, compared to this throne; yes, they are but footstools to this throne; and therefore upon this single ground it may well be called a great throne.] Rev. 1:5, 17:14, and 19:16. Upon all which accounts this throne may well be called a *great* throne.

It is also called "a *white* throne," because of its celestial splendor and majesty, and to show the uprightness and glory of the judge. The color *white* in Scripture is used to represent purity and glory. Here it signifies that Christ, the judge, shall give most just and righteous judgment, free from all spot of partiality.

"From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." The splendor and majesty of the judge is such, as neither heaven nor earth is able to behold or abide the same; how then shall the wicked be able to stand before him? Augustine says, "the judgment being finished, then shall this heaven and earth cease to be—when the new heaven and earth shall begin." For this world shall pass away by a change of things, not by an utter destruction. "The heaven and the earth shall flee away;" that is, this shape of heaven and earth shall pass away; because they shall be changed from vanity, through fire, that so they may be transformed into a much better and more beautiful estate; according to that which the apostle Peter writes, "The heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with heat; but we expect new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells

righteousness," 1 Pet. 3:12.

How this passing away, or perishing of heaven and earth, shall come to pass—there are divers opinions of learned men. Some think that the substance or essence itself of the world shall wholly perish and be annihilated. Others are of opinion, that only the corruptible qualities thereof shall perish and be changed, and the substance or essence remain. There shall be a renovation of all things, say most, and that only the fashion of the world, that is, the outward form and corruptible qualities, shall be destroyed; and so the earth shall be found no more as it was, but shall be made most beautiful and glorious, being to be "delivered into the glorious liberty," as far as it is capable, "of the sons of God," Romans 8:19-22; being to be freed from corruption and bondage; and with these I close. The sum of the 21st verse is, that the creature shall not be always subject to vanity, but shall have an emancipation from bondage; of the which deliverance, three things are declared;

First, Who the creature is—that is, "the world;"

Secondly, From what—from "corruption," which is a bondage;

Thirdly, Into what estate—into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

Some here note the time of the deliverance of the creature, namely, when the children of God shall be wholly set free; for though they have here a freedom unto righteousness, from the bondage of sin, yet they have not a freedom of *glory*, which is from the bondage of misery. But others take it for the state itself which shall be glorious, yet not the same with each of the children of God—but proportioned according to its kind with them; for it is most suitable to the liberty of the faithful, that as they are renewed, so also should their habitation. And as when a nobleman mourns, his servants are all clad in black; so it is for the greater glory of man, that the creatures, his servants, should in their kind partake of his glory. And whereas some say that it is deliverance enough for the creature, if it ceases to serve man, and have an end of vanity, by annihilation, I affirm, it is not enough, because this 21st verse notes, not only such deliverance, but also a further estate which it shall have after such deliverance—namely, to communicate in some degree, with the

children of God in glory.

Certainly the creatures, in their kind and manner, shall be made partakers of a far better estate than they had while the world endured; because God shall fully and wholly restore the world, being fallen into corruption through the transgression and sin of mankind. And this does more plainly appear by the apostle's opposing subsequent liberty against former bondage; which, that he might more enlarge, he calls it not simply freedom or liberty—but *liberty of glory*, as it is in the Greek text, meaning thereby, according to the phrase and propriety of the Hebrew tongue, glorious liberty, or liberty that brings glory with it; under which term of glory, he comprises the excellent estate that they shall be in after their delivery from their former baseness and servitude.

As for those words, of the "sons of God," to which we must refer the glorious liberty before mentioned, they must be understood by a certain proportion or similitude thus; that as in that great day, and not before, God's children shall be graciously freed from all dangers and distresses of this life whatever, either in body or soul, and on the other side, made perfect partakers of eternal blessedness; so the creatures then, and not before, shall be delivered from the vanity of man, and their own corruption, and restored to a far better estate than at present they enjoy; which also may further appear by the words the apostle uses, setting glorious liberty, deliverance and freedom, against servile bondage and slavery. Chrysostom reads, for the glorious liberty of the sons of God: as if the end or final cause of their deliverance were pointed at, namely, that as God made the world for man, and for man's sin subdued it to vanity; so he would deliver it and restore it for men, even to illustrate and enlarge the glory of God's children. I could, by variety of arguments, prove that this deliverance of the creature that our apostle speaks of, shall not be by a reduction into nothing, but by an alteration into a better estate. But I must hasten to a close.

[If any shall inquire what shall be the particular properties, works, and uses of all and every *creature* after the last judgment, I answer, (1.) That as to these things the word is silent, and it is not safe to be wise above what is written; (2.) Here is place for that which Tertullian calls a *learned ignorance*.]

Verse 12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." The judge, before whom all do appear, is our dear Lord Jesus, "who has the keys of hell and death in his hands," Rev. 1:18; Acts 17:30-31, and who is designed and appointed by God the Father to be the judge of the living and the dead. He has authority, and a commission under his Father's hand, to sit and act as judge. Here you see that John calls the judge absolutely God, but Christ is the judge; therefore Christ is God absolutely; and he will appear to be God in our nature in that great day.

The parties judged, who stand before the throne, are,

Generally "the dead," all who had died from Adam to the last day. He calls them "the dead," after the common law of nature, but then raised from death to life by the power of God, Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13. He speaks not of men dead in sins and trespasses, but of such as died corporally, and now were raised up to judgment. But shall not the living then be judged? Oh, yes! "For we must *all* appear before the judgment-seat of Christ: that he may be judge of the living and the dead, and be Lord both of the dead and the living," 2 Cor. 5:10; Romans 14:9-10. Under this phrase, "the dead," are comprehended all those that then shall be found alive. By "the dead" we are to understand the living also, by an argument from the lesser. If the dead shall appear before the judgment-seat, how much more the living! But the dead alone are named, either because the number of the dead, from Adam to the last day, shall be far greater than those that shall be found alive on earth in that day, or because those who remain alive shall be accounted as dead, because "they shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye," 1 Cor. 15:52.

Secondly, He describes them from their age and condition, for the words may be understood of both "great and small," which takes in all sorts of men, tyrants, emperors, kings, princes, dukes, lords, etc., as well as subjects, vassals, slaves, beggars; rich and poor, strong and weak, bond and free, old and young. All and everyone, without exception, are to be judged; for the judgment shall be *universal*. No man shall be so great as to escape the same, nor none so small as to be excluded; but everyone shall have justice done him, without respect of persons, as that great apostle Paul tells us, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of

Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. 5:10. I am no admirer of the schoolmen's notion, who suppose that all shall be raised about the age of thirty-three, which was Christ's age; but do judge that that perfection, which consists in the conforming them to Christ's glorious body, is of another kind than to respect either age, stature, or the like.

"Stand before God," that is, brought to judgment. The guilty standing ready to be condemned, and the saints standing ready in Christ's presence to be absolved and pronounced blessed, John 3:18.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the *books* were opened: and another *book* was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Christ the judge being set on his throne, and having all the world before him, "the books are opened."

(1.) In the general, the books are said to be open.

(2.) Here is a special book for the elect, "The book of life was opened."

(3.) Here you have sentence passed and pronounced, according to what was written in these books, and according to their works. Here the judicial process is noted by imitation of human courts, in which the whole process is accustomed to be drawn up, and laid before the judge, from whence the judge determines for or against the person, according to the acts and proofs that lie open before him. The equity, justice, and righteousness of Christ the judge, who sits on his white throne, is set forth by a metaphor taken from human courts, where the judge pronounces sentence according to the written law, and the acts and proofs agreeing thereunto. "All things are naked and bare before him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire," Heb. 4:13; Rev. 1:14.

But to show that the judgment shall be as accurate and particular in the trial, and just and righteous in the close, as if all were registered and put on record, nothing shall escape or be mistaken in its circumstances, but all things shall be so cleared and issued beyond all doubts and disputes,

as if an exact register of them had been kept and published; in all which there is a plain allusion unto the words of Daniel, speaking thus of this judgment, "The judgment was set, and the books were opened," Dan. 7:10.

### **We find six different BOOKS mentioned in the Scripture.**

**[1.] The book of NATURE.** This is mentioned by David, "You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed" Psalm 139:16. ["The world," says Clemens Alexandrinus, "is the first Bible that God made for the instruction of man."] It is a metaphor from precise workmen, that do all by the book, or by a model set before them, that nothing may be deficient or done amiss. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the skies show his handiwork." The psalmist looks upon that great volume of heaven and earth, and there reads in capital letters the prints and characters of God's glory.

In this book of nature, which is made up of three great leaves, heaven, earth, and sea, God has made himself visible, yes, legible, "even his eternal power and godhead," Romans 1:20. So that all men are left without excuse. Out of this book of nature, the poor blind heathen might have learned many choice lessons, as:

first, that they had a maker;

secondly, that this maker, being before the things made, is eternal, without beginning or ending;

thirdly, that he who made all things out of nothing, and sustained such a mass of creatures—must needs be almighty,

fourthly, the order, variety, and distinction of creatures declare his marvelous wisdom;

fifthly, in this book they might run and read the great goodness, and the admirable kindness of God to the sons of men, in making all the creatures for their good, for their service, and benefit;

sixthly and lastly, in this book they might run and read what a most excellent, what a most admirable, what a most transcendent workman God was. What are the heavens, the earth, the sea—but a sheet of royal paper, written all over with the wisdom and power of God?

Now, in the great day of account, this book shall be produced to witness against the heathen world, because they did not live up to the light which was held forth to them in this book, but crucified that light and knowledge by false ways of worship, and by their wicked practices, whereof the apostle gives you a catalogue, from verse 21st to the end of that 1st chapter of Romans. But,

**[2.] Secondly, There is the book of PROVIDENCE,** wherein all particulars are registered; even such particulars, as we may count trivial and inconsiderable. Mat. 10:30, "But the very *hairs* of your head are all numbered." And where is their number summed up? Even in the book of providence. The three Hebrew worthies were taken out of the fiery furnace, with their hairs in full number, not one of them singed, Dan. 3:27. Paul, encouraging the passengers to eat, who were in fear and danger of death, tells them that "there should not a hair fall from the head of any of them," Acts 27:34. And when Saul would have put Jonathan to death, the people told him "that there should not a hair of his head fall to the ground," 1 Sam. 14:45. Christ does not say that the hairs of your *eyelids* are numbered, but the hairs of your *head*, where there is the greatest plenty, and the least use. Though hair is the least significant part of man, yet every hair of an elect person is observed and registered down in God's books, and not one of them shall be lost. God has already booked them all down, and all to show us that special, that singular care that God takes of the smallest and least concerns of his chosen ones. God will produce this book of providence in the great day—to confute and condemn the atheists of the world, who have denied a divine providence, and whose hearts have swelled against his government of the world, "according to the counsels of his own heart." But,

**[3.] Thirdly, There is the book of men's AFFLICTIONS.** This some account an entire book of itself: Psalm 56:8, "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book." God counted all those weary steps that

David took in passing over those two great forests, when he fled from Saul. While David was hunted up and down like a partridge, and chased out of every bush, and had no certain dwelling-place, but driven from post to pillar, from one country to another, God was all this while a-noting down and a-numbering of his sorrows, and a-bottling up his tears, and a-booking down his sighs: "You have collected all my tears in your bottle." Not a single tear of mine is ever lost, but kept safe in God's bottle, as so much sweet water. God is said in Scripture to have a bag and a bottle: a bag for our sins, and a bottle for our tears. ("My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin." Job 14:17) And oh that we would all labor to fill his bottle with our tears of repentance, as we have filled his bag with our sins!

And certainly if the *white* tears of his servants be bottled up, the *red* tears of their blood shall not be cast away. If God treasures up the *tears* of the saints, much more will he remember their *blood*, to avenge it! And though tyrants burn the bones of the saints, yet they cannot blot out their tears and blood out of God's register: "Are they not in your book?" Are they not in your register or book of accounts, where they cannot be blotted out by any time or tyrants? That is—yes, certainly they are! You assuredly book them down, and will never forget one of them. Let the great Nimrods and oppressors of the saints look to themselves, for God books down all the afflictions, sufferings, and persecutions of his servants; and in the great day he will bring in this book, this register, to witness against them.

Ah, sinners, sinners! look to yourselves. In the great day of account, the Lord will reckon with you for every *rod* that he has spent upon you; he will reckon with you, not only for all your *mercies*, but also for all your *crosses*; not only for all your *sweets*, but also for all your *bitters*; not only for all your *cordials*, but also for all your *corrosives*. In this book of afflictions there is not only item for this mercy and that, but item also for this *affliction* and that, this *sickness* and that, this *cross* and that, this *loss* and that. And will not the opening of this book of the saints' afflictions and sufferings, and of sinners' afflictions and sufferings, be as the handwriting upon the wall, to all the wicked of the earth, in the great day of account? Dan. 5:5-6. Surely yes; for as they cannot answer for one

*mercy* of ten thousand that they have enjoyed, so they cannot answer for one *affliction* of ten thousand that they have been exercised with. But,

**[4.] Fourthly, There is the book of CONSCIENCE.** "Conscience," says Philo, "is the little tribunal of the soul." Conscience is a thousand witnesses, for or against a man, "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them." Romans 2:14-15.

Conscience is God's preacher in the heart. "Conscience has a good memory," says one. The chief butler forgot the promise that he had made to Joseph, but conscience told him of it, Gen. 41:9. "A good name acquit us among men, but it is a good conscience only that can acquit us before God," says Augustine. In this great day, the book of every man's conscience shall be opened for their conviction, wherein they shall read their guilt in legible characters; for that is a book of record, wherein men's actions are entered. And although *now* it be shut up close, and sinners will by no means be brought to look into it, and though many things that are written in this book seem to be so greatly obliterated and blotted, that they can hardly be read, yet in that great day of accounts God will refresh and recover the luster of those ancient writings; and sinners, in that day, shall find that *conscience has an iron memory!*

In the last day God will bring *the book of conscience* out of the rubbish, as they did the book of the law in Josiah's time; and the very laying open of this book before sinners will horrify them, and fill them with unspeakable dread and terror, and be a hell on this side hell unto them. In this book they shall find an exact account of every vain thought they have had, and of every idle word they have spoken, and of every evil action they have done; and oh, what amazement and astonishment will this fill them with!

By the books in this Rev. 20:12, Origen does understand the books of conscience, which now are hidden, not from God, but from most men; for the hidden things of the heart are not *now* known, but *then* they shall be opened, and manifested to the consciences of every sinner, so as there

shall be no place, no room left for any excuse or plea. Ambrose says that the books that are here said to be opened are the books of men's consciences and God's omniscience. Oh, what dreadful accusations will every sinner be forced to read out of this book of conscience in the great day! Oh, how in that great day will all wicked men wish that they had followed the counsel of the heathen orator when he said, "A man may not depart an hair's-breadth all his life long from the dictates of a good conscience." The book of God's omniscience takes in all things past, present, and to come, as if he had kept a diary of every man's thoughts, words, and actions. But,

**[5.] Fifthly, There is the book of SCRIPTURE.** And of all books, this book is the most precious book. The book of the creature is but as the inventory of the goods; the book of the Scripture is the evidence, and conveyance, and assurance of all good to us. The book of Scripture is the book of the statutes and ordinances of the King of heaven, which must be opened and consulted, and by which all must be judged in the great day: James 2:12, "So speak, and so do, as those who shall be judged by the law of liberty;" that is, by the gospel of Jesus Christ, by the whole word of God, registered in the blessed Scriptures, James 1:23-25. Now the whole word of God is called the law of liberty; because thereby we are born again to a new spiritual life, and so freed from the bondage and slavery of sin and Satan. ["Let the word be president in all assemblies and judgments," says Beza. In the Nicene Council, Constantine caused the Bible to be set upon the desk as judge of all controversies. The word shall be the judge of all men's estates at last; every man shall stand or fall, according as he holds weight in the balance of the sanctuary.]

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his proceedings in the great day of account, will judge us by the Scriptures, and pass everlasting sentence upon us according to the tenor of the Scriptures. At the great and general assize, Christ will try all causes by the word of God, and pass judgment upon all people according to the word: John 12:48, "He who rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The people that are to be judged in the great day are not believers in Christ, they are not receivers of Christ, but such as reject his person, and receive not his

doctrine. "He who rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him," etc.

However the rejecters of Christ may escape judgment *for a time*, yet they shall never be able to escape the judgment of the last day; they shall assuredly, they shall unavoidably, be judged in the last day. Though the rejecters of Christ had none to witness against them, yet the word of the Lord shall be more than a thousand witnesses against them in the great day, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The word of the Lord is so sure and infallible a word, that Christ's sentence in the great day, when heaven and earth shall pass away, 2 Pet. 3:7, 10-12, shall proceed according to the verdict and testimony thereof, "For the word that I have spoken shall judge him in the last day." Christ will pronounce then according to what it says now; and that as well in favor of believers as against unbelievers. Look, as Christ himself is "ordained to be the judge of the living and the dead," Acts 17:31; so the word, the doctrines which he has delivered, will be the rule of all his judicial proceedings, both in acquitting the righteous, and condemning the wicked.

By *the books* in this Rev. 20:12, Augustine understands the books of the Old and New Testament, which shall then be opened; because, according to them, the judge will pronounce sentence: Romans 2:16, "When God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel," which promises heaven and happiness to all believers. The sentence of the last day shall be but a more manifest declaration of that judgment, that the Lord, in this life, generally has passed upon men. *Heathens* shall be judged by the law of nature; *profligate professors* by the written law, and the word preached; *true believers* by the gospel, which says, "He who believes shall be saved; he who believes shall not perish, but have eternal life; he who believes on the Son has everlasting life; he who believes shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life," Mark 16:16; John 3:15-16, 36, and 5:24. Christ shall, in the great day, give sentence according to the doctrine of the gospel, which says, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not." Upon the credit of the word of God, if we believe, really, savingly, and repent sincerely—all our sins shall be blotted

out; and a book of clean paper, in respect of sin, shall be presented to the judge. But,

**[6.] Sixthly and lastly, There is a book of LIFE.** Rev. 20:12, "And another book was opened, which is the book of life." The book of life is the book of all those who were elected and redeemed to life through Christ Jesus. [God neither needs nor uses books to judge by, but this is spoken after the manner of men.] This book of life contains a register of such particular persons in whose salvation, God from all eternity determined to have his mercy glorified, and for whom Christ merited faith, repentance, and perseverance, that they should repent, believe, and be finally saved. "The book of life shall be opened;" that is to say, the decrees of God will be then published and made known, which now are sealed up in his bosom and locked up in his archives. Then it will be seen whom are appointed to eternal life, for the glorifying of God's free, rich, and sovereign grace; and whom he purposed to leave in their sins, and to perish forever, for the exaltation of his justice. It is called "a book of life," not that God has need of a book, but to note the certainty of predestination—namely, that God knows all and each of the elect, even as men know a thing which, for memory's sake, they set down in writing. This book of life shall be opened in the great day, because then it shall be shown . . . who were elect—and who were reprobates; who truly believed in Christ—and who did not; who worshiped God in spirit and in truth—and who did not; who walked with God as Noah did—and who did not; who truly revered God—and who did not; who followed the Lamb wherever He went—and who did not; who were sincere—and who were not; who are sheep—and who are goats; who are sons of God—and who are slaves of Satan; who have mourned for their sins—and who have made a sport of sin; who preferred Christ above ten thousand worlds—and who did not; who preferred their farms, and their oxen, and their swine, yes, their very lusts—before a Savior, a Redeemer! Ezek. 9:4,6, etc.

Of this book of life you read often in Scripture: Phil. 4:3, "And I entreat you also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life." Vorsitus thinks it a speech taken from the custom of soldiers or cities, in which the chosen soldiers or citizens are by

name written in a certain book or scroll. This book or scroll is called here "the book of life," because therein are written all the elect who are ordained to eternal life: Rev. 3:5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." In this book of life all "the just, who live by faith," are written. The elect are certain of eternal life, they shall never perish, nor none can ever pluck them out of the Father's hand, nor out of Christ's hand, John 10:28-31.

God is said to have books *metaphorically*; he needs no books to help his memory; he does all things by his infinite wisdom, eternal foreknowledge, counsel, government, and judgment. But thus men cannot do; for whatever is done in their councils, cities, families, contracts, etc., for memory's sake, is set down in writing, that so, as there is occasion, they may look it over, and call to mind such things as they desire. [The holy God, by an *anthropomorphism*, speaks to our capacity; for he does all things without the help of books.] Mark, not to have our names blotted out of the book of life is to have them always remain therein; that is, to enjoy eternal glory; and what can the soul desire more?

The names of the elect are written in the book of life. They do not obtain salvation by chance, but were elected of God to eternal life and happiness before the foundation of the world. Now their names being once written in the book of life, they shall never, never be blotted out of that book. In the book of predestination there is not one blot to be found—the salvation of the elect is most sure and certain: Rev. 13:8, "All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." The names of the elect are said to be written in the book of life by a usual metaphor; for we commonly write down the names of such as are dear unto us, that we may continually remember them. So God having in his eternal counsel elected some to salvation, has written their names in the book of life; as our Savior tells us, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven," Luke 10:20. Some understand the metaphor of the sonship of the elect; so that to be written in the book of life shows that they are heirs of glory; for we know that such are to inherit whose names are written in the last will and testament of men. Of this book of life you

may further read, Rev. 17:8, 20:15, 21:27, and 22:19.

Now from this book of life, which shall be opened in the great day, when the other books shall be opened, as has been showed, every sincere Christian may form up this eleventh plea as to these ten scriptures, [Eccles. 11:9, and 12:14; Mat. 12:14, and 18:23; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:10 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, and 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5; Dan. 9:24; Col. 2:14.] that refer to the great day of account, or to a man's particular account.

Most holy and blessed Lord, cast your eye upon the book of election, and there you will find my name written. Now my name being written in that book, I am exempt from all condemnation, and savingly interested in the great salvation. My name being written in the book of life, I am secured from coming into the judgment of reprobation or condemnation, John 5:14; Rev. 21:27. Jesus Christ, who has written my name in the book of life, has made up my accounts for me; he has satisfied your justice, and pacified your wrath, and borne my curse, and purchased my pardon, and put upon me an everlasting righteousness. **He has crossed out the black lines of my sins—with the red lines of his blood;** he has cancelled all the bonds wherein I stood obliged to divine justice. I further plead, O blessed Lord, that there is an immutable connection between being written in this book of life and the obtaining of eternal life; and if the connection between being written in this book of life and the obtaining of eternal life were not commanding, what reason could there be of opening this book in the day of judgment? The book of life is a book of sovereign grace, upon which lies the weight of my salvation, my happiness, my all; and therefore by that book I desire to stand or fall."

"Well," says the Lord, I cannot but accept of this plea as holy, honorable, just, and righteous; and therefore enter into the joy of your Lord, inherit the kingdom prepared for you!" Mat. 25:21, 34.

Thus, by divine assistance, and by a special and a gracious hand of providence upon me—I have finished those select and important cases of conscience which I designed to speak to.

## MONERGISM BOOKS

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